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Editorial

We open this issue of *Review of Artistic Education* in the wake of the International Conference on Artistic Education (ICAE), whose papers form the backbone of the volume you are now reading. The conference once again brought together researchers, performers, and educators from across Europe and beyond to examine how the arts are taught, transmitted, and renewed — in the conservatory and the classroom alike, and increasingly, in digital and community spaces that did not exist when this journal was founded in 2011. The ICAE Conference and this year's double issue of the journal are organized by the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies and Research of the Department for Teacher Education, "George Enescu" National University of Arts, from Iasi, Romania.

Fifteen years on, that founding premise still holds: artistic education is not a single discipline but a family of practices — musical, visual, choreographic, dramatic — united by a shared pedagogical question of how expertise is passed from one generation of artists to the next. This issue's selection reflects that breadth. In this year double issue, readers will find contributions organized loosely around four lines of inquiry that dominated the conference floor this year:

- music and instrumental pedagogy — studies on repertoire selection, performance anxiety, and the evolving role of the private lesson alongside conservatory training
- visual arts and design education — curriculum studies spanning art history, studio practice, and the integration of new media into traditional ateliers
- digital technologies in artistic learning — the use of online platforms, virtual simulation, and AI-assisted tools in teaching performance and visual disciplines, alongside sober assessments of their limits
- art as social and therapeutic practice — community arts interventions, art therapy, and inclusive pedagogy for learners with diverse needs.

Taken together, these papers argue for a widening rather than a narrowing of what counts as artistic education research: the field is as much about cognition, wellbeing, and social repair as it is about technique.

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Our thanks go first to the reviewers whose unpaid, largely invisible work sets the quality bar for every article that appears here, and to the authors who revised their manuscripts — sometimes more than once — to meet it. We are already reading submissions for Issue No. 33/2027, and we welcome contributions from researchers in artistic education at any career stage, in Romania and abroad. Submission guidelines and deadlines are available on the journal's website.

NUMBER 31

PART I MUSIC

Support of Sensory Integration and Proprioceptive Perception in a Child with Autism Spectrum Disorder Using Music in Physiotherapy

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Patrícia Shtin Baňárová^b

and Terézia Kovalová^c

ABSTRACT: Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is characterized by core difficulties in social interaction, communication, and the presence of repetitive behaviours, among other symptoms. Music-based interventions integrated into physiotherapy may support emotional regulation in individuals with ASD. In this study, we incorporated music into the physiotherapeutic treatment of an 8-year-old boy diagnosed with ASD.

Objective: The objective of applying music in physiotherapy of the patient with ASD was stimulation of sensory integration and proprioceptive perception and supporting communication and movement activity.

Sample and methodology: The intervention consisted of three physiotherapy sessions, each lasting 40 minutes, in which music was incorporated. Pre- and post-session assessments focused on emotional regulation and movement activities relevant to autism. From a physiotherapeutic perspective, the patient with ASD exhibited predominant challenges in sensomotor integration and proprioceptive perception. At school, he experiences increased stress that negatively affects his attention and performance. Each session included 15 – 20 minutes of music therapy, with musical

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selections and activities tailored to the therapeutic objectives and planned in cooperation with the patient's mother.

Results: Improvements were observed in the patient's physical and emotional responses. During the first session, muscle relaxation in the shortened lower limb and visible signs of reassurance were noted. In the second session, increased engagement and spontaneous emotional expression were evident, particularly during decision-making and problem-solving tasks. In the third session, enhanced proprioceptive perception was observed during exercises performed on the BOSU.

Conclusion: The objective of integrating music into physiotherapy – to enhance sensory integration in a child with ASD – was successfully achieved. Across the sessions, the participant exhibited decreased muscular tension, greater engagement, and more active participation. Moreover, he demonstrated notable improvements in courage, patience, and sustained concentration during the therapeutic activities. These findings suggest that incorporating elements of music therapy into ongoing physiotherapy may be beneficial, as this combined approach appears to promote attentional control and relaxation over the long term

KEYWORDS: autistic spectrum disorder; muscle tension release; music in therapy; proprioceptive perception; stress reduction; sensory integration;

Introduction

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is characterized by persistent deficits in social communication and interaction, alongside restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, or activities, which result in significant impairments in social, educational, and occupational functioning (APA, 2017).

Sensory integration: Sensory processing differences and dysfunctions are closely associated with the core characteristics of ASD (Schaaf & Mailloux, 2015). The capacity to accurately process sensory information is essential for a child's overall development and daily functioning. Children with sensory integration difficulties often struggle to generate adaptive responses to sensory stimuli, which consequently impacts their learning, motor coordination, and behaviour (Smith Myles et al., 2005). These challenges arise not from structural brain injury or loss of function but from atypical neural processing patterns (Hodges, 2020).

Difficulties in sensory modulation and discrimination are commonly observed among children with ASD and may manifest across multiple sensory domains. Such dysfunctions can be identified by professionals including physiotherapists, occupational therapists, social workers, and clinical speech and language therapists. Providing structured sensory input through targeted interventions and activities can enhance the child's ability to process sensory information and produce more adaptive responses. This, in turn, supports improvements in learning, emotional regulation, and behavioural outcomes (Bundy, Lane, & Murray, 2007).

Music therapy: The term *music therapy* (MT) is appropriately applied when musical expression serves as an essential therapeutic medium – when the intervention would lose its purpose without the use of music itself (Králová & Kantor, 2020). Music therapy engages multiple sensory modalities, allowing children with ASD to respond to stimuli in ways that are less demanding than conventional verbal communication. Through improvisation and spontaneity, children are encouraged to express emotions freely, while rhythmic activities promote improvements in motor coordination, attention, and self-regulation (Shogren, Dean, Burke et al., 2021). Music and movement activities constitute an inseparable and natural component of early childhood free play. These activities engage multiple sensory modalities simultaneously, creating a multisensory experience. From an early age, children primarily communicate through nonverbal bodily expressions, using their bodies as tools for both receiving and expressing sensory stimuli. Through bodily reactions – such as restlessness, vocalization, crying, or rhythmic movement – they externalize their sensory and emotional states. In physiotherapeutic interventions, the use of music can enhance these processes by promoting authentic bodily experiences, which are fundamental for developing self-awareness and a positive relationship with one's own physicality (Lucká & Habalová, 2022). Music has also the potential to positively influence self-image, motivation, and complex psychological states in everyday life (Kusý & Palčková, 2025).

Integrating physiotherapy with music therapy provides additional benefits for children with ASD, fostering spontaneity, emotional expression, enhanced memory, communication, and stress reduction (Reschke-Hernández, 2011). The receptive form of MT supports concentration, relaxation, emotional sharing, and the alleviation of anxiety. It often includes concurrent activities such as movement or drawing while listening to music, which allows children to remain actively engaged as recipients of musical experiences (Grocke & Moe, 2015).

Children with ASD may respond to musical stimuli verbally or through alternative forms of expression (Králová & Baňárová, 2025). In physiotherapeutic practice, MT techniques may involve musical relaxation, activation and stimulation exercises, reflective discussions about selected songs or compositions, listening to the patient's preferred music, and guided imagery based on the Helen Bonny *Guided Imagery and Music* method.

Objective

The primary objective of incorporating music in therapy, specifically in its receptive form, is to enhance sensory integration during physiotherapy for an 8-year-old patient with ASD. The intervention we used aims to improve both communication and motor perception, while also facilitating the patient's ability to express emotions through verbal and non-verbal means.

Sample – case description

A music therapy intervention was applied to an 8-year-old boy (Viktor) diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), specifically high-functioning autism. Viktor presents with a range of characteristic symptoms, including sensory integration disorder, impaired communication and concentration, a tendency toward social withdrawal and creation of a private imaginative world, difficulties in emotional understanding and expression, anxiety in group settings, as well as impaired motor and spatial orientation and coordination. His altered sensory perception manifests particularly in the visual domain and in reduced awareness of body position, indicating a disorder of deep sensory processing. From a physiotherapeutic perspective, these findings correspond to deficits in sensory integration and proprioceptive perception. Viktor has been attending a private physiotherapy centre in Trenčín once per week for the past 18 months.

Viktor is currently enrolled in the second grade of elementary school, where he encounters increased stress that adversely affects his attention and performance. Since beginning formal education, he has struggled with work pace and handwriting tasks due to stagnation in fine motor development. He shows limited tolerance for structured instruction and often fails to complete assignments within the given timeframe. In the past two months, his mother has observed a marked decline in his concentration during activities he previously performed with ease. Writing tasks now take significantly longer to complete, and both the patient and his caregivers perceive this regression as a response to accumulated stress. Additionally, increased toe-walking has been noted, suggesting changes in proprioceptive control. The decline in sensory perception is further reflected in decreased coordination and body awareness.

Music serves as a meaningful medium for the patient, providing a vent for emotional expression and self-regulation. He can maintain focus while humming. However, this behaviour is discouraged in the school environment due to group constraints. In play, he constructs elaborate narratives that he repeatedly reenacts over extended periods, indicating fixed patterns of creative expression. Similarly, his drawing activities reveal perseverative tendencies, as he often reproduces the same image when emotionally engaged.

Methodology

The methodological approach involved a detailed description of the therapeutic sessions conducted with Viktor, integrating both physiotherapy and music therapy interventions.

Within the music therapy intervention, an individualized receptive form of therapy was applied, with a focus on enhancing sensory integration. A diverse range of musical genres was employed, including meditation music, electronic (film) music, New Age, rock, and minimalism, as well as classical music styles such as impressionism and classicism. Musical selections for specific physiotherapy exercises were selected by one of the

authors, an expert in music theory, pedagogy, and music therapy.

Physiotherapeutic techniques primarily targeted joint compression, coordination exercises for the upper and lower limbs, and activities to improve fine motor skills. These physiotherapeutic exercises were administered by the other author, a licensed physiotherapist, in conjunction with the music therapy intervention.

Planning a music therapy intervention

Three individual 40-minute sessions integrating receptive music therapy (MT) were conducted for a month and a half at a rehabilitation clinic in Trenčín, involving the physiotherapist, musician, Viktor, and his mother. Each session included 15-20 minutes of MT, with musical selections and activities tailored to therapeutic objectives and planned in collaboration with his mother.

Both creative and non-creative receptive MT approaches were applied. Non-creative MT focused on relaxation, stress reduction, muscle tension release, and enhanced body awareness. Creative MT supported fine motor development (drawing or sorting Lego bricks to music), emotional expression (clapping, slapping, snapping), balance and coordination (for example ball exercises while standing on BOSU), and guided breathing exercises.

Activation exercises using reproduced music targeted sensory integration, attention, concentration, spontaneity, emotional expression, and motor coordination. Interventions were adapted to the patient's emotional state, and technical conditions ensured high-quality auditory stimuli. The long-term plan included educating the mother on strategies to further develop sensory integration through music.

Therapeutic setting for music therapy

The music therapy intervention was conducted in a children's room at a private rehabilitation clinic in Trenčín, equipped with rehabilitation and sensory aids. Viktor was familiar with the environment and responded positively. Therapy utilized familiar equipment that he typically requests during exercises, including a BOSU, fitball, ball, and toys such as Lego blocks, coloured cubes, and containers. The auditory environment was carefully controlled, with music played at a maximum of 50 decibels – comparable to normal indoor ambient noise, muffled conversation, or typical street sounds – ensuring comfort and safety for his sensory perception.

Implementation and results

This section presents the implementation of three music therapy interventions, detailing the therapeutic objectives, selected musical stimuli, physiotherapy techniques, and observed outcomes. The objectives for each session were determined according to the patient's emotional state at the time of the intervention, allowing for an individualized and responsive therapeutic approach.

Session 1

Activity 1: The objective of this activity was to induce relaxation, release tension in the shortened lower limb muscles, and enhance body awareness through joint pressure techniques. Viktor did activities while he was listening to 2 slow-tempo musical pieces:

1. *8D Bilateral EMDR – Sound Energy Alchemist* (4:18 min, lento, 50 BPM), meditation music.
2. *Song of White – Theme* (2022), Vangelis, *Antarctica* (4:50 min, adagio, 56 BPM), New Age, electronic music.

Procedure: During the first piece, Viktor lay supine with eyes closed, attending to musical elements reminiscent of natural sounds, such as rustling leaves. Within approximately two minutes, he achieved a calm state. Physiotherapy then commenced, incorporating passive release of the shortened lower limb muscles combined with joint pressure to enhance proprioceptive awareness (Figure 1A). Passive muscle stretching techniques were applied concurrently with the second Vangelis piece. The entire activity lasted 10 minutes

Activity 2: The objective of this activity was to enhance fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, concentration, and patience, while supporting the sensory integration of auditory and visual stimuli. The activity, Music and Colours, also encouraged emotional expression through the selection of colour shades and promoted creativity by linking musical perception with visual representation. Materials included coloured markers and large drawing paper. Slow, expressive piano compositions were used during the activity:

3. *Moonlight* (1905), Claude Debussy, *Suite bergamasque* (5:02 min, andante, 63 BPM), impressionism.
4. *Moonlight Sonata* (1801), Ludwig van Beethoven, Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp minor *Quasi una fantasia*, 1st movement (5:04 min, adagio sostenuto, 56 BPM), classicism.

Procedure: Both pieces were piano compositions; therefore, the session began with a brief introduction to a pianist and the expressive potential of musical performance. Viktor observed a photo of the pianist while watching a short online demonstration of the pianist's interpretation. This was followed by hand and finger exercises simulating piano playing and raindrop movements. He was encouraged to choose colours and expressive gestures according to his mood and personal associations with the music.

During the musical pieces, Viktor sat at a table with markers and paper ready. After listening to the first piece, he spontaneously drew a piano and the pianist, demonstrating persistence and careful attention to detail. He maintained concentration without vocalizing or humming along and engaged in imaginative visualization of lights while

drawing. The second piece, *Moonlight Sonata*, followed, and Viktor completed his artwork within approximately 10 minutes (Figure 1B and 1C).



Figure 1. Course of the first therapeutic session

Legend: 1A - Relaxation of shortened lower limb muscles with joint pressure applied to enhance proprioceptive awareness; 1B - Activity "Music and Colours" during the drawing process, illustrating engagement with auditory and visual stimuli; 1C - Outcome of the "Music and Colours" activity, showing the Viktor's expressive response and creative output.

Session 1 - results: At the start of the session, Viktor exhibited signs of nervousness. After approximately two minutes of exposure to a calm tempo and pleasant musical melodies, he achieved a relaxed state. Muscle tension in the lower limbs was notably reduced, and he demonstrated awareness of joint position even in extended postures.

During the subsequent "*Music and Colours*" activity, Viktor displayed positive affect, including smiling, despite typical challenges in communication and social interaction. According to his mother, drawing serves as a primary means of emotional expression and therapeutic processing. Viktor engaged attentively with the task, independently selecting colours for the piano, the figure of the pianist, and visual representations of the music, expressing satisfaction with the developing artwork. The drawing process progressed sequentially, beginning with the piano, followed by the figure, and concluding with symbolic depiction of the musical phrases as "waves."

Viktor demonstrated persistence and autonomy throughout the activity. His mother noted that he had not previously completed a comparable drawing independently, highlighting the significance of this therapeutic outcome. The session concluded with Viktor giving the completed artwork to his mother, reflecting a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Session 2

Activity 3: The objective of this activity was to facilitate synchronization between

the Viktor's movements and the rhythmic structure of the musical recording, while simultaneously enhancing attention, planning, and rhythmic motor coordination through targeted body percussion. This activity was selected for its potential to promote sensory integration, concentration, perceptual processing, and emotional expression through rhythmic movement. During the therapeutic session, a "rhythm and tempo game" was implemented, in which Viktor executed planned body taps in synchrony with the musical rhythm while nonverbally expressing their current emotional state. Through listening and repetition of rhythmic sequences, the intervention aimed to strengthen attention, working memory, and motor planning skills, particularly in executing coordinated actions such as thigh slapping and hand clapping. These exercises also contributed to improving upper limb coordination. The session employed rhythmic music characterized by a fast tempo:

5. *Clapping Music* (1987) by Steve Reich, from the album *Early Works* (duration: 4:49 min; tempo: vivace, 172 BPM). Genre: minimalism; style: experimental and rhythmic composition.

Procedure: At the beginning of the activity, the participant was guided to adopt a correct seated posture on a raised mat. He then imitated the therapist's movements in a body percussion exercise involving rhythmic slapping of the thighs. The participant appeared engaged and expressed enjoyment, consistent with his reported preference for clapping, drumming, and similar rhythmic activities. The body percussion task consisted of alternating rhythmic patterns: initially, the right hand striking the right thigh and the left hand striking the left thigh, followed by a crossed pattern in which the right hand struck the left thigh and the left hand struck the right thigh (Figure 2A). Subsequently, the participant remained seated on the mat and listened to a demonstration of *Clapping Music* by Steve Reich, after which he began to reproduce the rhythmic pattern by slapping his thighs (Figure 2B). Initially, he followed the therapist's model and later continued independently until the completion of the musical excerpt. During the rhythmic-motor engagement, he displayed positive affect, smiling and gently swaying his torso laterally in time with the music. The total duration of the activity was approximately six minutes.

Activity 4: The objective of this activity was to enhance sensory and proprioceptive perception. The participant engaged in synchronous activation of the abdominal and back muscles while performing coordinated movements that integrated multiple sensory modalities. During the "colour sorting" task, the participant was required to focus on several stimuli simultaneously, combining visual and manual colour categorization with a concurrent musical accompaniment. The activity also incorporated elements of decision-making training, encouraging the participant to select and organize coloured objects based on auditory and visual cues. The exercise was performed while seated on a gymnastic ball, which provided continuous proprioceptive stimulation through dynamic balance control. The therapeutic session utilized fast-paced rock music to support

rhythmic engagement and motor activation. During this activity we used the following musical material:

6. *Holly Herald* (2009) by Jethro Tull, from the album *Christmas Album* (duration: 4:17 min; tempo: allegretto – moderately fast, 113 BPM). Genre: rock; style: progressive and folk rock.

Procedure: The participant assumed a prone position on a gymnastic ball, with his head oriented downward toward the floor. Initially, he touched the ground with his thumbs and then raised his arms, practicing body extension and balance control. Subsequently, a sensory mat, six coloured bowls (yellow, orange, red, green, blue, and purple), and 24 Lego bricks (four pieces of each colour) were arranged on the carpet in front of him. After receiving instructions regarding safe movement and balance on the gymnastic ball, the participant propelled himself forward to the sensory mat in coordination with the musical accompaniment. Upon reaching the mat, he placed both hands on its surface while maintaining trunk support on the gymnastic ball and keeping his lower limbs relaxed, thereby ensuring postural stability.

The task required him to sort and place the Lego bricks into bowls of corresponding colours (Figure 2C). He experienced minor difficulty distinguishing between similar hues (yellow and orange) and hesitated when determining colour placement. To resolve this, he grouped visually similar bricks together and subsequently selected the most appropriate colour match. Throughout the activity, he actively decided which hand to use for grasping and sorting, thereby engaging both visual discrimination and proprioceptive coordination. At the participant's request, the activity was repeated three times. The total duration of the session was approximately 15 minutes.

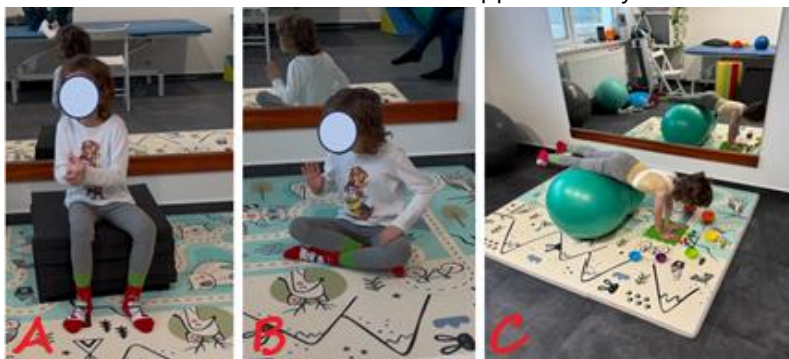


Figure 2. Course of the second therapeutic session

Legend: 2A – “Rhythm game” activity performed in a seated position on a raised mat;
 2B – “Rhythm game” activity performed in a seated position on the floor;
 2C – “Colour sorting” activity.

Session 2 - results: During the activity “Playing to the rhythm,” the participant demonstrated evident joy and enthusiasm. He smiled frequently and synchronized the

movements of his torso and head with the musical rhythm. A slight deceleration in movement was observed when alternating cross-lateral hand patterns (left hand to right thigh, right hand to left thigh). The participant also expressed enjoyment of the “Colour sorting” activity, including the accompanying musical demonstration, and stated that he wished to repeat it at home. Throughout the session, he exhibited patience, sustained motivation, and active engagement in the therapeutic tasks.

Session 3

Activity 5: The objective of this activity was to develop balance control, strengthen core stability, and improve coordination between the upper and lower limbs. The therapeutic session employed electronic music with a slow, steady walking tempo to support rhythmic motor engagement. The following musical material was used:

7. *Main Theme* by Vangelis, from the album *Chariots of Fire* (duration: 5:27 min; tempo: andante – moderately slow, 95 BPM). Genre: film electronic music.

Procedure: During the activity, the participant stood upright on BOSU with knees slightly flexed and feet positioned shoulder-width apart. A ball was thrown toward him, which he caught and returned to the therapist. Initially, the throws were directed straight toward his hands; later, the ball was thrown laterally and rolled along the floor, prompting the participant to adjust his posture and squat on the BOSU to retrieve it. This variation stimulated proprioceptive and visual-sensory feedback; and engaged visual-motor coordination, enhancing both hand – eye and bilateral hand coordination (Figure 3A).

The activity required sustained attention, as the direction of each throw was unpredictable. The accompanying musical background added a dynamic and motivational component to the task. Compared with previous sessions, the participant demonstrated increased patience, confidence, and persistence. The total duration of the activity was approximately 15 minutes.

Activity 6: The objective of this activity was to promote relaxation following the preceding balance exercise in BOSU workout, using guided breathing and rhythmic-motor relaxation techniques. Electronic music with a medium-slow tempo was incorporated to facilitate calmness and steady breathing. We used the following musical material:

8. *Song of the Seas* by Vangelis, from the album *Song of the Seas* (duration: 5:34 min; tempo: andante – steady and free, 70 BPM). Genre: electronic music.

9. *Crab Breaths* – Namasteln school, motivational video on breathing exercises.

Procedure: To induce relaxation, the “Playing a crab” exercise was employed. The participant sat comfortably on a mat, listened to the musical background, and imitated crab-like movements synchronized with a structured breathing pattern. The breathing sequence involved inhaling through the nose (count 1-2-3), holding the breath (count 1-2-3-4-5) while simultaneously performing five “claw-clicking” hand movements, and

exhaling slowly through pursed lips (count 1-2-3-4-5-6-7). During exhalation, the participant performed gentle side-to-side movements of the head and torso, referred to as the “crab dance” (Figure 3B). The therapist participated alongside the participant, modelling the breathing rhythm and movements to encourage engagement and synchronization.



Figure 3. Course of the third therapeutic session

Legend: 3A – “Coordination game on a BOSU ball” activity;

3B – “Crab Walk” activity.

Session 3 – results: Although BOSU workout was not new to the participant, this session marked the first occasion during which such activities were accompanied by music. The introduction of musical accompaniment appeared to have a positive influence on his engagement. He demonstrated greater confidence, patience, and overall enthusiasm during the session. During the balance task, the participant became strongly attuned to the rhythm of the music and momentarily lost concentration, resulting in a brief loss of balance and a fall from the surface of BOSU. He was not alarmed by the incident and promptly resumed the activity, maintaining motivation and focus.

The subsequent relaxation activity was intentionally designed to follow the physically engaging BOSU workout. Based on prior therapeutic experience with the participant, it was known that relaxation is most effectively achieved when the exercise is embedded within a short imaginative narrative, such as the “Playing a crab” activity. The background music created a calm and pleasant atmosphere, to which the participant responded with slow, rhythmic swaying of the torso. Throughout the exercise, he maintained concentration on the breathing sequence – inhale, hold, and exhale – accompanied by the coordinated “claw-clicking” hand movements.

Summary of Results

Following three sessions of music-supported physiotherapy, the observed effects in an 8-year-old patient with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) were as follows:

Session 1: The participant exhibited relaxation and reduced tension in the shortened muscles of the lower limbs. While engaging in drawing activities accompanied by music, he demonstrated persistence, concentration, and positive affect.

Session 2: During rhythmic clapping exercises, the participant expressed joy and enthusiasm, smiling and moving his torso and head in synchrony with the rhythm. In the colour-sorting task, he demonstrated independent decision-making, hand alternation, and self-directed problem solving.

Session 3: The participant displayed patience and confidence during balance and coordination exercises in BOSU workout. During the subsequent relaxation activity, he responded with slow, controlled swaying of the torso and maintained focused attention.

The main objective of the music intervention – supporting sensory integration in a patient with ASD – was achieved. The participant demonstrated the ability to induce a state of physical and psychological well-being, which was reflected in muscular relaxation and enhanced engagement during therapeutic exercises.

Conclusion

Impaired sensory perception in the 8-year-old participant with ASD was primarily observed in the visual domain and in reduced awareness of body position. To address these challenges, proprioceptive stimulation was incorporated through joint pressure exercises and activities performed on an unstable surface of BOSU. With parental consent, three physiotherapy sessions incorporating a music-based intervention were designed to support sensory integration.

Musical selections and therapeutic activities were tailored to the specific objectives of the intervention. An individualized receptive form of music therapy was employed, focusing on enhancing sensory integration in the child. Throughout the sessions, the participant demonstrated reduced muscular tension, increased engagement, and active participation. Notably, he exhibited courage, patience, and sustained concentration during the exercises.

Based on these observations, the integration of music therapy elements into ongoing physiotherapy was recommended, as this approach appears to facilitate both attentional control and relaxation in the long term.

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Theoretical, Practical and Pedagogical Implications for Inclusive Higher Music Education

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ABSTRACT: Educators worldwide increasingly realize that a change is needed in institutions, communities, educational systems and individual initiatives regarding the inclusivity and equity that all members of society should experience. In this theoretical paper, we will examine the experiences of students with special education needs (SEN) who are enrolled or have graduated from an undergraduate degree program in music at two institutions in Cyprus and Romania. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with students as well as teachers, and focused on the specialized support provided to these students by the two institutions. Findings from this study can shed light on current practices and guide administrators and decision-makers toward the necessary changes that need to be made in order to improve policies and practices for a more equitable educational context for all.

KEYWORDS: Inclusion; music; SEN (special education needs); higher education; frameworks for support

Introduction

During the late 20th century there has been an increased attention towards the lives, experiences and challenges of people with disabilities. This has led to the development of the new academic field of Disability Studies and to the realization that disability is not

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another medical condition but a social construct and that there many things that administrators, policy makers, educators and everyday people can do to improve the lives of those around us who experience some sort of disability. Undeniably, many of these necessary changes start, or should start, from the field of education, by removing barriers, allowing equal access to all, and providing increasing support structures throughout compulsory and higher education. Yet, much more needs to be done at the institutional, communal and structural level regarding the inclusivity and equity that all members of society should experience.

According to the Postsecondary National Policy Institute of the United States (2025), 13.6% of all civilians and 21% of all enrolled undergraduates reported having some form of disability. In another recent report of the National Disability Center for Student Success (2025) indicated, 38% of participating students identified themselves as disabled. In Europe various research findings exhibit similar results. According to The Higher Education Authority of Ireland (2023), an average of 17% of new entrants in the academic years 2019-2022 indicate that they have some sort of disability.

Nevertheless, according to the European Disability Forum's website, only 31% of learners with disabilities continue into tertiary education. Similarly, as official statistics of Eurostat (2025) indicate, in 2024 only 23.9% of people between 15 and 64 years of age with some disability and 15.3% of people with a sever disability had a high level of educational attainment from tertiary education, compared to a 33.6% of people without a disability.

In the field of music education, during the last two decades there has been a significant increase of voices, research and projects supporting and documenting the need for change in music education to better accommodate students with special education needs (SEN) (Abramo, 2012; Darrow, 2015; Dobbs, 2012; Grimsby, 2020; Hourigan & Hammel, 2019). Music is an irrevocable human and cultural right for all people, regardless of their ability or disability and it plays a fundamental role in the everyday life of people in all communities, societies and nations. Thus, all people should have the right to learn music at all levels and participate in music-making throughout their lives, either as professional or amateur musicians. This presupposes that students with SEN should be encouraged and supported to enter and complete their studies at higher education institutions of music, as well as be supported after their graduation in their professional lives as musicians.

What is IncluMusic

The European Union offers a wide range of opportunities for collaboration between universities in different countries, with the aim of finding solutions to specific challenges in the field of education. A concrete example of such a project is "IncluMusic – Developing Skills for More Inclusive Conservatories," which brings together seven partners and

focuses on finding effective solutions to improve the adaptability of students with special educational needs (SEN) to the university music environment. The partners involved in this project are five universities with expertise in education and music, and two associations from five different countries, represented as follows: ANMGD-Gheorghe Dima National Academy of Music (coordinator, Cluj-Napoca, Romania), RIAM-Royal Irish Academy of Music (Dublin, Ireland), LUMSA University (Rome, Italy), EUC-European University Cyprus (Nicosia, Cyprus), CONSPA-State Music Conservatory 'Alessandro Scarlatti' (Palermo, Italy), AEC-Association Européenne des Conservatoires (Belgium), and Resolvo (Florence, Italy).

The main objective of the project is to build inclusive higher education systems within the community by promoting and fostering excellence in teaching, learning, and assessment, and by developing the skills necessary for inclusive education. The secondary objectives focus on the following areas of interest (Cinque et al. 2023):

- Increasing access and participation for students with sensory and cognitive disabilities in Higher Music Education Institutions (HMEIs);
- Developing the competencies of teaching and administrative staff in the field of inclusive education;
- Introducing and training academic mentors to serve as mediators between students and the university environment;
- Promoting innovative practices and approaches for inclusive education and the development of an HMEI community focused on inclusion.

The project was complex, running for a period of 36 months (2022-2025), and was structured into five work packages, in which all partner institutions were equally involved. The first work package (*WP 1 – Project Management*) focused on managing the entire project lifecycle, coordinated by ANMGD with support from Resolvo, and addressed the coherent organization of activities, monitoring progress at every stage, and ensuring quality and results throughout the implementation period. The second work package (*WP2 – Design & Curriculum*) focused on defining the course design principles that must be considered by all those working in an inclusive education system, and on developing a European curriculum for the training of teachers, tutors, and administrative staff in HMEIs. The third work package (*WP3 – Course Development & Piloting*) involves the actual development of the training course content, the preparation of supporting teaching materials and assessment methods, and concludes with the internal piloting of the materials within the partner institutions. Next, external testing of the courses and the development of training manuals, which detail the pedagogical methodology and support their implementation, were carried out as part of Work Package 4 (*WP4 – Testing & Support Tools*). The final phase of the IncluMusic project (*WP5 – Dissemination & Exploitation*) aims to disseminate the project's results and capitalize on them through various contexts, such as conferences, workshops, social media channels, and various

groups within the academic music community, aspects that promote inclusion in HMEIs (Sârb & Miralis, 2025).

As a result the IncluMusic project produced two *e-learning courses*, one for teachers and one for administrative staff, as well as a *training manual* focusing on two areas of inclusivity training: pedagogical practices and broader institutional practices, and a website containing these support materials (PPT presentations, explanatory videos, links to other supplementary materials), all designed to build strong inclusive competencies and facilitate access for individuals with SEN to HMEIs. The e-learning self-paced course summarize the contents of the Training Manual, and it can be found at <https://elearn.inclumusic.eu/>. The modules it contains are relevant both for the project objectives and for all actors involved in higher music education (Mladin et al, 2025) and are presented in the following:

- *Module 1:* Disability studies, special pedagogy and inclusive music teaching (5 sessions)
- *Module 2:* Special Musical Methodologies and Assistive Technologies Workshops (5 sessions)
- *Module 3:* Legal and Ethical Principles of Inclusion: Strategies for Effective Implementation (6 sessions)
- *Module 4:* Mindfulness and Inclusive Music Teaching (6 sessions)
- *Module 5:* Music Therapy, Music and Health (6 sessions)
- *Module 6:* Inclusive MuEd and Community Music (5 sessions).

Research Methodology

As part of the *IncluMusic* project, to achieve the clearest possible picture of the reality in Europe, regarding inclusion practices at the university level, we conducted multiple research activities, such as: identifying courses or study programs at European universities, examples of best practices and events that promote inclusion in the university music environment, focus groups in each project partner's country, interviews with professors, students, administrative staff, and representatives from associations, as well as rectors and directors of institutions involved in inclusion.

In this paper, we will refer only to the interviews conducted in Romania and Cyprus with teachers and students of music. The research tool used was the structured interview, administered to faculty and students.

The interview for teachers began with questions about their professional experience, followed by open-ended questions regarding their experience with educational contexts and teaching strategies in an inclusive environment, challenges encountered, and support received from the institution (Appendix 1). The teachers' responses provided details about their perspectives on the inclusive environment.

In the interview designed for students, following some introductory questions

about affiliation, specialization, and level of study, we included questions related to institutional culture, inclusive policies and practices, learning and collaboration experiences, and the level of involvement of professors or other members of the institution, all of which facilitate adaptation to the inclusive university environment. Student responses were measured using a 3-point Likert scale: *Definitely agree* – *Agree to some extent* – *Disagree*. In addition to these three categories of questions, the interview concluded with an open-ended question asking students to name three important changes regarding inclusion and diversity that they would like to see in their institution (Appendix 2).

The research questions for each category of respondents were designed to enable a comparative analysis that provides a comprehensive picture of the inclusion of the two groups in question: teachers and students.

To better understand the needs and challenges faced by teachers and students, as well as to foster the creation of the most inclusive musical community possible, we conducted interviews with various groups, as follows:

a). HMEI students:

- Romanian and Cypriot students from our institutions (ANMGD and EUC);
- Erasmus students who study in our institutions;
- Romanian and Cypriot students who study outside the country.

b). HMEI teachers, music university centers from different cities in our countries:

- Romania: Cluj-Napoca, Timisoara, Oradea, Brasov, Arad, Bucuresti;
- Cyprus: Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca.

Analysis of data

Data from Romania

Data analysis revealed that the most common condition mentioned by music students at ANMGD was ADHD and visual impairment. Music university indicated that the biggest challenge they faced was how to better adapt their teaching methods and materials to the specific needs of students with SEN, while maintaining integrity and fairness in their assessment. They were also concerned about finding appropriate ways to fight student isolation and promote smoother integration of students with SEN in their classes and in the university in general.

Music institution indicated that they approach these challenges with an open mind, flexibility and determination to overcome difficulties by improving their teaching methods, learning from their students' resilience and motivation and by being more creative in inventing games, tests and group activities that can be stimulating for all. They further identified various resources that are available to students with SEN, such as a student counseling center, psychological and financial support and various integration strategies that are followed.

Another issue brought up by Romanian music faculty is the importance of establishing good interpersonal relationships with and being empathetic towards SEN students. After all, they indicated, "we have to be human and try to see the world from their perspective." They also commented on the important role played by various related associations which provide qualified personnel, facilitate integration and encourage SEN people to carry out normal activities.

Despite various inclusive policies and practices followed at ANMGD, the problems are far from being resolved. Music faculty admitted that no special training was offered to them in order to face the challenges that the education of SEN students brings. They acknowledge that minimal training of teachers is needed, but, above all, what is equally important is empathy towards others who are different.

Data from Cyprus

The most common condition mentioned by music students at EUC was learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dysgraphia, as well as mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression or social and emotional distress. Music students with visual and hearing impairments and students on the autism spectrum were also accepted and graduated from the music program at EUC.

Music faculty from EUC indicated that the biggest challenge they faced was the reluctance of students to move forward because of their fear of being exposed and stigmatized for their disability. Despite the various advancements made over the years, such feelings of reluctance and fear are still experienced by students. Another challenge has to do with the time management of the course and the need to adjust the course content to accommodate students with SEN. One colleague indicated that, when resources are not available, differentiation is a challenge.

In regards to accessibility, it was indicated that about a decade ago all necessary adjustments (i.e. reserved parking, specialized lift for wheelchairs) and classroom changes were made in order to accommodate an incoming music student with mobility impairment. Currently, such amenities are commonplace, and the campus is accessible to all.

As with their colleagues in Romania, music faculty at EUC also indicated that they have not received any specialized training on how to better accommodate students with SEN. They expressed sincere interest for more training, education and awareness raising regarding the various types of sensory disabilities and impairments that students have, in order to become more capable of better supporting their students. They further indicated that, without good knowledge and skills in this area, teachers can do harm or affect SEN students in a negative way. The university has established a specialized committee for students with SEN, through which their specialized needs are identified and support is provided to both students and faculty. On the other hand, music faculty indicated that currently the university does not have any collaboration with any association focusing on

issues of disability and this reality needs to be changed for the benefit of the students. They further added that faculty need to take advantage of what assistive technology can offer.

Results and recommendations

Interviews with music students and faculty in Romania and Cyprus revealed some common trends. Faculty in both institutions welcome and support students with SEN in higher music education institutions. They also acknowledge their lack of training on issues pertaining to disabilities and are eagerly looking for specialized training in order to enable them to better identify the needs of their students and to provide the necessary support for them in order to succeed in their studies. This could take the form of in-service training, better communication and discussion amongst faculty and staff, closer connection and collaboration with local or national disability associations, incorporating assistive technologies, as well as enhancing communication and fostering empathy with and understanding of students with SEN. As one faculty stated, when available resources are limited, differentiation is a challenge.

Conclusions

Based on an examination of the context of inclusive music education in Cyprus and Romania, we can conclude that the situation has evolved significantly in recent decades in both countries.

The findings from interviews with teachers demonstrate that all those involved in education possess basic inclusive competencies, are conscious of the importance of appropriate and effective perspectives on the inclusive educational context in higher education, and are eager to further improve their knowledge and skills. However, teachers face many problematic situations and highlight the lack of specialized training for the diverse range of issues in the field of inclusion that may arise in education and affect pedagogical approaches.

Students pointed out several positive aspects regarding the facilitation of adaptation for students with various special educational needs in higher music institutions, which reflect the support and concern offered by the host institutions. However, difficulties and obstacles related to the educational climate were also noted, particularly regarding the adaptation of academic learning content or challenges related to social integration.

The development and improvement of an inclusive educational environment in music universities is an ongoing and long-term process that requires both specialized training for faculty members in the specific aspects of inclusive education and the adaptation of teaching, learning, and assessment strategies to the variety of special educational needs, including the use of assistive technologies. This highlights the importance of disseminating the results of research on inclusion and projects

organized with partners from different academic backgrounds and cultures, such as the *IncuMusic* project.

All of the aspects mentioned confirm that a robust inclusive environment specifically requires a paradigm shift regarding educational practices as well as institutional culture, through a focus on empathy, flexibility, and ensuring genuine and effective communication.

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Appendix 1-Interview with teachers

1. The kind of SEN most present in HMEIs
2. The challenges reported
3. The opportunities/resources offered
4. The different perspectives
5. Competencies needed to build inclusive HE systems
6. Presence of tutors and other staff devoted to students with SEN
7. Teacher education and training
8. Methodologies of music classes / Classroom organization
9. Inclusion: policies/laws versus practice
10. Partnership and support from associations, families and colleagues.

Appendix 2-Interviu with teachers students

Please rate the following sentences:

(using Likert scale: *Definitely agree* - *Agree to some extent* – *Disagree*)

Directions	Questions
CULTURE	- Everyone is made to feel welcome at my Conservatory / HMEI. - Students help each other. - Staff work well with each other. - Staff and students treat one another with respect. - Parents feel involved (?) - Staff and governors work well together. - Teachers do not favor one group of students over another. - Teachers try to help all students to do their best. - Teachers think all students are equally important.
POLICIES	-The Institution makes it easy for students with impairments to come and study music. - When you first join this Music institution you are helped to feel settled. - Teachers like teaching all their classes. - The teachers work hard to make the institution a good place to come to.
PRACTICES	- Teachers try to make the lessons easy to understand for everyone.

	- Students are taught to appreciate people who have different backgrounds to their own. - Students generally know what will be taught next in lessons. - In lessons teachers expect students to help each other. - Teachers help everyone who has difficulties with lessons. - Teaching assistants work with anyone who needs help. - Homework helps with learning and is properly explained. - There are activities arranged outside of lessons which interest everyone.
What three changes would you like to see at your institution? - - -	

Enhancing School Music Education through Technology: The Case of Solfy

Morel Koren^a

ABSTRACT: This article examines the educational potential of Solfy, an interactive digital platform designed to support singing development and the early acquisition of music literacy in school settings. The discussion is grounded in the view that digital tools should not replace the music teacher or traditional pedagogical practice, but should instead extend and reinforce them. Drawing on scholarship on blended learning, feedback, digital tools in elementary music education, and technology-supported music pedagogy, the article argues that Solfy may provide a meaningful bridge between teacher-guided classroom instruction and structured home practice. Particular attention is given to the pedagogical value of repetition, self-recording, formative feedback, differentiated learning, and continuity between classroom and home. The article also proposes a mixed-methods pilot framework for investigating the effects of Solfy on singing accuracy, music literacy, motivation, confidence, and readiness for collective singing. It is suggested that, when integrated thoughtfully into teacher-led instruction, Solfy may support students' independent practice while also helping teachers monitor progress and address learner diversity more effectively.

KEYWORDS: music education, singing pedagogy, music literacy, blended learning, digital learning, formative feedback, Solfy

Introduction

Singing has long occupied a central place in school music education. It supports musical participation, aural development, memory, expressive communication, and the gradual internalization of pitch and rhythm relationships. In many school systems, however, music

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teachers work under conditions of limited instructional time, varied student readiness, and unequal opportunities for guided practice outside the classroom. These constraints often make it difficult to provide the repetition, individual support, and feedback that many learners need in order to gain confidence and musical fluency.

In response to such challenges, educational technology has increasingly been explored as a means of extending music learning beyond the classroom. Recent scholarship suggests that digital tools in elementary music education can support musical skills, engagement, and motivation when they are integrated into sound pedagogical design rather than treated as ends in themselves (Liu et al., 2025). Research on teacher preparation and blended music learning similarly emphasizes that technology is most effective when it remains connected to musical, social, and pedagogical goals (Beirnes & Randles, 2023; Cuervo et al., 2023; Karkina et al., 2023).

The present article focuses on Solfy, an interactive educational platform developed to promote singing and initiate music literacy. The central claim advanced here is that Solfy can be understood not as a substitute for traditional school music teaching, but as a complementary pedagogical resource. Used in class by the teacher and at home by students for individual practice, Solfy may help create continuity between shared musical activity and personal reinforcement. This article therefore aims to articulate a pedagogical rationale for the use of Solfy in school music education and to propose a research framework through which its educational contribution may be examined systematically.

Literature Review

Contemporary literature on music education increasingly highlights the expanding role of digital environments in teaching and learning. This shift is not simply about the addition of devices or platforms; it also concerns changing conceptions of access, participation, practice, and learner agency. Research on blended and online music learning has shown that digital environments can support repetition, flexible pacing, multimodal representation, and new forms of interaction, but it has also warned that these benefits depend on careful educational framing and the continued presence of meaningful teacher guidance (Beirnes & Randles, 2023).

A particularly relevant strand of literature concerns feedback. Cardenas (2024) argues that feedback remains one of the most important instructional tools in music teaching and that its form, timing, and responsiveness to learner needs significantly influence its educational value. In the context of singing, feedback is especially important because vocal learning depends not only on knowledge of correct pitches or rhythms but also on self-awareness, confidence, and repeated opportunities for adjustment.

Recent work on AI-assisted and e-learning-supported vocal training further suggests that personalized feedback technologies can foster reflection and deep engagement, even when measurable performance gains are not always immediate or

uniform. The significance of such findings lies partly in the fact that digital feedback may help structure practice and make learners more active in observing and evaluating their own performance (Li, 2025).

In addition, Liu et al. (2025), in a systematic review of digital tools in elementary music education, found that many studies reported positive effects on musical performance, music theory skills, motivation, and engagement. At the same time, the review stressed the need for careful methodological design and critical appraisal of interventions. This point is highly relevant for any study of Solfy, because enthusiasm for innovation should not replace rigorous educational evaluation.

Teacher preparation is another essential dimension. Cuervo et al. (2023) show that effective use of technology in music learning depends not only on software availability but also on teachers' confidence, pedagogical intention, and digital competence. For this reason, any school-based implementation of Solfy must be understood as involving not only student learning, but also teacher mediation and teacher development.

Theoretical and Pedagogical Framework

The pedagogical logic behind Solfy can be situated within four closely related ideas: blended learning, differentiated instruction, formative assessment, and student-centered musical practice.

First, blended learning in music education involves the thoughtful combination of face-to-face teaching and digital learning opportunities. In a musically meaningful blended model, the classroom remains the place where the teacher introduces repertoire, models expression, guides joint singing, and creates social-musical coherence. The digital environment then extends this work by allowing students to revisit material, repeat tasks, and practice at an individual pace.

Second, Solfy is compatible with differentiated instruction because it allows students to repeat songs and exercises as needed, work at their own pace, and receive individualized responses to their performance. Differentiation is especially important in school music classes, where learners often vary considerably in confidence, previous exposure, vocal control, and reading ability.

Third, the platform aligns with the principles of formative assessment. Formative approaches focus on helping learners understand where they are, what they are aiming for, and how they can improve. In music, this is not limited to formal grading; it includes timely information, guided reflection, and opportunities for revision. The feedback literature strongly supports the value of such approaches in music classrooms (Cardenas, 2024).

Finally, a student-centered perspective is relevant because musical growth depends on active participation. Solfy may support agency by enabling students to listen, repeat, record, compare, and improve. In this respect, the platform can be seen as

strengthening rather than weakening the educational role of the teacher: the teacher frames the task, selects the repertoire, interprets progress, and reconnects individual practice to collective classroom music-making.

Solfy as an Educational Tool

Solfy is designed as an interactive learning environment for the development of singing and music literacy. Its educational value lies in the integration of several musical functions within one structured setting: listening, score visualization, vocal imitation, self-recording, repetition, feedback, and progress monitoring. In classroom use, Solfy can help the teacher present songs and solfège exercises through coordinated visual and auditory support. In home use, it can provide students with a guided space for repetition and self-evaluation.

From a pedagogical perspective, three features are especially relevant. The first is continuity: the same material introduced in class can be revisited at home. The second is individualization: students who need more repetition can work longer, while more advanced students can consolidate more independently. The third is visibility of learning: student recordings and usage data may provide teachers with useful information about patterns of participation and progress.

Importantly, this article does not position Solfy as a fully autonomous learning system. Rather, it is viewed as a tool whose educational effectiveness depends on teacher-led integration. This position is consistent with recent scholarship arguing that meaningful technology in music education should serve pedagogical and human goals, including accessibility, engagement, reflective practice, and the strengthening of existing musical relationships (Karkina et al., 2023).

Aim of the Study

The aim of this article is to propose and justify the educational use of Solfy in school music education and to outline a research design for examining its pedagogical value. More specifically, the article explores how Solfy may support singing development, early music literacy, student confidence, and continuity between classroom activity and home practice.

Research Questions

The following research questions are proposed:

1. How does the integration of Solfy into teacher-led classroom instruction influence students' singing development?
2. In what ways can Solfy support the early development of music literacy?
3. How does home practice with Solfy affect student confidence, motivation, and readiness for collective singing?
4. How do teachers perceive Solfy as a complement to traditional music education?

Method

Research Design

A suitable next step would be a mixed-methods pilot study. Such a design is appropriate because the educational use of Solfy concerns both measurable outcomes and lived pedagogical experience. Quantitative data might include pre- and post-assessments of selected musical skills, while qualitative data could include teacher observations, student questionnaires, and short interviews.

Participants

Participants could be drawn from one or more primary school classes, for example Grades 3–6. Ideally, a pilot study would compare an experimental group using Solfy alongside normal instruction with a comparison group receiving the same repertoire and classroom teaching without structured Solfy-supported home practice.

Procedure

The intervention could run for six to ten weeks. At the beginning of the study, students could complete an initial assessment focused on singing accuracy, rhythmic response, or basic notation recognition. During the intervention, the teacher would introduce songs and related musical material during regular classroom lessons using traditional pedagogical methods supported by Solfy as a presentation and practice aid. Students in the experimental group would then continue practicing at home through Solfy.

At the end of the intervention, students would complete a post-assessment. Teachers could also record observations about rehearsal efficiency, student confidence, and participation. Usage statistics from Solfy could help document the frequency and duration of home practice.

Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative data could include teacher observations, open-ended student responses, and brief interviews. Quantitative data could include pre- and post-test scores, number of recorded attempts, and platform usage indicators. Qualitative data could be analyzed thematically, while quantitative results could be compared descriptively and, if sample size permits, statistically.

Ethical Considerations

Because the study would involve school-aged children, informed consent from school authorities and, where necessary, parents or guardians would be required. Participant anonymity should be protected, and audio or usage data should be handled in accordance with institutional ethical standards.

Discussion

The case for Solfy rests on a simple but pedagogically important observation: many children need more guided musical repetition than classroom time alone can provide. If

the teacher's classroom work can be extended into a structured home environment, then singing and early music reading may become more stable, more individualized, and more continuous.

Solfy appears especially promising in three areas. The first is practice quality. Rather than leaving home practice vague and unsupported, the platform can offer specific musical tasks and immediate responses. The second is confidence-building. Students who can practice privately, repeat tasks, and hear themselves again may arrive in class more willing to participate. This aligns with scholarship showing the importance of autonomy, challenge, and positive self-perceptions in school singing experiences (Freer, 2025). The third area is teacher insight. When teachers can see how often students practiced and can listen to recordings or review progress indicators, they may be better able to differentiate instruction and plan subsequent lessons.

At the same time, caution is necessary. Not all reported benefits of digital music tools are equally strong, and positive engagement does not automatically translate into major performance gains. For this reason, Solfy should be evaluated through careful classroom-based research rather than only through anecdotal enthusiasm. A rigorous pilot study would be an important step toward identifying the conditions under which the platform most effectively supports student learning.

Conclusions

Solfy offers a promising model of technology-enhanced music education in which digital innovation remains subordinate to musical and pedagogical aims. Its potential lies in connecting teacher-led classroom instruction with structured home practice, thereby supporting repetition, self-evaluation, differentiated learning, and continuity of musical development.

For school music education, this matters because singing and music literacy are cumulative processes that benefit from frequent, guided engagement. A platform such as Solfy may help sustain that engagement beyond the classroom while preserving the teacher's central role in framing, interpreting, and humanizing the learning process. The next step is not simply wider adoption, but rigorous school-based research that can determine under what conditions Solfy most effectively supports students, teachers, and collective musical participation.

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Methods for developing skills in learning choral scores in future music teachers

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ABSTRACT: Professional training of future music teachers at university involves mastering conducting and choral performance. Success in studying choral works depends on students' ability to learn choral scores. The ability to analyse and understand musical notation affects the artistic value of the performed work. The aim of the study is to identify effective methods for developing the skills of future music teachers in learning choral scores, aimed at optimising the process of learning choral works. The main research methods are theoretical, empirical and statistical. After the experiment, effective methods for developing skills in learning choral scores by future music teachers were identified: the method of simultaneous recognition, the method of emotional and content analysis of the work, the algorithm of initial and detailed familiarisation with the score, the method of sketching works and concentrated reasoning. The application of these methods in the experimental group led to an increase in the number of students with average (+6.1%) and high (+4.2%) levels of proficiency in learning choral scores. The low level decreased by 8.3%. Analysis of the research results revealed a positive trend in the development of skills in learning choral scores among future music teachers, which indicates the effectiveness of the proposed methodology.

KEY WORDS: methodology; skills; choral score; professional training; music teacher;

Introduction

The current paradigm of arts education in Ukraine places high demands on the professional training of future music teachers. Their professional role is multifaceted, combining the functions of a teacher, choir director, performer and educator. One of the cornerstones of such a specialist's professional competence is the ability to work with choral scores – complex, multi-layered structures that require not only technical reading

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of the musical text, but also deep analytical understanding and artistic interpretation.

Many years of teaching experience in higher education institutions show that students often encounter difficulties when transitioning from the mechanical reproduction of notes to a holistic grasp of a piece's musical character. The process of mastering a score is often haphazard, which slows down the development of professional independence in future teachers. Consequently, there is an urgent need to develop and implement a comprehensive methodology that would systematise the stages of working on a choral piece and stimulate students' inner ear and analytical thinking.

The issue of choral conducting training for future music teachers has been addressed in the works of renowned methodologists and researchers such as Kozyr & Fedoryshyn (2023), Maltseva et al. (2025), Dite & Vavilkin (2025), and Thorgersen et al. (2016). Issues relating to the interpretation and analysis of musical scores are presented in the works of Pomerleau-Turcotte et al. (2023) and Kim-Boyle (2019). In particular, the article by Kozyr & Fedoryshyn (2023) states that "the performer must see absolutely everything in the author's text – the artistic content, phrasing, articulation, dynamics, terminology, and so on. All this helps to fulfil the main task of performance – to penetrate as deeply as possible into the creative intent of the composer and convey its artistic value to the performers" (p. 32). In the research study by Pomerleau-Turcotte et al. (2023) proposed an original strategy for sight-reading musical notation, based on the interconnection between human body movements and rhythmic and combined notation, as well as the correlation between musical knowledge and automatic skills with rhythm, pitch and combined notes. The researchers identified a classification of strategies that ensure successful sight-reading, including: 1) managing attentional resources; 2) decoding notation; 3) anticipating future content and potential difficulties; 4) using the body to perform the rhythm; 5) constructing mental representations of sounds and relying on them; 6) using musical knowledge; 7) relying on automatic skills (Pomerleau-Turcotte et al., 2023). At the same time, it has been experimentally proven that relying on automatic skills is the most effective prerequisite for a high-quality result.

In their work, Kim and Boyle (2019) developed a technology for creating an immersive effect, involving the use of generative three-dimensional notation to represent musical forms, which facilitates physical interaction with the score, in which the musical work is viewed as an emergent property of an open piece. However, despite a significant number of developments, the aspect of developing specific technological skills for mastering the score in the context of intensified learning requires further research and the development of effective methodologies to support this process.

Method

In the course of our research, we employed a comprehensive set of methods, including: theoretical methods – the study of specialist literature, analysis, synthesis,

comparison and modelling, which were used to develop an experimental methodology for fostering skills in the interpretation of choral scores; empirical methods – observation, interviews, surveys, questionnaires, testing, pedagogical experiments, and quantitative and qualitative analysis of research results; and methods of mathematical statistics, which enabled us to experimentally identify effective methods for developing skills in mastering choral scores among future music teachers.

Participants

A total of 124 students from higher education institutions – future music teachers specialising in Secondary Education (Arts. Music) – were involved in the experimental study. To ensure the quality of management and control over the course of all stages of the formative experiment, the optimal size of the representative sample of respondents in the control and experimental groups (62 respondents in each) was determined using a method of planned mechanical selection from the general population of the study. The age range of the experiment participants (19–21 years) is based on psychological research, in which this age is considered the most sensitive period for the optimal development of personal skills, in particular, the skills required to learn a choral score.

Instruments.

During the development of the diagnostic methodology, we analysed teaching materials and conducted a series of pedagogical micro-studies: discussions, interviews, and tests involving students and lecturers in choral conducting and choral music. Analysis of the responses revealed that in both study groups, the majority of students experienced difficulties in reading choral scores (52%), the vast majority carry out this type of activity under the guidance of a teacher (74%), and only a small percentage of future specialists are able to independently analyse the musical text, carry out an artistic and pedagogical analysis, and develop their own concept of artistic and expressive performance (12%).

To assess the actual level of proficiency in interpreting choral scores, experts were asked to complete the 'Expert Assessment Forms on the Correlation between Logical Balance and Emotional Intensity in the Performance of Choral Scores' that we had developed.

Procedure

The experimental task involved students performing pieces they had learnt independently – playing the choral score on an instrument. The experimenter and choral conducting tutors completed evaluation forms in accordance with the established criteria: the logical balance and emotional richness of the choral score performance, in line with the focus of the students' attention (internal and external).

The first criterion, relating to the focus of internal attention, is determined by the logical structure of the musical material, which was assessed according to the following

parameters: the focus of internal attention on reproducing the cohesive form of the musical work; the logical development of musical themes (parts of the score); adherence to the appropriate tempo; the reproduction of partial and overall climaxes; the correspondence of the instrument's sound to the dynamics of the piece. The assessment of the first criterion, in accordance with the focus of external performance attention, was carried out based on the presence of technical errors in the performance and was evaluated according to the following criteria: the maintenance of caesuras, pauses, long notes and fermatas; the absence of textual errors; and the complete execution of the choral score's texture.

The assessment of the second criterion – the emotional intensity of the choral performance in relation to the focus of attention – was carried out by measuring the representation of the work's figurative and emotional content, which was evaluated according to the following parameters: the focus of attention on the emotional rendering of the artistic image; 'deep immersion' in the artistic image; the vividness of the emotional palette in the portrayal of the characters of musical images; and the adequate reproduction of the emotional richness of the work's content. The assessment of the second criterion, based on the external focus of attention through manifestations of emotional experience of the image, was carried out according to the following parameters: personal emotional engagement with the piece; correspondence of the performer's movements to the content of the piece; expressiveness of the performer's gestures and facial expressions; and the artistry of the performance.

Following mathematical processing of the data using the formula: $(+X) + (-Y) : 8$, the average score of the expert panel members was calculated for the logical balance of the choral score – L – and for emotional intensity – E. The number of points awarded depends on the difference in the ratio of the indicators of logical balance (L) and emotional intensity (E), as well as on their qualitative characteristics ("+" or "-"). A high level (3 points) is awarded when both parameters are positive ("+") and the difference in the ratio between them ranges from +2 to +3 points. For example, parameters with numerical values where $L \text{ or } E \leq +3$ and $\geq +2$ are classified as a high level of balance in the ratio of logical deliberation and emotional intensity ($L=E$).

Values are classified as 'average' (2 points) when the L and E indicators, both with a '+' sign, are exactly equal to one another within the range of +1 to +1.9 (or with a margin of error of 0.3), as well as when one of the parameters L or E is of high quality (from +2 to +3) and has a significant advantage over the other, including when one of them may be of low quality, i.e. with a '-' sign. For example, $L=+2.6 > E=-1$, which in such cases indicates a significant advantage of logical balance over emotional intensity.

All other possible outcomes, where both the logical soundness (L) and emotional intensity (E) indicators receive a negative rating from the experts (from -3 to -1), as well as those yielding a zero result, are scored as 1 point (since the activity in question was

nevertheless carried out) and indicate a low level in the assessment of the indicator under study.

Results

Following the scoring process, the levels of proficiency in students' ability to interpret choral scores were determined using expert evaluation forms. Positive assessments in terms of logical balance and emotional richness were found in only 1.3% of students, who demonstrated high artistic ability and a harmonious balance in directing their attention both to the logic of the musical material and to the reproduction of the artistic image. Respondents in whom one of the specified parameters predominated – a focus on the accuracy of performing all nuances, performance technique, or concentration solely on the emotional reproduction of the artistic image (which in some cases made it difficult to maintain the tempo) – accounted for approximately 26.6%. Most future music teachers performed the piano scores with a significant number of errors and deviations from the tempo, indicating a lack of focus and a failure to convey both logic and emotion in their artistic interpretation. The group receiving low expert ratings comprised 72.1% of the respondents.

Discussion

The effectiveness of developing skills in interpreting choral scores depends directly on the systematic approach taken by the student: from preliminary theoretical analysis to vocal and choral intonation and conducting.

The foundation of any performance is the musical score of the work, without which performance is impossible. In our study, particular emphasis was placed on the initial stage of learning a choral work – working on the score (choral score). The development of skills for mastering the choral score among students in the experimental group was carried out in accordance with the structure of reading a choral score, which consisted of mastering the following stages: 1) a cursory acquaintance with the score (forming a general impression of the music and the main artistic images); 2) a detailed analysis of the choral work (a gradual immersion into the essence of the work); 3) the future conductor's engagement with the artistic performance concept of the work (the culmination of all previous work marks the final formation of the performance concept, the individual interpretation of the work and the plan for its realisation).

During the stage of familiarisation with the written text of the choral score, we employed the method of simultaneous recognition. Its implementation is based on the concepts of popular speed-reading techniques, grounded in the principles of systematic development of attention and sight-reading of musical works (Abdullah, 2018; Karim, 2022). Thanks to the capabilities of the human eye, a conductor, provided their attention is properly focused and their visual and auditory systems, vocal apparatus and cognitive processes are well-coordinated, is capable, within a few seconds, of perceiving,

“decoding” and generating into sound images (internal mental sound) a single page of a musical score (Golyk, 2000; Pomerleau-Turcotte et al., 2023). On this basis, it is important to be able to uncover the underlying meaning of the musical notation. Thus, the overall image is perceived as a simultaneous image of the successive process of musical sound (simultaneous – occurring at the same time (thinking along the vertical axis of the score), successive – unfolding over time (thinking along the horizontal axis of the score)) (Furtwängler, 1991). Taking into account that the musical text is the sign system of the work, the context is the ideal conception, the construction of thoughts and feelings, emotions, and the subtext is the actual image that should arise in the listener, the quintessence of their aesthetic experiences and philosophical conclusions (Golyk, 2000, p. 44), we can state that the speed of grasping the essence of an unfamiliar work at the stage of initial familiarisation with the choral score comprises several stages:

1. referential-communicative (“referat” – essay, overview; communication – means of conveying information);
2. logical-semantic (understanding the logical structure of the text);
3. expressive-semantic (musical notation, musical means of expression, performance markings);
4. emotional-expressive aspect (comprehension and personal experience of the composer’s emotional intent, one’s own attitude);
5. concluding section, the creation of the semantic subtext of the choral work.

The introduction of the method of simultaneous choral score recognition required a certain level of preparation on the part of the students. In choral conducting classes, the method of the attention-guiding algorithm was applied during the initial familiarization with the choral score. This algorithm involved directing students’ attention to a set of primary orientational operations, the performance of which during the perception and analysis of the work ensures the unfolding of the logic of the artistic concept of the choral work, as recorded in the musical text of the score. The proposed algorithm consisted of specific structural operational blocks, which focused attention on: 1) the poetic text and the exploration of its emotional and semantic content; 2) the musical form of the work; 3) musical means of expression (key, tempo, tessitura, characteristics of melody, rhythm, choral texture, dynamics, form, etc.); 4) performance characteristics of the work (the composition of the choir, performance difficulties).

In the process of mastering the algorithm for an initial familiarization with choral work, the analytical operations of analysis, synthesis, comparison and generalization were subordinated to the revelation of the work’s artistic and imaginative content. With logic actively at work, the emotional aspect of choral work took on a leading role, since the development of the emotional content of any musical work is always subject to a certain logic. A semantic analysis of the text helped to develop the students’ understanding of

the choral work's content, the composer's creative intent, and the logical justification for the emotional interpretation of an individual performance concept.

During the initial familiarization with the score of a choral work, the ability to sight-read musical notation is one of the most important skills for a music teacher's future professional practice. Surveys of students revealed that insufficient attention is paid to the development of this skill during the learning process. Therefore, in choral conducting classes with students in the experimental group, various practical exercises were carried out to practice sight-reading (of musical scores):

- playing the musical parts of some choir sections whilst the others are sung;
- singing the choir parts from the score, reading both the vertical and horizontal lines;
- singing the melodic line of the piece as it appears in different voices;
- alternating between mental reading (singing in one's head) and singing one of the choral parts;
- playing the score whilst highlighting one of the choral parts.

The systematic application of these modifications to the reading of choral scores helped students develop the ability to reproduce all sections of a choral work with the appropriate nuances (either mentally or aloud) and to cultivate their musical and aural perception. The pedagogical effectiveness of this method of score learning in our study was complemented by the method of mental reading of choral works. In our work with a group of students during classes in the "Choral Class and Practical Work with a Choir" course, we expanded the scope of the pedagogical impact of this method.

In the context of our study, the method of sight-reading was aimed at the collective development of skills for learning the score of a choral work. During the collective reading of the choral parts of an unfamiliar choral work, under the direction of the conductor (teacher, student). The piece was performed collectively from start to finish through the piecemeal reproduction of choral parts by various groups of performers: choristers singing a single voice, or a group of choristers singing one part, two or more parts, or the accompanist. All of them performed the score following the conductor's gestures at the indicated points. The students performed the rest of the choral piece by singing internally, whilst paying attention to what was happening at that moment in the performance. This method helps to develop aural skills in combination with simultaneous visual perception and analytical processing of information.

In our study, the method of mastering the algorithm for the detailed analysis of choral works proved to be of methodological value. Its essence lay in enabling students to acquire an algorithm for performing analytical operations in a specific sequence. When analysing the musical score, students provided clear answers: what idea and content the literary text conveys; by what means of musical expression the composer recreates the musical image; which artistic devices most accurately convey the work's content in actual

performance; and what technical difficulties may arise in the process of realising the ideal performance concept. By following this sequence of analytical operations, students acquired the skills to independently analyse the text of a choral work.

During the implementation of the operations in the algorithm for the detailed analysis of a choral work, the method of concentrated reasoning was applied. Initially, with the help of the teacher's questions (and subsequently on their own), the students identified ever new characteristics of musical and expressive means, their artistic and functional significance, and the possibilities for their realisation in performance interpretation. Subsequently, this activity took on an independent character and became a personal skill of the future music teacher.

An additional method for developing skills in interpreting choral scores is the method of emotional and semantic analysis of a musical work. Its distinctive feature lies in a holistic analysis aimed at uncovering the overall meaning of the work by identifying discrete, meaningful elements, revealing the connections between them and determining the nature of these connections, that is, by identifying intermediate meanings.

With the aim of developing skills in reading choral scores, we have employed a method involving the simultaneous reading of several pieces, based on the human mind's ability to 'be present in several information streams at once' (Volkova, 2006, p. 102). The pedagogical value of this method lies in its ability to expand the scope, stability, distribution and shifting of students' attention. This significantly stimulates the development of the skill of quickly orienting oneself within an information stream and simultaneously evaluating it.

At the initial stage of learning the method of sight-reading multiple pieces, students analysed short choral miniatures or excerpts from works of varying styles simultaneously. In our research, we employed methodological techniques aimed at developing performance attention whilst familiarising students with the choral score. Among these techniques, the following are particularly effective: comparing objects based on similarity, comparing objects with varying degrees of similarity, and introducing an additional criterion for comparison (Volkova, 2006). By working on the students' attention, we were able to direct it towards important features of the musical text – the form of the piece, its modal and tonal characteristics, phrasing, dynamics, text and much more.

We obtained the results regarding the perception of the artistic and imaginative content of a choral work by having students record their views in written annotations. In these, the respondents outlined not only the logic behind the reproduction of the work's text, but also their emotional response to the work. Subsequently, the development of these skills depended on the gradual increase in the complexity of the tasks – an increase in the number of works, an improvement in the quality of their analysis, whilst gradually optimising the time spent.

In the process of familiarising students with many choral scores, a method of sketching out works was introduced, which has become widely used in the context of piano pedagogy. According to Padalka (2008), "when working on a sketch, the student should gain an understanding of the content of artistic images, grasp the general character of the artistic work, and identify the specific features of the use of artistic means of expression; at the same time, they are not required to analyse the work thoroughly, study it in depth, or work through it meticulously in detail" (p. 132). This method has been adapted to suit the ways in which school choirs learn the musical notation of choral songs: sight-reading the melody (playing or singing) and the accompaniment; performing simultaneously (sight-reading the music) the vocal part and the instrumental accompaniment; simultaneous performance (sight-reading) of the melody by voice and conducting of the entire piece and accompaniment; simultaneous singing of the melody (sight-reading of the musical notation) and conducting of the other voices, etc.

The increased use of analytical approaches to the study of choral scores, a systematic pedagogical approach, and the application of various teaching methods and techniques have contributed to the systematic development of skills in interpreting choral scores as part of the professional training of future music teachers.

Conclusions

The theoretical rationale and experimental validation of the developed methodology for fostering skills in the interpretation of choral scores among trainee music teachers are based on a comprehensive combination of analytical, performance-based and creative components. Analysis of the results of the assessment tests has enabled the identification of the most effective methods and techniques for developing skills in reading choral scores, including: the method of simultaneous recognition of choral scores; the method of directing attention during initial familiarisation with a choral score; the method of mental reading of choral works; the method of mastering the algorithm for detailed analysis of choral works; the method of concentrated reasoning; the method of emotional and semantic analysis of a musical work; the method of simultaneous reading of several works; the method of sketching out works.

As a result of applying these methods, the number of students in the experimental group with an average level (from 35.4% to 41.5%) and a high level (from 21.3% to 25.5%) of proficiency in learning choral scores increased. The number of students with a low level decreased by 8.3% (from 42.3% to 34%). Thus, analysis of the research results revealed a positive trend in the development of skills for mastering choral scores among future music teachers – the participants in the experimental group. This indicates the effectiveness of the proposed methodology, as well as the efficacy and effectiveness of the tested methods, which, overall, ensure the optimisation of the study and performance of choral works.

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Enescu's Romanticism - the stylistic hallmark of the Romanian violin sonata of the early 20th century: Stan Golestan, Sonate en mi bemol majeur pour Piano et Violon (analytical study for a deeper interpretation)

Augustina Florea^a

ABSTRACT: The affinities of the Romanian composition with the French musical School, initiated at the end of the XIX century through the creation of George Enescu's youth, are to be intensely manifested in the first decades of the XX century in the creative attempts of several Romanian composers.

This attachment to the European tradition, rooted in the spirit of the Parisian artistic climate, is also eloquently manifested in the creation of the Romanian composer established in Paris, Stan Golestan (1875-1956), is of the *Schola cantorum*, disciple of outstanding musicians such as Vincent d'Indy, Albert Roussel and Paul Dukas.

Prodigious composer, author of symphonic, chamber, choral creations, etc., he inscribed a distinct tab in the history of the Romanian violinist sonata genre only through one work-the first work in the chronology of the genre in the twentieth century: *Sonate en mi bemol majeur pour Piano et Violon* composed in the years 1906-1908 in Paris, dedicated to his teacher ("*À mon Maître Vincent d'Indy*"). The Sonata was performed for the first time, as identified on the reverse of the title sheet of the score, on 15 February 1908 by George Enescu and Maurice Dumensnil.

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Introduction

Enescu's early works – a distinct phenomenon in European Romantic art

The creative experience accumulated in the musical legacy of the forebears of Romanian composition, drawing from the sources of local folklore as well as from the masterpieces of European academic music, finds its full realization in the dazzling emergence of George Enescu's early works, in particular, his first sonatas for violin and piano. Composed at the end of the 19th century within the artistic milieu of Paris (in 1897—Op. 2, No. 1; and in 1899—Op. 6), they express the young composer's aspirations toward the European musical phenomenon, affirming the primary path toward universality through the continuity of the Romantic tradition. The approach to the creative ideas of musical Romanticism, which undoubtedly determines the aesthetic dominance of the aforementioned works, is centered on the genre model of the Romantic sonata conceived through his own compositional thinking, whose unmistakable charm—as noted by his compatriot, also settled in Paris, Stan Golestan—is marked by "the reverie and melancholy of the Romanian sensibility." (Cosma, 1988, p. 455)

It is precisely from the perspective of this stylistic symbiosis that Enescu's work stands out as a unique artistic phenomenon in European music, revealing, in the opinion of the renowned musicologist Clemansa Liliana Firca, "the romantic effusion, the expansiveness of the solo singing—shaped somewhere between cantilena and declamation—the richness and fullness of the harmonic language, the cyclical structure of Franckian lineage" (Firca, 1974, p. 33), all of which give voice to "the nostalgic lyricism of Romanian doina singing" (Firca, 1974, p. 33). In this regard, the researcher notes "features that not only set Enescu's works apart within the local compositional landscape, but also define them as a unique case within European Romantic and Late Romantic art itself" (Firca, 1974, p. 33).

In her investigation of this artistic phenomenon, she defines it through the concept of "Enescu-style Romanticism," a term subsequently adopted by several Romanian authors, who continue to analyze its characteristic features. Thus, in Adrian Rațiu's study, the phenomenon is identified through "the musical construction (...) with a programmatic foundation derived from Berlioz and Liszt, the Wagnerian technique of leitmotifs, and Franck's cyclical principle" (Rațiu, 1968, p. 205). Valentina Sandu-Dediu evaluates this artistic phenomenon as a complex, multifaceted one, recognizing "Enescu's Romanticism" as a consequence of the assimilation of the Viennese Classical tradition (formal balance, Beethovenian polyphony), of certain principles from Brahms (Romantic lyricism and massive construction), Wagner (chromatic harmony), or Franck (the principle of cyclical thematic development). It is a mature, synthetic style in which the melody bears an

original imprint: though not folkloric, it denotes subterranean, ineffable connections with Romanian melos, and its association with the rhythmic aspect suggests the improvisation and lyricism of the doina. It is interesting and significant how the combination of French and German influences operates in Enescu's work to establish a Romanian musical language, without altering its distinctiveness" (Sandu-Dediu, n.d., p. 4).

And according to musicologist Laura Vasiliu, this concept reveals "the image of the creator discovering himself within the romantic vein of Romanian spirituality" (Vasiliu, 2007, p. 92). She argues that "the type of synthesis shaped in Enescu's work (...) through the incorporation of traditional and modern, national and universal elements" (Vasiliu, 2007, p. 89) is expressed in their assimilation through a compositional attitude and approach that is "specifically Romantic – essentially subjective" (Vasiliu, 2007, p. 89). In this context, the author considers significant "the accumulation of purely Romantic artistic means (culminating dramaturgy, the cyclical structure of the work, the primary function of melody, direct or implied programmatism), with those derived from the incorporation of folklore (the rhapsodic character, the coloristic function of modal harmony) and with neoclassical features (the emphasis on formal coherence, imitative polyphonic techniques)" (Vasiliu, 2007, p. 90). In particular, the musicologist emphasizes that throughout his entire creative output, in the process of applying the "innovations of the first half of the 20th century" (Vasiliu, 2007, p. 89) "his belief in the sincerity of expression and the subjectivity of his vision shine through clearly in every work, regardless of the techniques used" (Vasiliu, 2007, p. 90).

In tracing the origins of Enescu's Romanticism—eloquently manifested in the musical style of the composer's early violin sonatas—it is important to emphasize that these works, long celebrated as masterpieces of the global concert repertoire, played a defining role in the international recognition of Romanian classical music. At the same time, these works hold significant importance in the development of the violin-and-piano sonata genre in the works of Romanian composers.

The Romantic affiliation, expressed through Enescu's conception of Romanticism, is strikingly evident in the violin sonata by Stan Golestan (1875–1956), the Romanian composer whose entire career unfolded in direct contact with European musical art, as he was based in Paris, studied at the *Schola Cantorum*, and became a disciple of renowned musicians such as Vincent d'Indy, Albert Roussel, and Paul Dukas (Golestan, *Wikipedia*).

In France, he had enjoyed a highly successful career, establishing himself as a prodigious composer in various musical genres, writing numerous symphonic, chamber, choral, instrumental, and vocal works, etc., becoming a member of the SRC (Society of Romanian Composers) in Bucharest and of SACEM (Société des Auteurs, Compositeurs et Éditeurs de Musique) in Paris. At the same time, for over two decades he served as a professor of composition at the École Normale de musique, giving lectures in England, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Romania, etc., He also worked as a music critic, writing a

column in *Le Figaro*, founding the magazine *L'Album Musical*, and publishing articles in *România muzicală*, *Muzica*, *Rampa*, *Larousse Illustre*, *Le Soir* etc.¹ Thus, Stan Golestan, ranking among the most prominent figures in French musical culture, became known not only in Paris - the city that launched his career - where he made a name for himself through his compositions and the concerts he organized and conducted; but, at the same time, he was equally appreciated in other European countries, and even in China, where he earned the applause of music-loving audiences.

Although he lived in the French capital for six decades, Golestan remained deeply attached to his homeland, following in the footsteps of George Enescu both in continuing the Romantic tradition and in drawing on Romanian folklore, while actively promoting Romanian art in Western circles. Among his most acclaimed works are *Symphony in G minor in Romanian style*, *Romanian Rhapsody No. 1*, *Romanian Concerto* for Violin and Orchestra, the symphonic poem "*Dâmbovița*", the *Moldavian Concerto* for Cello and Orchestra, *10 folk-style songs on poems* by M. Eminescu, *Sleepy Little Birds* for voice, flute, and piano, on poems by M. Eminescu (in his own French translation), etc. Thus, Golestan's works are imbued with the freshness of folk melodies, which soothed his homesickness and, when set against the structural rigors of Western music, infused his entire oeuvre with life, lending it a distinctive picturesque quality. From this perspective, the Parisian newspaper *Le Monde* compares S. Golestani's work to "a suite of paintings in varied colors, yet in which even the brightest hues reveal a touch of nostalgia" (Stan Golestan, muzicianul care a promovat doinele românești în Europa).

The same stylistic affinities can be detected in other works as well, but particularly in his only sonata for violin and piano, through which Stan Golestan managed to carve out a unique place in the history of Romanian violin music. *Sonate en Mi bémol majeur pour Piano et Violon* (Golestan, 1919), composed between 1906 and 1908 in Paris, is his earliest work, yet also the most representative in terms of Romantic influences, exhibiting, in particular, significant associations with Enescu's Romanticism. Marking a genre debut in the chronology of 20th-century chamber music in the Romanian region, the Sonata pays homage to his teacher Vincent d'Indy, with the dedication "*À mon maître Vincent d'Indy*" noted on the score (Ex. 1).

As C. L. Firca notes, Golestani's work reveals clear "influences of French Romanticism – even to the point of borrowing – in the musical motifs and chord progressions, drawn from the music of Franck" (Firca, 1974, p. 33). And O. L. Cosma quotes an article published in the Parisian press after the premiere of the Sonata, in which it is described as "a spiritual great-granddaughter (...) of the serene César Franck" (Cosma,

¹ For his prolific body of work and his many achievements, Stan Golestan has been honored with numerous awards and distinctions, including: the George Enescu First Prize for Composition, the Verley Prize from the Golschmann Concert Society in Paris, and the French Legion of Honor in the rank of Officer

1988, p. 470) . However, the article also praises the artistic value of the work, as well as the creative maturity of the composer, who demonstrates his attachment to Romanian culture: "With a solid structure, this work, among the most significant to have emerged from the pen of a Romanian composer, (...) reveals a well-defined musical personality, a personality that betrays its Romanian origins in certain passages" (Cosma, 1988, p. 470).

A work of impressive concertante scope, Stan Golestan's Sonata was premiered by George Enescu² together with Maurice Dumensnil³ on February 15, 1908, during an artistic soirée; the reverse side of the score's title page bears the inscription: "Premiere performance in Paris by M.M. Georges Enesco and Maurice Dumesnil at the Art Evening on February 15, 1908" (Figure 1):

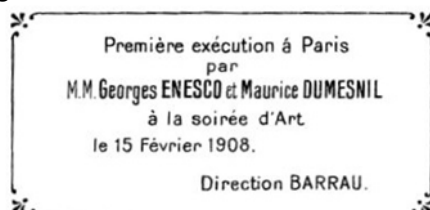


Figure 1. The reverse side of the score's title page

Stan Golestan's Sonata – a pioneering achievement in 20th-century Romanian violin music

A work of pronounced romantic sentimentality, the *Sonata in Es-dur for Piano and Violin* features a musical language marked by transparent echoes of the music of the great figures of European Romanticism – with Wagnerian and, in particular, Franckian influences, and a cyclical structure achieved through "wandering" intonations, with coloristic effects, enharmonic modulations, and other expressive devices that signal the phenomenon of an undeclared program. At the same time, however, the work's artistic style reveals a striking connection to the rhythmic-intonational substrate of Romanian folk music.

The work is structured in a three-part form following the traditional fast-slow-fast sequence: *Allegro energico* – *Andante sostenuto* – *Allegro animato*, and is preceded by an

² Toward the end of his life, while in poor health, S. Golestan sent a letter to the editorial office of the Parisian journal „Le Guide du Concert” (now preserved in the archives of the “George Enescu” National Museum), which served as a tribute to George Enescu: “thus paying tribute to the memory of the great figure of music, of the profound soul, whom I knew and admired” (Sârbu, n.d.). Recalling in the letter two moments in his life that had left a lasting impression on him, he first mentioned the occasion when his young compatriot gave the world premiere of the Sonata for Piano and Violin (Sârbu, n.d.).

³ Maurice Dumensnil (1884-1974) – French pianist, graduate of the Paris Conservatory (Isidor Philipp's piano class), scholar and researcher of Claude Debussy's piano works, to whom he dedicated his studies: «Comment jouer et enseigner Debussy», «Claude Debussy, Master of Dreams» etc. (Dumesnil, Wikipedia).

extended section, *Introduction* (33 m.), consisting of several alternating sections with contrasting motifs.

The sonata begins in the piano's low register, against the backdrop of the E-flat tonic note, played across three octaves with an intense *fff* dynamic, featuring strong accents and multiple repetitions over long durations, thus creating the auditory illusion of prolonged bell tolls and establishing the sonic context for the opening of a passionate and dramatic pianistic discourse in the Romantic spirit. This impassioned oration, "delivered" with iambic rhythmic organization, "clad" in a dense chordal texture, "perforated" sporadically by eighth-note rests, powerfully encodes an *interrogative* intonation. Externalized on the ascending major third intervals (I-II-III), with the repetition of the peak note ($es^2-f^2-g^2-g^2$), syntactically isolated by "breathing"-pauses, and insistently developed throughout the section, this intonation takes on the function of a semantic element of masterful imagery (Ex. 1):

A mon Maître VINCENT d'INDY

SONATE

EN MI b MAJEUR

I

INTRODUCTION

STAN GOLESTAN

pour Piano et Violon

Allegro energico

Ex.1. S. Golestan, Sonata, *Introduction*, m. 1-6.

The artistic significance of this intonation is specifically examined in researcher Iurie Gabay's study, which explores the psychological portrait of the romantic hero:

„The «motif of interrogation» has a symbolic content in Romanticism (...), giving it the meaning of a vector oriented beyond the limits of a «text» and beyond the boundaries of art (...); in fact, Romanticism is an «unanswered question»" (Gabay, 1987, p. 27).

The rhetoric of the discourse suddenly disappears, and in the ninth measure a contrasting episode (*Andantino*, 3/4) begins, featuring a plaintive melody in the violin part, which descends within the range of a tritone (c^2-fis^1), indicating, through the marking *p*, *espressivo*, the expression of emotions of tenderness and affection (Ex. 2):



Ex. 2. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. I, m. 9-12.

The third thematic motif in the Introduction (m. 23), in a quasi-Wagnerian style and sustained in Adagio tempo, is also presented in the violin part; its interpretation, suggested by the *molto espress.* marking, conveys the meditative and sombre character of the melody, and the romantic spirit is accentuated by the interweaving of tritone intervals (d^1-as^1 , ces^3-f^2) with *interrogative* intonations. These are complemented by descending motivic endings in semitones (es^2-d^2 , ges^2-f^2) in the violin's melodic line; at times these are also imitated on the piano (ces^2-b^2). These motifs, which also carry an allegorical connotation, express, as noted by the author cited above, the striving toward the unattainable romantic ideal, ultimately becoming a "*striving toward the impossible*" (Габай, 1987, p. 16). In this context, the researcher addresses the issue of *romantic pessimism*⁴, elucidating the symbolism of another type of intonation – intonations with a *lamenting* semantic connotation (Ex. 3):



Ex. 3. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. I, m. 23-27.

The first movement, Allegro risoluto, Es-dur, 2/4, *f*, in sonata form, is structured around the contrasting imagery of two themes. The main theme (m. 34) begins with great verve in the violin part, possessing a majestic, energetic, and exalted character, with the opening motif ascending by a minor sixth (g^m-es^1), from the third degree (g^m) to the first

⁴ In addressing the issue of romantic pessimism, Iu. Gabay refers to Chateaubriand's striking antinomic statement: "We are disappointed without ever having known delight; we burn with desire, yet are already devoid of illusions. Imagination is wonderful and thrilling; existence – gloomy and desolate. We live with a full heart in a hollow world, and even before we have had our fill of anything, we are already bored with everything." (Gabay, 1987, p. 13).

(es^1), then – at a minor tenth interval (g^m-b^1) – toward the fifth degree (b^1), highlighted melodically by the addition of the lowered sixth degree (ces^2), and rhythmically through syncopation (m. 6) and anacrusic cells (mm. 1–2, 3–4). However, the “alertness” of the melodic line is “braked” in the accompaniment by the insistent repetition of the motif framed within a fourth range—versatily shaped ($es^m-d^m-es^m-fis^m-g^m-f^m$), with the mobility of the second degree (fis^m/f^m), forming an augmented second in the ascending direction (es^m-fis^m). The perpetual use of altered degrees (m. 1, 3, 5), the interweaving of syncopated rhythmic patterns (mm. 2, 4) or anacrusic cells (mm.2-3, 4-5) lends the pianistic discourse certain intonational-rhythmic affinities with folk music, particularly



with folk dance tunes (Ex. 4):

Ex. 4. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. I, m. 34-40.

The dynamic build-up and gradual rise in pitch lead to a tense moment (m. 63, *animato*, *ff*), with the melodic lines of the violin and piano parts unfolding in two octaves (Ex. 5):



Ex. 5. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. I, m. 63-66.

The secondary theme (m. 77, *Allegretto non troppo*, marked *espress. dolciss.*, *p*), in the key of *G-dur*, also presented on the violin, derives intonally from the violin theme of the *Andantino, Introduction* (Ex. 2). With a tritone range, it evolves through ascending sequences, standing in “contrast” to the *ostinato*-like movement with sixteenth-note durations in the accompaniment. Thus, descending intonatively from the introductory section, TS is metrically modified into duple meter, and the “percussive” background of the pianistic figurations, which support the development of the respective theme, suggests the sound of cimbalom jingles in folk orchestras (Ex. 6):



Ex. 6. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. I, m. 77-82.

The clash of these two elements leads to a developmental phase, after which the thematic subject returns (m. 109) in a new visual (*animato*, *ff*, *passione*) and tonal guise (in *a-moll*, a tritone away from the main key – *Es-dur*). Developed in the piano part with parallel octaves, it gains volume, firmness, and confidence (Ex. 7):



Ex. 7. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. I, m. 109-114.

The treatment (m. 137) begins in *b-moll* with the presentation of the counterpoint from the thematic section (Ex. 4) – in the piano's lower register (m.s., *una corda*), with abrupt articulation (*sf*), octave doubling, and the time signature changed from duple to triple (recalling the meter of some folk hora dances), accompanied by tumultuous iambic motifs (m.d.), against the backdrop of the *fis*¹(Ex. 8):



Ex. 8. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. I, m. 137-143.

The tonal shift (*g-moll, es-moll, e-moll* with the fourth degree raised) leads to the major key of *E-dur* (*Allegretto molto moderato*), in which the thematic material appears in augmented form (2/2) and in a dialogic presentation, with the violin part marked *dolce e tranquillo* (Ex. 9), then – *espress., molto dolce* (Ex. 10):



Ex. 9. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. I, m. 168-173.



Ex. 10. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. I, m. 176-180.

As the dialogue continues, the violin's melodic line evolves toward the section marked *poco animato* (Ex. 11), in which the *interrogative* intonation from the *Adagio, Introduction* (Ex. 3) is interwoven, modified so that the tritone interval is accentuated through augmentation (m. 183: es^2-a^1), then through an ascending extension up to a diminished octave (m. 185: a^1-as^2), simultaneously amplifying the sonic intensity and emotional tension of the instrumental discourse – *cresc. e passione* (Ex. 11):



Ex. 11. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. I, m. 182-186.

The melody then unfolds in an ascending sequence, with dynamic and temporal progression, reaching a climax in the main key of *Es-dur*, where the recapitulation begins (*Allegro risoluto, ff*). The presentation of the theme in the violin part, two octaves higher, with octave doubling, the volume increased to *ff*, supported by the pianistic counterpoint – which is also in parallel octaves – conveys an image of vigor and vehemence (Ex. 12):



Ex. 12. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. I, m. 207-213.

The secondary theme, in both of its tonal versions, is transposed a minor third upward from the exposition (*G-dur/a-moll*) to *B-dur/c-moll*, thereby enhancing its lyrical expressiveness (Ex. 13–14):



Ex. 13. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. I, m. 249-254.



Ex. 14. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. I, m. 281-287.

The movement returns to the main key, with the tempo and dynamics slowing down (*dim. e rall., ppp*). The movement concludes with a coda, which begins in the secondary key, *F-dur* (*Andantino quasi allegretto molto, pp*), with a theme derived from

the augmented counterpoint (2/2) of the main theme, presented on the piano (m.d., *una corda*) against a backdrop of sustained violin tones c^1 (Ex. 15):



Ex.15. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. I, m. 320-324.

Later (m. 350), the tritone motif from the *Adagio* theme in the *Introduction* (Ex. 3) suddenly enters the violin part with a striking dynamic contrast (*Allegro animato, subito presto, ff*)—in an ascending sequence ($f^1 - ces^2$; $as^1 - d^2$; $h^1 - f^2$), with excessive volume and an emphasis on the *interrogative* intonation, heightening the emotional tension and passionate character (Ex. 16):



Ex. 16. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. I, m. 350-356.

Part II, Andante sostenuto, c-moll, 4/4, is structured as a set of free variations, preceded by a brief piano introduction (m. 1–4), consisting of two motifs that convey an *interrogative* tone (derived from the *Adagio* theme, *Introduction*⁵); and the *fermata* on the high notes of the motifs (m.2 - e^1 ; m.4 - as^1) emphasizes the sense of *inquiry* (Ex. 17): The introductory passage is followed by a violin theme (m. 5, *molto espressivo*), which begins with a laconic intonation (mm. 5–6) played on the G string, shaped by two

⁵ At the same time, one can also discern connections to the theme in the Introduction to Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde*.



Ex. 17. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. II, m. 1-4.

The introductory passage is followed by a violin theme (m. 5, *molto espressivo*), which begins with a laconic intonation (m. 5–6) played on the G string, shaped by two descending motifs a minor second apart ($es^1 - d^1$, $as^m - g^m$), accented and highlighted by the rhythmic pattern (doubles–quavers). The plaintive and somber character of the motifs, clearly associated with *lamentative* semantics, determines the imagery of the movement; and this theme constitutes its architectural cornerstone (*nucleus*) (Ex. 18):



Ex. 18. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. II, m. 5-9.

Later in the same violin part, the introductory theme of the movement (m. 17) – first presented in the piano part – returns; here it is more musically developed through the expansion of phrases and range, an increase in tempo and dynamics, evolving from *Andante sostenuto*, *p* to *poco animato*, *cresc.*, *f* (Ex. 19)



Ex. 19. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. II, m. 17-22.

This approach leads to a variation on the main theme, which is played on the piano with the marking *dolce*, *pp*, “enveloped” – almost beyond recognition – in triplet figurations (Ex. 20):



Ex. 20. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. II, m. 30-33.

In the same movement, a melodic theme appears (*Andantino*, *p*), which is then taken up by the violin (Ex. 21):



Ex. 21. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. II, m. 44-49.

Throughout this passage, one can hear the intonation of the movement’s main violin theme (Ex. 18), which is now shifted to the violin’s upper register, with a continuous increase in dynamics (*f*, then *sf*), conveying a sense of agitation and restlessness thanks to the turbulent figurations in the piano part (Ex. 22):



Ex. 22. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. II, m. 52-57.

An intense tonal flow accompanied by a surge in volume, culminating in *ff* and *sf*, followed by a pause with *fermata* (m. 65), signals the transition to the next variation of the main theme. Presented in the piano part, in three parallel octaves, *ff*, it continues, after a major dynamic contrast – from *ff* to *pp* – in the violin part (*Tranquillo e quasi andantino*, *pp*), supported in the accompaniment by the “rustling” of the “whispering” figurations (Ex. 23):



Ex. 23. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. II, m. 65-68.

Later, in the upper register of the piano, the augmented motif of the main theme emerges (Ex. 24):



Ex. 24. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. II, m. 73-75.

Next comes the development of the initial intonations of the theme (Ex. 25):



Ex. 25. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. II, m. 83-86.

Then they come together in *stretto* – violin / piano / violin / piano (Ex. 26):



Ex. 26. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. II, m. 87-90.

The tonal progression builds toward the climax of the second movement (in Esdur, m. 93), where the coda begins – initiated by the development of the of the main theme, marked *ff, con passione*, with instrumental doubling in octaves, against a backdrop of frenetic passages (Ex. 27):



Ex. 27. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. II, m. 93-96.

In the violin part features echoes of the phrasing from the *Andantino, Introduction*, marked *con sordine, molto espress. e delicato*, presented in an augmented form (Ex. 28):



Ex. 28. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. II, m. 109-111.

Immediately following in the same movement comes the initial phrase of the main theme – in the upper register, with a major modal character and marked "*più forte e con colore*" (Ex. 29):



Ex. 29. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. II, m. 115-119.

The theme continues, appearing at the same pitch in the solo piano part (Ex. 30):



Ex. 30. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. II, m. 122-123.

Immediately, in the main key of *c-moll*, the *Andantino*, *Introduction* theme, returns once again, but now played softly at *pp*, and the tempo slows to *Largamente* (Ex. 31):



Ex. 31. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. II, m. 124-126.

The movement concludes with the main theme in its original violin version, in which the *lamenting*, descending half-step motif – “sigh” ($es^1 - d^1$, $as^m - g^m$) with its gradual fading is imitated in the piano part (mm. 135–136) and repeated multiple times on the violin. The tonic appears after an extreme dynamic contrast of *fff* – *ppp* (Ex. 32):



Ex. 32. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. II, m. 135-143.

Part III, Allegro animato, Es-dur, 6/8, in sonata form, with a prominent concertante character, is preceded by an introduction structured as an instrumental dialogue consisting of alternating solo passages for piano (m. 1–5, *con fantasia*, *ff*) and violin (m. 5–8, *con fantasia animato quasi recitativo*). Its intonations, showing affinities with the *Recitativo-Fantasia* from C. Franck's Violin Sonata, also suggest certain associations with Verdi's operatic melos (Ex. 33):



Ex. 33. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. III, m.1-8.

And the motif marked *Adagio espressivo* (m. 13), developed in the violin part and punctuated by pauses (with *fermata*), is a reminiscence of the key theme from the second movement (Ex. 34):



Ex. 34. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. III, m.13-15.

The progression of the music leads to the introduction of the main theme of the final movement (m. 22) – in the violin part (Es-dur, 6/8), marked *Allegro giocoso, p*, accompanied by oscillating figurations on the piano. This duet, arranged according to the *melody-with-accompaniment* principle and reminiscent of folk dance music, conveys the optimism of this folk genre, imitating the interpretive style of traditional folk musicians (Ex. 35):



Ex. 35. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. III, m. 22-26.

The secondary theme (m. 62, 9/8), imbued with light and serenity, unfolds in the key of E-dur in the violin part, reprising—through augmentation—the descending motif from the *Andantino, Introduction* theme (Ex. 2), which had already been presented in this manner in the second movement. The violin melody, marked *molto espress. e dolciss.*, unfolding against the arpeggiated backdrop of the accompaniment, reveals certain Wagnerian influences, evoking associations with the “fate motif” from *The Ring of the Nibelung* (Ex. 36):



Ex. 36. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. III, m. 62-67.

The conclusion, which begins in the piano part in *cis-moll* (m. 86, 6/8, *marcante*), and is then imitated by the violin in the dominant key, completes the imagery of the main theme, evolving into a prolific instrumental dialogue, unfolding against a backdrop of a torrent of sixteenth notes, “spilling” across all registers of the piano (Ex. 37):



Ex. 37. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. III, m. 86-90.

The treatment begins with the return of the secondary theme in the violin part (bar 103, *con passione e molto espressivo*); this melody unfolds over diminished rhythmic durations against an instrumental backdrop of polyphonic texture, highlighting a spectrum of lyrical images (Ex. 38):



Ex. 38. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. III, m. 103-108.

The shifting of the key (*c-moll, b-moll, es-moll, B-dur*), the acceleration of the tempo (from *meno mosso* to *animato*), the sustained *B* note over the course of 15 measures, the sonic avalanche (from *p* to *ff*, from *dolce espressivo* to *stringendo*) leads to the movement's climax: in the piano part – the D9 chord of the main key is insistently repeated across an oversized range of four octaves, with dotted anacrusic rhythmic cells, suggesting "fanfare" motifs; and in the violin part – ascending passages persist (in a diminished seventh range, with thirty-second note durations), interrupted on the final high note – thus clearly revealing the interrogative intonation (Ex. 39):



Ex. 39. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. III, m. 151-154.

The recapitulation begins with the return of the main theme in an instrumental duet featuring the doubling and metrorhythmic synchronization of the parts (Ex. 40):



Ex. 40. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. III, m. 155-162.

The secondary theme (m. 185) unfolds in the main key without any substantial changes. The conclusion follows in the key of *c-moll* (m. 219), followed by the transition section (m. 256), similar to the one preceding the recapitulation, but the marking *cresc., fortissimo* changes to *animato fortissimo* (Ex. 41):



Ex. 41. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. III, m. 256-259.

The movement concludes with a final section that intervenes (like a recapitulation) at a climactic moment (m. 260) – the coda begins with a variation on the piano counterpoint of the first theme – in augmentation, marked *Meno mosso e ben marquante*, *ff*, with doubling in both parts and *stretto* imitation (m.261) in the piano's lower register (Ex. 42):



Ex. 42. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. III, m. 260-261.

As a summary – an epilogue to the Sonata – there appears a reminiscence of the main theme from the finale, which is reworked in duple meter and performed with the marking *Largo, fff*, on both instruments in octave doubling; and the chordal texture of the

piano part suggests the effect of orchestral sonority, highlighting the solemn, majestic, and imposing character of the conclusion of this work (Ex. 43):



Ex. 43. S. Golestan, Sonata, p. III, m. 280-281.

Conclusions

An analytical study of Stan Golestan's Sonata in E-flat Major for Piano and Violin – the first work of its kind in the 20th century – convincingly demonstrates that the development of Romanian classical violin music during that period followed a path of stylistic alignment with the genre model of the Romantic sonata, which was interpreted through the aesthetic conception of Enescu's Romanticism, promoting a compositional mindset and a musical language.

At the same time, we can conclude that the Sonata under investigation, by assimilating the imagery-semantic characteristics and architectural principles specific to the sonata genre as defined within the Romantic tradition – conceived from the perspective of Enescu's compositional vision – places musical creation within the Romanian cultural sphere within the logical chain of the development of European musical art. As journalist Aida Vermont wrote in 1929: "Through Stan Golestan, young Romanian music is gaining a firm foothold in France and throughout the civilized world" ("Stan Golestan, muzicianul care a promovat doinele românești în Europa", n.d.).

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The Anatomy of Musical Thinking and the Architecture of Sonorous Consciousness: The Role of Musical Analysis in Cultivating Aesthetic and Cognitive Intelligence

Anca Sîrbu^a

ABSTRACT: Music addresses both the soul and the spirit, yet it is equally grounded in a profoundly intellectual process, whether we refer to creation or performance. The result of this interplay between the emotional and the rational is a complex phenomenon, to which we relate through a unique psychological impact, shaped by the deeply subjective nature of musical experience and of human nature itself. Nevertheless, there exist stable cognitive dimensions that delineate a set of parameters widely acknowledged as the fundamental framework underlying the realization of the musical act. The integrative discipline *Musical Analysis* provides a radiographic probing of these mechanisms that shape the structure upon which music is constructed, from its incipient stages to its final form, offering the musician a clear understanding of the internal architecture of a musical work and of the relationships among its constitutive elements. Through analysis, the student develops an advanced form of musical thinking, capable of integrating or projecting auditory experience from within the intimacy of the creative act directly into the consciousness of the listener. This mechanism transcends the status of a mere method, generating a psychological process that shapes both the approach to music and the cultivation of the musician's intellect, while also contributing to the psycho-emotional impact that gives rise to aesthetic experiences.

Thus, musical analysis models the anatomy of musical thinking and supports the formation of a mature, informed, and consciously assumed artistic identity.

KEYWORDS: musical analysis; neuroscience; musical thinking; aesthetic experience; cognitive processes; sonorous consciousness.

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Introduction

How do we perceive music, how do we come to understand it, and what determines this understanding?

Music is a **complex phenomenon** that addresses **human sensitivity**, yet it also encompasses a **profoundly cognitive dimension** involved in the three fundamental modalities of sonorous manifestation: creation, performance, and reception. Although it is perceived as a succession of events unfolding in time, its particular details often remain concealed from immediate consciousness. With the exception of extreme musical Aleatorism, any musical work is “projected” from one or several sonorous entities that emerge, evolve, mature, transform, and undergo continuous metamorphosis along a trajectory conceived from the very stage of the creator’s intention. This process generates what we call the structure of a musical work, which includes both the form through which the musical substance, infused with potentiality, becomes crystallized, and the broader directions in which the constitutive elements of musical language are developed. The understanding of this structure does not arise intuitively (although the function of its components may be intuited at this level), but rather through **musical thinking**, which cultivates the capacity to identify tonal or modal relationships, compositional schemes, types of musical textures, elements of musical syntax and morphology, and other such typologies.

Complementarily, the manner in which this radiographic probing of music is assimilated and integrated into the listener’s mind transforms auditory perception into a far more refined and complex experience. This is what we call the **architecture of sonorous consciousness**, representing the higher level of musical thinking, responsible for penetrating subtle nuances and for cultivating more elevated aesthetic sensibilities.

The primary instrument underlying these modes of perception and awareness of the sonorous dimension is **musical analysis**, through which one may uncover both the composer’s intentions and technical strategies, the internal relationships among components, as well as the function of each within the sonorous dramaturgy of the whole. Through this process, both **cognitive and aesthetic intelligence** are developed, refining musical taste and sensitivity to stylistic and semantic subtleties, and thereby enhancing the capacity for a conscious and profound appreciation of musical quality, as well as for a clear distinction between artistic value and non-value.

For this reason, Musical analysis, as a discipline of synthesis, may assume an essential role in both the intellectual and emotional perception of a musical experience capable of enriching and elevating the human spirit.

The Neurocognitive Foundation of Musical Thinking (Cartographic Mapping)

Performed music, lived in real time as an integrated sensory experience, has an implicit characteristic: beyond its sonorous dimension, it is also inherently visual, as clearly noted by Igor Stravinsky in *Poetics of Music* (Stravinsky, 1967, pp. 101–102). From the appearance of the performer to the organization of the acoustic space, from the gestures of musicians on stage in purely instrumental concerts to the staging of opera and ballet performances or contemporary multimedia experiences, musical perception generates a complex, syncretic experience.

Nevertheless, the phenomenon of reception through audio recordings, although significantly deprived of immediate visual coordinates and of the collective energy that fulfills meaning (and thus the very purpose of music), can still generate a multisensory perceptual process through the activation of memory, imagination, and already internalized perceptual schemas. As the British scholar Susan Hallam, a specialist in music psychology, observes: “When we listen to music, we rapidly and often unconsciously interpret a vast amount of information” (Hallam, 2019, p. 21). At an initial stage of engaging with a recording, Nicholas Cook argues that the listener does not perceive sound alone, but imagines the gesture that produced it; although the performer is not seen, the sound itself contains traces of the body – through breath, articulation, and other elements: “This applies even in phonographic listening: the signs of the body are encoded in sound and mapped by listeners onto their own bodies, resulting in a musical experience that is not only auditory but also visual, kinesthetic, and social” (Cook, Tiplea-Temeș, 2017, pp. 11–12).

This phenomenon thus constitutes the initial stage in the activation of brain activity during musical reception, in which a simple auditory stimulus already triggers processes of integration, association, and even anticipation, developing in proportion to the extent of one’s engagement with music (through listening, specialized reading, and related practices). The more complex the music, the more these processes stimulate increasingly sophisticated neural mechanisms of thought. The “good news”, as Hallam also notes, is that “there are only minor differences in the processing of music between those with specialized training and those without formal studies” (Hallam, 2019, p. 22).

In order to understand this more fully, it is necessary to penetrate the inner workings of this phenomenon. Although music unfolds in time as a succession of sonorous events, it is, as we know, realized through a complex synchronization of constitutive parameters. A single moment within a musical composition involves pitch, duration, harmonic color, intensity, and timbre, and only a few such configurations can generate relationships that convey velocity, a certain pulsation, contextual positioning (types of textures), and can give rise to typologies of sonorous dramaturgy (with consequences for form and genre) or systems of pitch organization. A cultivated musical thinking will further incorporate the contextual function of each structure. Moreover, in the case of programmatic music or music with text, the sonorous landscape demands an exceptionally distributed attention.

This superposition gives rise, at the neurocognitive level, to a continuous process of selection and organization of information. The brain does not process each element in isolation; rather, it activates instantaneous mechanisms of pattern recognition and integration into meaningful contexts, drawing upon memory and anticipation.

In practical terms, this process is so complex that it cannot be localized within a single brain region. As musician and cognitive neuroscience expert Daniel J. Levitin argues: "Musical activity involves nearly every region of the brain and nearly every neural subsystem" (Levitin, 2010, p. 99).

The **human brain** is composed of **two hemispheres** or, as the renowned educator Makoto Shichida describes them, "two different 'computers' operate within the brain... the left hemisphere is also referred to as the linguistic brain, while the right hemisphere – the imagistic brain" (Shichida, 2022, p. 89). The left hemisphere fulfills a conscious function, operating through a slower, analytical, and reason-based process grounded in logic and argumentation, and is also associated with communication (written, oral, or gestural). In contrast, the right hemisphere operates through a rapid, automatic, and synthetic process, based on intuition and the functions of the subconscious, being responsible for spatial awareness.

Although the left hemisphere is generally considered responsible for mathematical thinking and the right for the artistic domain, the observation made by the aforementioned author is particularly striking: "I once examined, using a PET scan, the brain activity of a music teacher while listening to classical music. I discovered that 80% of teachers listen to music using the left hemisphere" (Shichida, 2022, p. 92)¹

In this case, the explanation is related to the type of auditory ability (perfect or relative pitch) of the listener; however, our interest lies in the manner in which musical thinking migrates from one hemisphere to the other, as well as in their synchronization during activities involving musical processes. If we examine this more closely, from a strictly musical perspective, the left hemisphere processes structure, rhythm, and analysis; it is involved in the logical organization of music and supports pattern recognition (thus relating to musical thinking). The right hemisphere, on the other hand, processes pitch inflection, timbre, expressivity, and melodic contour, providing a global perception and aesthetic experience (thus relating to sonorous consciousness). In other words, the interaction between the two hemispheres allows for the integration of sonorous elements into a complete and coherent experience, in which analysis and aesthetic perception function complementarily.

Therefore, **musical activities** trigger an **integrated bilateral process** that can be

¹ The advanced stage reached by modern medicine provides scientific validation of the processes involved in the perception and integration of music, not only through electroencephalography (EEG), but also through techniques such as positron emission tomography (PET) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI).

associated with “the grounding of a neuro-perception, a neuro-aesthetics, and a neuro-semiology of music” (AthanasIU, 2003, p. 29).

Moving further into depth, each hemisphere is divided into four main lobes: frontal, parietal, temporal, and occipital.

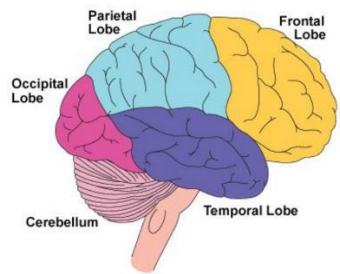


Fig. 1 The Anatomy of the Human Brain

Although generalizations can be made, the functional complexity of the brain’s lobes can neither be fully encompassed nor reduced to rigid cartographic mappings. Nevertheless, several broad directions may be outlined.

LOBE	GENERAL FUNCTIONS	MUSICAL FUNCTIONS
Frontal	Planning, organization, decision-making, movement, speech	Musical analysis, understanding armonic functions, phrasing
Temporal	Short-term memory, hearing	Pitch perception and timbre, interval recognition, identification of melodic contour
Parietal	Object recognition, spatial perception, information processing, interpretation of tactile sensations and pain, comprehension of spoken language	Awareness of sonorous textural planes and types of musical writing
Occipital	Visual information processing	Score reading, correlation of notation with the resulting sonority, visual representations of structural patterns

Fig. 2 Functions of the Brain Lobes

Although an attempt has been made to outline, in parallel, the musical functions fulfilled by the lobes of the human brain (Levitin, 2010, pp. 98–100), **most musical parameters**, such as melody, rhythm, harmony, or form, cannot be assigned to isolated regions, but instead **simultaneously engage multiple cognitive, auditory, and mnemonic processes**, integrated within a unified system.

Certainly, a specialized study of brain anatomy would further enrich this fascinating and not yet fully defined domain of neuroscience with numerous details. Nevertheless, it becomes almost axiomatic that interaction with music, from any perspective, results in a complex cerebral activity that stimulates and gives rise to musical thinking as a higher-order process of awareness and understanding of sonorous reality. The more elaborate the musical structures, the more intensively the cognitive mechanisms involved are engaged. Thus, **musical complexity** may become a **factor of neuronal stimulation**, and consequently of cognitive development, with an implicit effect on the enhancement of intellectual capacity, **refining aesthetic sensitivity** and cultivating a taste for expressive subtleties.

Musical Analysis – the “Synapse” Between Musical Thinking and Sonorous Consciousness (Radiographic Probing)

Following the stage of musical perception, the **process of understanding** begins **through analysis** and through the establishment of connections between constitutive elements. The awareness of a musical composition is achieved through a meticulous process of decomposition, recognition of its components, and the reconstruction of the universe shaped by the creator. At this point begins the higher stage beyond merely “hearing,” which transforms into active “listening” and, subsequently, into “understanding” the mechanisms through which the sonorous organism comes to life. The consequences of this process include the validation or invalidation of the work as an artistic value, its assumption as an aesthetic experience, its assimilation as a trigger for states and emotions, and its direct impact upon the individual at all levels of being.

By its very nature as a synthetic discipline (one that can only be practiced through the correlation of other specialized fields), musical analysis transcends its condition as a purely technical endeavor concerned with the investigation of patterns, schemes, systems, functions, syntaxes, or other formal “configurations.” It claims instead the role of **mediator between immediate perception**, sometimes sterile, often profane, **and the rational and aesthetic integration** of the sonorous phenomenon. Musical analysis, now understood as a higher form of consciousness, assumes the role of a “synapse,” transferring and transforming musical information from the intuitive substratum into that of a meta-conceptual framework capable of generating meaning, coherence, and authentic artistic value.

In order to better understand the extent to which the brain is stimulated through

the process of musical analysis, it becomes necessary to explore its nature as a complex act of knowledge and as a conversion of its meanings into axiological landmarks.

Defined by the musicologist Clemansa Liliana Firca as **"the primary modality of studying the musical work** and compositional art in general" (Firca, 1973, p. 12), musical analysis, although initially involving a dissociative process, ultimately targets the ontological nature of the musical phenomenon. As she further argues, "the contribution of the analyst to the unveiling of the identity of a score, a style, etc., is not measured by the meticulous presentation of stages of formal construction, nor by the exhaustive treatment of morphological categories, but by the capacity to discern either the single principle or the group of principles that structurally and semantically individualize the phenomenon" (Firca, 1973, p. 15). This is because the systematic application of a single, generalized analytical scheme to all scores may fail precisely by missing the very essence of the sonorous identity and its intended trajectory, as conceived by its creator: "there have been cases, however, in which surpassing the pre-established analytical scheme, by engaging all capacities of intuition and professional culture (historical, aesthetic, etc.), and especially the synthesizing abilities of the researcher, has led to genuine access to the being of the work" (Firca, 1973, p. 13). We thus understand that advanced analytical practice **engages and mobilizes all the endowments and cognitive resources** available to the human being.

The complexity and multidimensional demands of the musical phenomenon are further illustrated by the compelling perspective of the composer Irinel Anghel, who compares musical creation to a biosystem, investigating its ontogenetic nature starting from **"the hypothesis of the existence of a 'musical DNA'**, in which the miniature genetic code is inscribed, the developmental program of the sonorous organism, the duration of its life, namely musical time, and, in one way or another, the means of activating it" (Anghel, 1993, p. 49). Within this framework, the author advances the idea of **"the existence of three fundamental levels of material reality:** the physical, the biological, and the psychological [...]. The applicability of the triad matter–energy–information in the domain of musical creation is evident through the consubstantial relationship, within the very intimacy of a sonorous object, between its form, its integrated content, and the meaning conveyed by that content" (Anghel, 1993, p. 51).

A higher stage of the radiographic probing of the sonorous world is also articulated by the musicologist Laura Vasiliu: "musical phenomenology, absorbing ideas from *Gestalt* psychology, places at the **forefront perception and the lived experience of the musical phenomenon as it unfolds**, extrapolating the dynamic, kinetic, and temporal character of the art of sound" (Vasiliu, 2002, p. 18). Within analysis, multiple layers emerge: form and structure, each subdividing and generating the other parameters of sonorous dramaturgy. As a fundamental component in the decoding of a score, musical form is also defined, from a phenomenological perspective, as a "complex mental

configuration, born during and as a result of listening to a work, as a consequence of the transformation of musical temporality into visual-spatial suggestion" (Vasiliu, 2007, p. 27).

Thus, through analysis, music no longer remains merely at the level of reception, but is deconstructed and subsequently reconstructed at the mental level. This reconstruction allows access to the intimate mechanisms of the sonorous discourse, to its internal logic, to the intentionality of the creative act, and to the fulfillment of its trajectory within the sensitivity of the listener. In this sense, analysis becomes not only a solid instrument of knowledge, but also an act of higher consciousness, through which the listener transcends immediate experience and penetrates the most subtle substrata of music, assuming it as a reflected and internalized aesthetic experience, and opening the way to profound cognitive processes.

From this point onward, it becomes evident that musical analysis surpasses the descriptive and structural level of sonorous events within a score and takes shape as an act of cognitive internalization and affective interiorization. Beyond functions, relations, syntaxes, morphologies, and typologies, higher types of awareness emerge, in which music reorganizes itself as a profound experience, simultaneously lived and understood.

In other words, once the human being is penetrated by such a complex phenomenon, one may allow oneself to be carried toward the highest and most noble purpose: that of assuming the role of sonorous consciousness itself, profound, reflexive, and consciously internalized. Thus, this sonorous consciousness becomes an act **of aesthetic experience, intensified through understanding.**

On Meaning and Fundamental Calling in the Destiny of the Musical Work: Its Fulfillment in Sonorous Consciousness (Holographic Revealing)

Synthesizing the entire preceding inquiry, we may define, in scientific terms, the trajectory from the initial perception of music to its final destination, consciousness, as follows: "networks of interconnected neurons perform computations on information and combine their computations in ways that lead to thoughts, decisions, perceptions, and, ultimately, to consciousness" (Levitin, 2010, p. 97). The author further investigates the subject and advances a particularly compelling idea: "perhaps the supreme illusion in music is that of structure and form. [...] Our ability to derive meaning from music depends on experience and on neural structures that can learn and modify themselves with each new musical work and with each new listening of a familiar one" (Levitin, 2010, p. 124).

We may thus infer a virtuous circle: the more we listen, the more we understand; the more we understand, the more refined our taste becomes; the more refined our taste becomes, the more deeply we feel, ultimately leading to a process of selection and **axiological discernment**. From the perspective of ancient thought, this consequence may be extended even further: "For instance, Aristotle maintained that listening to music

contributes substantially to the cultivation of the mind and to the development of moral judgment" (Balteş, 2012, p. 33).

As a beneficial collateral effect, there also emerges an epiphenomenon: **the cognitive and psycho-emotional training** involved in the musical phenomenon **develops** not only **neural capacities** transferable to other domains, but also the **sensitivity and empathy of the human being**. This is because music is likely a second nature of humankind, as the British neurologist Oliver Sacks affirms: "Sensitivity to music appears very early in development, occupies an evident and central place in every culture, and probably emerged at the same time as our species" (Sacks, 2017, p. 7).

A revealing personal illustration of the force with which the sonorous universe operates as a form of both pre-linguistic and meta-linguistic communication can be found in the naturalness and spontaneity of childhood. When he was about four or five years old, my son asked his father, who was listening, in a moment of relaxation, to Greek music, what kind of music it was and why he could not understand it. His father explained that it was music in another language, to which the child responded, with disarming simplicity: "Daddy, play some music in Romanian that I can understand, play some Mozart!" For a child, instrumental music composed by Mozart was a language he could understand.

Beyond its apparent naivety, this reaction reveals **the existence of a form of proto-sonorous consciousness**, in which music is not perceived as a foreign language, but as a space that generates meaning. "We are a musical species to the same extent that we are a linguistic one" (Sacks, 2017, p. 9). Far from contradicting the objective of the present research, we may deduce that understanding can transcend explicit semantic codes and may construct its edifice upon **perceptual and affective structures pre-existing within human consciousness**, thus confirming, despite its often clichéd status, the postulate that music functions as a universal language, whose comprehension is revealed through the manner in which the sum of intuitive elements of human nature, and subsequently of experience, is reflected within our consciousness.

Thus, the concept of **sonorous consciousness** reveals a **duality of meanings**: on the one hand, it manifests as an **original stage** inherent to human nature; on the other, it takes shape as a **cultivated capacity**, enhanced through knowledge, practice, and aesthetic refinement, elements through which we recognize and resonate with artistic value, and through which we mirror the very essence of the human condition. This is further supported by recent studies: "The emotional processing of music emerges early in development. From 2 to 4 months, infants show a preference for pleasant, consonant music and distress in response to unpleasant, dissonant music" (Balteş, 2012, p. 69).

In order to **"holographically reveal"** the **sonorous entity** in its fullness, we must return to the fundamental purpose of the musical work: that of generating **aesthetic meaning** (a notion that also encompasses spiritual meaning), reflected in the artistic

sensibility with which the rational human being has been endowed: "From Pythagorean numerology and the Platonic harmony of the spheres to Aristotelian mimesis and catharsis, or Schopenhauerian essentialism, music has thus existed under the 'gaze' of the aesthetic, emerging also through the exercise of its principles. [...] The axiological vocation of music depends on the weight of this component" (Dănceanu, 2003, p. 206).

Within this perspective, the destiny of the musical work does not exhaust itself in the act of creation or in immediate reception, but is fulfilled through a mode of existence marked by the consciousness of the one who assimilates it: "Beyond its circumstantial birth, music has the right to attain a perennial existence" (Dănceanu, 2003, p. 228).

Thus, through sonorous consciousness, music no longer remains merely a beautiful, intriguing, or provocative phenomenon to be perceived (for various purposes) and understood, but becomes the mirror in which the spirit recognizes and rediscovers itself in the purest, most subtle, and most profound form of its own essence.

Conclusions

The aim of the present article is to highlight the role of musical analysis in the development of the cognitive processes involved in musical thinking, as well as its impact on the formation of an expanded intellectual capacity, applicable not only to a profound understanding of the musical phenomenon, but also to other domains of human experience. It also seeks to foster an awareness of the irreducible value of music, in an ineffable sense.

In conclusion, musical analysis, as a fundamental approach to music, transcends its purely methodological function and becomes an instrument for the configuration and shaping of both thought and consciousness. It thus contributes to the development of a higher form of intelligence, both cognitive and emotional, capable of integrating the musical experience, revelatory for the human being, into a dimension rich in meaning, reflection, and knowledge, as a true sonorous epiphany.

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From the Classroom to the Spotlight. Professional Musical Practice: Continuation or Culmination of the Learning Process?

Ligia Fărcășel^a,

ABSTRACT: Learning is organically part of human life. Whether we like to admit it or not, reality leads us through contexts in which we are compelled to adapt and learn, to constantly acquire knowledge and skills. For an individual who embraces this truth, the learning process becomes efficient and fulfilling, in contrast to a person who refuses to accept learning as a natural course of things and consequently places obstacles in their own developmental path.

The present research aims to observe the learning experience of artists who are students in the Voice Department of the "George Enescu" National University of Arts in Iași and, at the same time, vocal performers in the choir of the Romanian National Opera in Iași. The objectives are to identify how the learning process is perceived in these two contexts and to practically highlight the importance of continuous learning.

KEYWORDS: education; lifelong learning; singing; student; opera;

Introduction

Learning is part of the continuous process of life, in which every individual seeks meaning, whether consciously or not. Is learning an activity that continues within the context of professional practice? If we introduce into the current discussion the concepts referred to in the international specialized literature as LLL (lifelong learning) and LLE (lifelong education), we must also consider CPD, since young people and adults transitioning from education to work move into the specific professional realm of learning – that is from

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lifelong learning to continuing professional development. In fact, experts believe that CPD occurs in both personal and institutional contexts, meaning that learning and improvement take place both specifically within the work itself as required by the job and through the individual's personal attitude, which drives them to develop themselves personally as well. (Friedman, 2023)

An environment that is not explicitly dedicated to learning can be considered a non-formal educational setting. This type of learning occurs solely through the participants' own initiative and genuine interest. Non-formal adult education can take place at any time throughout life and may continue indefinitely, as it is always tailored to individual needs (Sobol, 2019). A learning process that takes place throughout an adult's life must include a critical-analytical component, which allows for the development of a framework from which the adult can begin. What defines the concept known as LLL (lifelong learning) is learning that takes place throughout one's entire life, from the first to the last breath. (Laal, 2011). The viability of continuous learning in non-formal and informal contexts is also supported by Harrison (2004). He explains how the learning process begins as early as the prenatal period, all the more so with regard to music, since it is perceived through the sense of hearing, which is available in some form even from that period.

Studies show that group learning not only fosters intergenerational bonds but also creates an environment conducive to developing a sense of independence in creative expression (Brook et al., 2026, p. 96). Students who join a specific experiential learning group (such as an opera choir) embrace certain changes associated with their status within that community and, at the same time, have the opportunity to engage in a process of self-reflection that facilitates the discovery of their identity (both musical and non-musical). The ability to self-assess can improve their transition from the learning context to the workplace (Benjamins et al., 2021). Smilde (2021) states that lifelong learning requires a significant degree of flexibility, given that contemporary society is evolving at an increasingly rapid pace, driven primarily by technology. This requirement is challenging; however, for musicians in particular, it is essential to approach it by first embracing change.

Given that in a collective – such as an opera choir – generations succeed and overlap one another, the intergenerational transfer of knowledge is a practice that is as popular as it is necessary. Researchers even propose the concept of group mentoring, in which experienced professionals offer newcomers support in settling in and learning (Basque, 2013). This is a phenomenon that occurs – whether mandated by job descriptions or practiced intuitively, out of empathy – in groups with healthy relationships among colleagues.

Beyond the issue of collective work and the transfer of information between generations of colleagues, one aspect worth considering in the practice of opera houses

is stage movement. Vocal performance (in this case, choral) accompanied by movement can reflect the extent to which choristers form a team in the artistic act, but it also constitutes an effective way to assimilate musical ideas (D'Amario et al., 2023). Moreover, research conducted in pre-university education confirms the importance of the ability to engage in informal learning to improve musical performance accompanied by movement (Pušić, Sablić, & Šulentić Begić, 2024).

A Look at the Concept of Learning

From a very young age, the human psyche has a need for meaning and significance. An individual engages in certain activities to obtain benefits, whether short-term (children) or short-, medium-, and long-term (in the case of adults). We are encouraged in every context to pursue results; this is part of human nature and is the driving force that propels us to accomplish tasks of varying complexity depending on age and the general context. For example, a child is willing to invest energy for a concrete reward or an immediate satisfying result, while an adult focuses on accomplishing complex tasks, often carried out over longer periods, that will bring a satisfying result in the long term. At the heart of every advancement, in any field, has been this desire to achieve results.

Learning is also part of this ongoing process of life, in which we seek meaning. Perhaps even more so than theoretical education, vocational education is deeply shaped by the need for meaning. An artist cannot create or perform unless they have the feeling. Indeed, an artistic performance executed perfectly but lacking in emotion ends up being perceived by the audience as lacking in value. This concept of "emotion" is an abstract one, difficult to define in quantifiable technical-scientific terms, one reason being the artist's subjectivity, the other being the audience's subjectivity. This is how we ultimately come to accept that art offers something that technical and theoretical fields cannot, which is why it is so valuable.

Within the broad field of education and vocational professions, current research focuses on the field of music, such a vast one, with multiple and complex implications throughout the world and across all eras. Reflecting on the phenomenon of music, British musicologist Michael Spitzer (2022) observes that "music, seemingly devoid of meaning – its semantic openness – is like a magical laboratory that allows us to make connections (...). Music has inspired religion (...). Music has been at the helm of history and civilization." (Spitzer, 2022, p. 392). In this context, the present study aims to identify and analyze how a music student – specializing in Vocal Performance – perceives the experience of opera vocal ensemble, the ways in which the two contexts of learning and work influence and affect each other, as well as to demonstrate and highlight the importance of lifelong learning and the opportunity to apply it in various life situations. The research aims to observe the subjects' learning experience in the academic context by comparison with the theatrical one, as well as to investigate the advantages resulting from the combination

of the two types of activity.

Regardless of the context and stage of life, an individual not only has a perpetual opportunity to learn, but, more importantly, is often compelled to remain in the learning process in order to sustain their existence and ensure their progress, because “learning leads to evolution (of various types and degrees), and a person who has undergone a process of evolution will be eager to learn more” (Fărcășel, 2024, p. 42). Experts also support the idea of this (almost) absolute presence of learning, understanding that it is not always a choice. In this regard, psychologist Andrei Cosmovici believes that “everything that is not innate is learned” (Cosmovici, 2005, p. 75).

Building on the idea stated above, we conclude that learning can be viewed through two paradigms: formal learning (in dedicated educational institutions) and informal learning (in any context that offers the opportunity to acquire both information and experience). This study addresses both, as it focuses on university students (formal education) who are also singers in the opera choir (informal education). The ability to gather information from various experiences and develop skills is truly valuable throughout all stages of life. Interest in experiential learning is growing and has come to be practiced with great enthusiasm even within formal educational institutions. The most natural explanation lies precisely in the understanding of the human need to move beyond the theoretical realm (which should by no means be underestimated) and toward the practical, functional realm.

It is well known that a teaching style can be truly effective only for certain types of learners, not for all. Depending on their personality and cognitive traits, students tend to prefer certain approaches, with an emphasis on visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learning. While education in general requires close attention to how information is received, this is even more critical in vocational education. In arts education, the student’s skills are of paramount importance. In the major arts – music, theater, visual arts, and choreography – having talent is the first requirement. Certainly, from this point onward, progress comes through sustained effort, but the three components – visual, auditory, and kinesthetic – are essential right from the start. In this context, learning can only take place to a certain extent in a conventional manner, specifically regarding theoretical disciplines. In professional artistic training, specific skills play a fundamental role.

Learning is an activity that should accompany an individual throughout their entire life. It brings fulfillment and meaning to one’s work. However, both learning and work are inseparable from discipline. The most effective results will be achieved by those who develop discipline and adhere to it, and this is made up of small habits. Consistency is, in the opinion of experts, more important than increasing the amount of work: “Too often we fixate on the belief that great successes require dramatic efforts. (...) The difference that small progress creates over time, however, is surprising. Here’s how it works mathematically: if you can increase your performance by 1% per day for 12 months, you

will be 3.7 times better at the end of that period.” (Clear, 2019, p. 23). The same principle applies to the study and interpretation of music. Indeed, vocational education is based on specific aptitudes – in music it means musical ear – but the path from these natural gifts to performance is paved with hard work and discipline. In the process of professional development, learning is indispensable. Regardless of age, the process must not stop. Continuous learning makes the difference between a life with meaning and direction and a life with a flat horizon.

Research methodology

Research in the arts differs from scientific research, as in the arts, results cannot be fully evaluated in quantifiable terms or structured in a systematic way. For this reason, the current study employs a qualitative method, applied with the flexibility required by artistic research.

The research participants comprise a group of nine students from the “George Enescu” National University of Arts in Iași, Department of Vocal Performance, who are also opera singers in the Romanian National Opera Choir in Iași. Of these, seven are enrolled in the Master’s program, and two in the Bachelor’s program. Additionally, six of the participants are women and three are men, ranging in age from 22 to 43. All respondents completed music studies prior to their Bachelor’s program in the Vocal Performance specialization and have experience in the opera choir ranging from 3 months to 15 years.

Table 1
Educational Background and Experience

Respondent	Current stage of studies	Musical studies before university (singing)	Previous experience in Opera Choir	Stage experience before opera choir
Respondent 1	Master’s	Classical singing	3 years	Recitals, invitations to various performances
Respondent 2	Bachelor’s	Classical singing	1 year and 5 months	Children’s opera choir
Respondent 3	Master’s	Piano	3 months	Occasional collaborator in opera choir
Respondent 4	Master’s	Piano, double bass, accordion	1 year	Music festivals
Respondent 5	Master’s	Classical singing	4 years	None
Respondent 6	Bachelor’s	Music pedagogy	14 years	Various choral and orchestral ensembles

Respondent 7	Master's	Music pedagogy	14 years	Philharmonic Choir "Moldova" Iași
Respondent 8	Master's	Byzantine music, religious music	12 years	Collaborator at "Nae Leonard" Theatre in Galați
Respondent 9	Master's	Violin, classical singing	15 years	Collaborator at Opera in Brașov

The primary research tool used is the semi-structured interview, administered to participants. The questions posed to participants focus on the learning component but also address other issues related to the activity, as follows: educational background – achievements and aspirations; experience in the Opera choir; stage and artistic experience; the learning process viewed in different contexts; professional development and career prospects. The subjects provided written consent for the processing of the data and opinions offered in the interview, while also being informed of the possibility to withdraw from the research if they wished; however, all respondents chose to participate.

The purpose of this article is to explore the extent to which continuous learning takes place in the workplace throughout the professional careers of opera singers. The focus is on exploring the factors that directly or indirectly influence perceptions of the learning process and the process itself, in order to provide an informed, insider perspective and, consequently, to raise awareness of the importance of continuous learning. The research questions are as follows: How do students in the Vocal Performance program view the learning process as it transitions from the classroom to the opera stage? Is professional practice an opportunity to continue the educational process, or merely a context for applying the skills and abilities acquired?

Results

Nine vocal students, who are also opera singers in the choir of the Romanian National Opera in Iași, were interviewed. The analysis revealed five main ideas, as follows:

1. Joining the opera choir does not mark the end of the learning process, but rather its intensification. It can be perceived both as the culmination of learning and as a new stage in a continuous process.
2. Some academic disciplines are essential to professional training, while others are considered less useful.
3. Participation in the opera choir is an advantage for academic performance.
4. The memorization skills acquired through academic work prove useful in the opera choir, particularly in memorizing musical scores and lyrics.
5. Participation in the opera choir is a valuable factor for personal development.

1. Joining the opera choir does not mark the end of the learning process, but rather its intensification. It can be perceived both as the culmination of learning and as a new stage in a continuous process.

Most respondents believe that the learning process continues or intensifies once they begin performing in the opera chorus:

"The learning process did not end when I joined the chorus; on the contrary, it intensified and took on a much deeper dimension. On stage, every rehearsal and every performance becomes a living lesson: you have to integrate vocal technique, expressiveness, and stage presence, adapt to your colleagues, the conductor, and the dynamics of the moment – all in real time." (Respondent 9)

"It continues and has intensified. You spend your whole life learning about yourself and (...) you have to prepare for the future" (Respondent)

One of the respondents, however, has a deeper and more demanding perspective, considering that the university stage was merely a prelude to the learning process:

"The learning process is just beginning. Only now am I beginning to grasp what proper vocal training entails."

2. Some academic disciplines are essential to professional training, while others are considered less useful.

More than half of the respondents (7) consider the vocal technique they learned in singing classes to be one of their most useful tools. Nearly half (4) find the opera class useful, and one respondent (Respondent 2) believes it should be introduced as early as the first year of study. More than half (6) of the participants stated that the music theory knowledge they acquired in class is useful in their work at the opera. When asked to suggest possible changes to the university curriculum, nearly all respondents (7) stated that they would request more class hours and a greater focus on practical disciplines:

"(...) 'Opera Class' in the first year of study, because it is very important for the future (just excerpts from operas, not entire operas, but it would be a very good start to handle the volume of study required by an opera). Second, I would make 'Choral Ensemble' a required course, not an optional one. I would add more hours of voice and Italian language" (Respondent 2)

"I would add more hours of stage movement and opera class, conducted more effectively" (Respondent 5)

"I think it would be useful for the training to include more practical exercises in conditions close to real-life situations: rehearsals with larger ensembles, performing complex roles, integration with the director, and close collaboration with conductors" (Respondent 9)

In addition to his peers, one of the respondents believes that the academic curriculum can be utilized as is in individual study and adapted to specific needs:

"Far be it from me to think of changing anything (...). I absorbed the teaching I received from my teachers, and in the study hall, on an individual level, I applied it to the gaps in my knowledge at that time." (Respondent 8)

3. Participation in the opera choir is an advantage for academic performance.

Almost all participants (8) stated that their experience in the opera choir had improved their approach to individual study:

"Yes. Once I joined the choir, I started studying more, but also learning faster. (...) When I get a new score, I immediately start studying it so that I can learn it very well and correctly by the time of the performance" (Respondent 2)

"Individual study has become much more conscious and structured – I pay more attention to breathing, intonation, harmony, and vocal balance, so that I am prepared to contribute effectively to the ensemble. (...) Essentially, the stage has become the most demanding teacher: individual study is no longer just a solitary exercise, but active and strategic preparation for every moment I experience on stage, a way to transform knowledge and technique into real and authentic artistic presence." (Respondent 9)

4. The memorization skills acquired through academic work prove useful in the opera choir, particularly in memorizing musical scores and lyrics.

More than half (6) of the students interviewed stated that the transition from a limited repertoire (at the university) to a broad one (at the opera) was a challenge. However, the skills acquired in class proved useful in the opera choir as well:

"At the opera, there were many scores to learn in a relatively short time, but my experience and solid knowledge of the notes helped me learn them quickly." (Respondent 6)

Memorizing the lyrics (approximately 500 words per opera, in Italian, French, or whatever language the libretto is written in) is also made easier by the learning experience gained in university courses. At the same time, some participants highlighted the importance of thoroughly learning the foreign languages most commonly used in opera texts.

"At first it was difficult for me, especially French, but I listened and sang at the same time, and by doing this very often, I managed to keep up with my fellow students." (Respondent 1)

5. Participation in the opera choir is a valuable factor for personal development.

All respondents, without exception, stated that participating in the opera choir helps develop personal skills and qualities, including calmness and empathy, self-confidence and the ability to work in a team, a willingness to take on challenges and push oneself, attentiveness, patience, discipline, and self-control.

Table 2
Perceptions on Learning and Opera Choir Activity

Respondent	Learning process after joining opera choir	Meaning of joining opera choir	Essential academic disciplines	Choir activity helps academic performance	Memorization skills useful	Personal development benefits
Respondent 1	No, it never ends. A stage in a continuous process.	A stage in a continuous process	Vocal technique, opera class	Yes – vocal control	Yes	Gaining calmness and empathy
Respondent 2	Continuous learning and development	—	Music theory, acting, singing, vocal technique	Yes – intensified study; improved memorization of scores	Yes	Self-confidence, teamwork skills
Respondent 3	Continued and intensified. Fulfillment and stage in continuous process	Fulfillment and stage in a continuous process	Music theory, acting, singing, opera class, choir	Yes – improved memorization and sight-reading	No	Self-confidence
Respondent 4	The learning process is just beginning	A process where skills and knowledge are applied	Singing, theory, opera class	Yes	Yes	Self-confidence
Respondent 5	Continues and intensifies	Fulfillment, but also opportunity to evolve	Vocal technique	Yes – increased attention to vocal technique	Yes	Sociability, expressiveness, calmness
Respondent 6	It has not ended	Fulfillment, but also an opportunity to progress	Vocal technique	No	Yes	Empathy

Respon- dent 7	A stage in a continuous process	Practical courses, music theory	Very little	No	Openness to challeng es, desire to evolve, self- improve ment	
Respon- dent 8	Learning continues. Fulfillment but also continuation of learning	Fulfillment and continuation of learning	Vocal technique	Yes	No	Constant attentive- ness
Respon- dent 9	Learning intensified and became much deeper	Fulfillment and stage in a continuous process	Vocal technique, score analysis	Yes – structuring individual study	Yes	Patience, discipline, self-control

Discussion

When asked what motivated them to choose vocal studies, most of the subjects cited passion, a desire to improve their vocal skills, or an admiration for opera performances. The choice to study singing arose from a natural connection to music, which led some to believe that the voice is one of the most original forms of expression. Singing studies were not always a *sine qua non* requirement in Romania for joining professional vocal ensembles; the main requirements were related to vocal abilities, assessed through auditions. However, with the amendment of the salary law (Law 153/2017, published in Monitorul Oficial 492/June 28, 2017), opera singers were compelled to pursue specialized studies in order to continue their work under optimal salary conditions (Monitorul Oficial, 2017, p. 47). Thus, for some of the respondents, this was the specific motivation for beginning vocal studies, as talent and passion for music were already present.

Being a lyric artist in an opera chorus involves, beyond singing, a theatrical component, along with everything that makes up the stage experience: direction, set design, and costumes. As musician Barry Green (2015) observes, "Like actors and actresses, musicians are performing artists. Their job isn't to express their own personalities, but to let the 'character' of the music speak through them. They have a responsibility to express the qualities of the music rather than to exhibit their own personality" (Green, 2015, p. 95). Thus, an opera singer is compelled to master, in addition to vocal aspects, theatrical skills as well. In certain directorial visions, performers are required to execute intense movements, which must be performed with authenticity but also with caution to avoid injuries on stage. Attention must be one of the main partners on stage, as it is required in multiple directions. The challenge of stepping outside one's musical comfort zone is intensified by the constant need to maintain the quality of the

musical performance. Some of the research participants stated that there are moments when they are tempted to get carried away by the flow of the performance and lose sight of the technical control of their vocal delivery. At the same time, the experience of performing in the opera chorus proves to be rewarding, not only for the audience but also for the performers, as these performances offer them genuine opportunities to appreciate from within the diverse and precious gifts of the vast musical culture. In fact, an opera performance is the result of sustained effort and collaboration among the various departments involved, which makes the performance experience extraordinary, hard to match, important for the development of a young performer, and fulfilling in the long term.

The excitement of the stage is intense and remains palpable even after a large number of performances, and being onstage continues to be captivating. Younger respondents, however, expressed a desire to be introduced earlier and more intensively to acting practice – so essential on the opera stage – as part of their university curriculum. They prioritized this aspect in practice and, with extra effort compared to their more experienced colleagues in opera, managed to adapt successfully. Acting in opera performances is not merely a structural element but a catalyst for creative artistic expression, encouraging the psychological exploration of characters and bringing them to life on stage.

Building on the direction outlined above, the current research has shed light on the relationship between the vocal score and movement. In this regard, participants were asked whether stage movement is an ally of the vocal score or an additional challenge. Opinions were divided, thus highlighting the importance of diversity and adaptability within a group. Some artists admitted that they are forced to focus more on movement during vocal performance, which already requires a certain discipline, thereby giving the experience a holistic character. Other respondents, on the contrary, believe that movement serves the music, helping with relaxation and ease, as long as it is not too complex.

The Classical Singing university program naturally places an emphasis on solo performance. However, in professional development, being part of a vocal ensemble plays a significant role. In class and during solo recitals, student artists come to understand their vocal capabilities so they can make the most of them. In contrast, as part of a choir, individuality is no longer an advantage but must be adapted to the demands of the score. The two approaches are different and must be treated with due attention. We investigated how the transition from the role of soloist (at the university) to that of ensemble opera singer (at the opera) is perceived. Here, as before, the diversity of artistic visions is reconfirmed. In describing the transition from the individual to the collective, respondents used words and expressions such as: challenging, formative, coordination, sound balance, stage harmony, adaptability, empathy, homogenization,

vocal color, and teamwork.

Regarding the transfer of knowledge and skills from the classroom to the stage, the young people surveyed stated that their university studies proved particularly effective in the context of courses in vocal training, music theory, acting, and opera. The students' pragmatic mindset is reflected in their desire and willingness to focus on subjects with practical applications for their future careers. They noted that they had the opportunity to master certain concepts strictly within an academic context, which later proved useful in the opera, where they put them into practice and refined them on stage – a setting where there is no room for glaring mistakes, as opera audiences are more demanding than those of university productions. In the same vein, a significant number of respondents expressed a desire for additional support in learning the languages in which most operas are written. Furthermore, artists-to-become believe that closer collaboration between arts education institutions and cultural institutions would be beneficial.

Another benefit that students who are singers in the opera choir have noted in their professional practice is the improvement in their individual study. While in academic settings the repertoire is tailored to each student, in the opera the situation is reversed: the artists must adapt to the program proposed by the institution, ultimately serving its cultural and artistic mission. In this regard, students are forced to intensify their individual study program in order to meet the required demands: complex and diverse opera scores, averaging three different titles per month. The accelerated pace of learning has helped them quickly gain greater dexterity in memorizing music and sight-reading scores. By comparison, while in academic study the student follows the instructions received from the professor, in opera they rely on those from the conductor or choir master, stored during group rehearsals, in order to put them into practice during individual study. Talent proves useful only when combined with discipline. Passion and the desire to sing are, thus, the driving force behind the desire to improve.

Every achievement requires sacrifice, hard work, and perseverance. Those who supported this study view these aspects through the lens of a passion for music and a desire for personal and artistic fulfillment. Although they acknowledge that the effort they devote to this endeavor is considerable, most of them put it aside, prioritizing the rewards that come with this work.

To address the main focus of the study, participants were asked whether, in their opinion, the learning process ended once they entered the choir. Although the answer is easy to guess, the respondents offered various nuances, all equally worthy of consideration. Some believe that the learning process continues upon joining the choir, that it never actually ends, while others believe it has intensified. Another perspective is that the learning process is only just beginning here. In fact, based on the responses received, we concluded that opera choir activities represent a place where learning, work,

and the culmination of that work stand on the same stage. On the other hand, some of the students surveyed believe that being part of the opera choir is a tangible reward for approaching academic work with responsibility. When asked whether it is difficult to balance the rehearsal and performance schedule with academic studies, those involved in the research demonstrated a high degree of openness and flexibility, sharing their perception that the two activities complement each other and expressing their gratitude for the support they receive from both sides.

In music, as in any other field, the more experienced members of a team can (and should) also serve as mentors to newcomers. The same is true for the team comprising the choir of the Romanian National Opera in Iași. More experienced colleagues share with the younger members elements of performance or direction that are not found in the score but must be taken into account.

Learning always involves personal development. The two influence each other, which is why we considered the study participants' perspective on how their work within the opera choir contributes to their personal development to be relevant. The responses provided demonstrated that the entire professional process nurtures or refines qualities such as patience, discipline, rigor, self-control and self-improvement, empathy, self-confidence, openness to challenges, sociability, and the ability to relax. All these personal and professional gains are part of the portfolio that whets young artists' appetite and paves the way for their progress and careers. Some of them aim for a solo career and view their choir experience as a valuable, formative one.

Conclusions

This study aimed to identify and analyze how opera work is perceived by opera singers who are still students in the Vocal Performance program, in order to observe the extent to which continuous learning takes place and how the two work contexts influence one another. Since the perceptions of those involved were one of the main objectives, the research is based on the responses received to the proposed questionnaire. Some of these were easy to anticipate, while others offered a fresh perspective or a personal viewpoint.

The results confirm the initial statement: that learning is a constant throughout the stages of life and that it is the main component of the process of personal and professional development, whether it takes place in formal or informal settings. In formal education, the student learns from the teacher, while in informal education – in the context of the present study – students who are young opera singers in the opera choir learn from designated specialists (conductor, choir master) and from more experienced colleagues.

Another finding of the analysis is that participation in the opera choir is perceived as both the beginning, the continuation, and the culmination of the learning process.

While artists can transfer concepts from the classroom to professional vocal performance (specifically, those related to singing, music theory, acting, and opera), the exchange of value works in reverse as well: the experience gained in the opera choir also benefits individual musical study.

These findings have important implications for long-term professional and personal development, as the skills and qualities acquired are steps toward becoming adults with values – a benefit that, in turn, extends to the community and society.

The findings of this research can be useful for gaining a better understanding of the learning process, both for university professors and for opera artists who interact with the study's participants. In this way, the talents of emerging artists can be effectively harnessed to enhance both academic and performance outcomes. What the current research has not addressed is the perspective on the vocal music job market. On the one hand, the subject underlying this study refers only to the perception of voice students regarding the learning experience they have during their university studies and within the opera choir. On the other hand, an examination of the music labor market in Romania could facilitate the integration of future artists and constitutes a topic worthy of consideration for future research.

Appendix 1

Research Interview Questions: From the Classroom to the Spotlight

1. Educational Background – Achievements and Aspirations

- What level of study (bachelor's, master's) are you currently in, and what year are you in?
- Did you pursue any other musical studies before studying classical singing? If so, which ones and when?
- What led you to choose to study singing?
- To what extent have your university studies to date been applied to your work at the opera? Please elaborate.
- Which skills acquired in class are most useful to you in the chorus?
- What would you change in the way the university prepares students for the realities of opera?

2. Experience in the Opera Chorus

- How long have you been a member of the Romanian National Opera Choir?
- How did you perceive the transition from being a soloist (at university) to an ensemble singer (at the opera)? What were the main differences, and how did you experience them?
- What sacrifices (time, energy, individual study, others) does working in the choir entail?

- How did you perceive the transition from a relatively limited repertoire in your academic work to a much larger and more diverse one at the opera? Please elaborate in a few sentences.

3. Stage and Artistic Experience

- Did you have any stage experience before joining the opera choir, aside from your academic experience? If so, in what context?
- How do you perceive the stage experience? Does it evoke feelings such as fulfillment, joy, excitement, stress, pressure, or anxiety? Or what other feelings does it evoke? Please elaborate.
- Given that in opera the lyrics are sung from memory, how did you adapt to this? Was it difficult for you to memorize such a large amount of material?
- How do you view the acting component of opera? Think about a few of the performances you've taken part in and describe how you felt, what challenges you faced, what you liked, and what you didn't.
- Do you think vocal music is easier to perform with or without stage movement?
- Is participating in opera productions an interesting and important experience? Why? How do you feel it shapes you as a musician?

4. The learning process viewed in different contexts

- Has your experience in the opera chorus changed the way you approach your individual studies?
- Do you consider that the learning process ended when you joined the chorus, continues, or has intensified? Please elaborate.
- Are your more experienced colleagues in the chorus a learning resource for you? In what way?
- Is it difficult for you to balance your academic studies with rehearsals and performances? In what way? Please elaborate.
- Do you think your involvement in opera affects your academic performance? Please elaborate.

5. Professional Development and Career Prospects

- Do you intend to pursue a vocal career (solo or in an ensemble), or are you open to other opportunities?
- In the future, do you wish to remain part of a vocal ensemble (such as an opera chorus) or are you aiming for a solo career?
- Do you consider your work in opera to be the "culmination" of your training, or rather a stage in an ongoing process? Please elaborate.
- How does your work in opera contribute to your personal development? And to your artistic development?

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The Ethics of Scientific Coordination of Music Students with Intermediate Specialized Training

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ABSTRACT : The ethics of scientific guiding of music students with intermediate specialized training requires high professional and moral responsibility on the part of the teacher. The supervisor must be able to strike a balance between academic requirements and the actual level of training of the student, while cultivating critical thinking, intellectual autonomy and methodological rigor. Respect for the artistic individuality and learning pace of each student is essential, since the training of a young musician involves both the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and the development of a personal view on music as a cultural and scientific act. The ethics of student guiding also requires clarity in setting objectives, transparency in assessment, and the avoidance of any form of pressure or favoritism. The supervisor has an obligation to guide the student in choosing appropriate topics, structuring their research, and observing academic writing and quotation requirements, thus contributing to the development of adequate scientific behavior. In the case of students with intermediate specialized training, it is important to adapt one's language and teaching tools to facilitate the understanding of complex concepts while maintaining academic standards. The ethics of student guiding thus becomes a mentoring process based on trust, competence and mutual respect.

KEYWORDS : ethics of scientific guiding; intellectual individuality of the student; models of good practice;

Introduction

In Romanian music education, the training of young researchers often takes place in vocational institutions that combine intensive practical training with academic objectives.

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Students with intermediate specialized training are somehow in the middle: they have a solid technical foundation, but do not always have the theoretical and methodological tools required for thorough scientific research. This scientific coordination involves not only pedagogical responsibilities, but also a deep ethical commitment (Nica, 2019).

Scientific coordination cannot be confined merely to methodological guidance. It involves an asymmetrical relationship, in which the coordinator holds a position of epistemic and moral authority. It is precisely this asymmetrical relationship that requires a well-defined ethical framework: encouraging critical thinking, supporting independent inquiry, valuing personal progress, and, last but not least, recognizing the limitations of the student's level of training (Truța, 2024). This, an ethic of balance emerges - between a demanding and supporting attitude, between autonomy and guidance, between assessment and learning.

This paper is aimed at exploring the fundamentals and ethical implications of the scientific coordination of music students at an intermediate stage of their training, while also suggesting models of good practice adapted to the specificities of the vocational field.

Defining scientific coordination in music education

Scientific coordination in the field of music education differs significantly from classical forms of academic guidance. Music, as both an artistic and scientific discipline, requires an articulation between the sensitive, performing, and theoretical-analytical dimensions (Balint, 2017). This, in the case of music students with intermediate specialized training, coordination involves reconciling the accumulated practical experience and the need to develop coherent scientific thinking.

The coordinator/supervisor has the role of turning the musical gesture - often intuitive and subjective - into a critical, well-founded, accessible discourse. To this end, the research methodology must be adapted to the student's intellectual and methodological development, avoiding both overestimation and excessive simplification of requirements. We refer to students who often come from vocational schools, where the emphasis has been mainly on performance and less on theoretical approaches. Therefore, coordination involves:

- the development of basic research skills - formulating a hypothesis, structuring a work plan, selecting relevant references, knowing the rules of citation;
- introduction to scientific language specific to music – analytical terms, aesthetic concepts, critical vocabulary;

- **building a relationship of trust and cooperation** between the student and the coordinator, allowing for a gradual but demanding learning process (Opre, 2025).

This mission involves a nuanced understanding of what Bernard Gendron calls *articulation critique* (Gendron, 2002, p. 17), i.e., the transposition of musical practice into an articulated critical discourse. In the case of students at intermediate stages, this process must be guided with pedagogical tact and epistemological responsibility, without compromising the rigor of the scientific approach.

Another essential feature of coordination in this context is **the recognition of the specific value of musical thinking**. Although music students are researchers in training, we start from their minimal aesthetic/specialized experience, which can be used as a source of reflection. The role of the coordinator is, therefore, to channel this experience/basic knowledge into coherent forms of analysis. Scientific coordination in music education this becomes an act of translating musical gestures into concepts, of accompanying the student on the path of discovery of their own scientific voice.

Ethical grounds of scientific coordination

In addition to teaching, guidance or assessment, scientific coordination establishes a relationship of an ethical nature. This is based on a fragile balance between the epistemic authority of the coordinator and the student's need for intellectual autonomy. In the case of musicians with intermediate specialist training, this balance is all the more delicate, as their previous training has focused on performing reproduction and less on theoretical reflection.

Respect for the student's intellectual autonomy

One of the basic principles of coordination ethics is respect for the intellectual and aesthetic individuality of the student (Schellekens, 2022). Although the young researcher is at an early stage of their training, their opinions should not be underestimated, but cultivated with patience. The coordinator is not a provider of answers, but a provocateur of relevant questions. This attitude is also supported by the constructivist principles of modern pedagogy, according to which knowledge is actively constructed through social and cognitive interactions (Bruner, 1996).

Coordinator's epistemic responsibility

The coordinator must be a role model of rigor, intellectual honesty, and critical thinking. They have a responsibility to correct the student's methodological deviations, familiarize them with the norms of academic ethics (originality, avoidance of plagiarism, correct citation of sources), and monitor the quality of scientific discourse. In this sense, coordination involves not only professional competence, but also an ethic of rigor, avoiding compromises that could undermine the integrity of their scientific endeavors.

Avoiding abuse of authority and aesthetic manipulation

In the arts, a situation frequently encountered in music, there is a risk that students will automatically adopt the aesthetic views of their coordinator, especially if they do not have sufficient critical tools of their own. Ethics dictate that the coordinator's personal taste should not become a normative act, but rather a starting point for aesthetic dialogue. Imposing a one-sided perspective (e.g., a preference for a particular repertoire or performing style) can inhibit the student's creative and analytical potential. As Jean-Jacques Nattiez states, 'the act of performing is a semiotic act' (Nattiez, 1990, p.15) – that is, it involves a choice of meanings depending on context, history and intention. The coordinator must therefore avoid turning the mentoring relationship into a form of aesthetic dogmatism.

Balanced support: between empathy and objectivity

Ethical coordination also requires **a balance between empathy and objectivity**. During the training process, students may feel pressure to perform and be assessed. A balanced coordinator will channel their energy into constructive feedback, recognizing effort and supporting progress, while also being prepared to set clear boundaries when necessary. A lack of objectivity can lead to uncritical validation, just as lack of empathy can lead to blocks or even the idea of intellectual abandonment (Queloz, 2025).

Principle of responsibility

The commitment of the coordinating professor (Rosacrans, 1962) in the case of bachelor's degree theses by music students with intermediate specialized training involves a two-fold responsibility: academic and formative. On the one hand, the coordinator has the obligation to guide the student in complying with the rigors of scientific research, ensuring topic consistency, methodological validity, and compliance with university ethics standards. On the other hand, the coordinator must adapt academic requirements to the student's level of training, actively contributing to the development of writing, analysis, and critical thinking skills. In this sense, the professor becomes a mediator between university requirements and the specific potential of the student, who is at the intersection of artistic and theoretical training (Yao-Ping Peng, Ting Cai & Xiaoyao Yue, 2025).

This commitment also implies ethical involvement in assessing student progress, avoiding the imposition of topics that are inaccessible from a methodological or conceptual point of view. The coordinating professor must create a balanced working environment in which the student is encouraged to use their musical resources and previous experiences in performance or analytical listening, without being constrained by overly academic models. This, coordination becomes a process of supporting the autonomy and professional dignity of the future musician, in which research is not a mere bureaucratic formality, but a stage of intellectual and artistic growth.

In conclusion, the ethical grounds of scientific coordination in the field of music involve a constant adjustment between the roles of trainer, dialogue partner, and epistemological role model. This adjustment becomes essential when working with students who are at the intersection of practical training and intellectual development.

Ethical challenges in coordinating students with intermediate training

Scientific coordination of music students with intermediate specialized training (Msangya, 2025) involves a series of specific ethical challenges, found at the intersection between artistic education, theoretical training, and the demands of academic methodology. These students have not usually completed a full university course and often face gaps in their conceptual understanding and formalization of scientific discourse. In this context, the coordinator must responsibly manage a series of dilemmas: what standards apply? How is progress assessed? What does originality mean at this level?

Need for guidance in clarifying theoretical concepts

One of the major challenges is the epistemic gap between the student's practical experience and the requirements of scientific research. Many of the concepts of aesthetics, semiology, musical analysis, or the history of musical ideas may seem abstract or inaccessible without an adequate explanatory framework. The coordinator has an ethical duty not to penalize the student for systemic gaps in training, but to support them in acquiring clear and stable foundations. This requires additional teaching effort, but it is necessary in order to gradually explain concepts, provide concrete examples, and recommend accessible and relevant sources. It is essential that students do not simply imitate scientific form, but understand the meaning of their scientific endeavor (Katz, 1969).

Balance between demanding and encouraging

Coordination ethics involves avoiding two extremes: excessive tolerance that dilutes scientific rigor and excessive demands that inhibit student motivation. For those with intermediate training, the risk of discouragement is high, especially when their efforts are assessed against the same criteria applied to advanced students. A coordinator focused on respecting ethical principles will set appropriate goals, recognizing individual progress, which also involves offering constructive criticism. This approach is aligned with the principles of formative pedagogy, which focus on assessing the process, not just the final result (William, 2011).

Originality vs. level of training

Originality is an essential criterion in the assessment of a scientific paper. However,

at the intermediate level of training, originality must be understood in relation to context. It takes into account, for example, the novelty of a research topic, offering a personal view on an analyzed score, or the reasoned interpretation of a stylistic phenomenon. We note that imposing standards of theoretical innovation that exceed the student's actual level of training is contrary to the ethical principles of the educational process. The coordinator must distinguish between formal originality (conceptual innovation, theoretical contribution) and functional originality, which consists of the student's ability to relate information, argue, and coherently structure an approach (Corazza, 2016).

Tension between the performative and reflexive models

Music students with vocational backgrounds are often trained according to a performative model, where success is measured by the ability to perform highly difficult pieces, by the degree of virtuosity in approaching standardized repertoires, and by immediate receptivity to the mentor teacher's explanations regarding the content of the proposed score. Scientific research, on the other hand, requires reflexivity, critical thinking, and distancing oneself from the object of study. The transition from one model to the other involves an effort of intellectual reconversion and careful support from the coordinator, who must use the accumulation of interpretive skills without absolutizing it. We refer to this transition stage as one of the most important ethical challenges: how can the student's artistic identity be maintained without turning it into an obstacle to their theoretical development? (Fragkos, 2016).

Case studies and examples of good practice

In order to understand the practical applicability of the ethical principles discussed above, it is essential to analyze case studies or models of good practice drawn from the experience of scientific coordination of music students with intermediate training. These examples demonstrate that ethics is not just an abstract set of rules, but active teaching practice, configured in relation to the needs, level, and potential of the student.

Case study: structuring a research paper in a vocational context

At the UNAGE Faculty of Performance, Composition and Music Theory Studies, a final-year student enrolled in the *Music* program was encouraged to write a research paper on *The compositional style in Frédéric Chopin's piano studies*. Although her theoretical training was limited, she often stood out as a pianist in group recitals, acquiring rich interpretative experience in the romantic repertoire. Based on this premise, the coordinator suggested a gradual working model, which included three stages.

Guided reference exploration, with sources adapted to the student's level;

Writing short analyses on various topics instead of standard chapters to encourage personal expression;

Integrating elements of performing experience into the analysis of the pieces,

as a form of reflective expression.

This approach allowed for a coherent work, original in its personal angle of analysis and methodologically sound, without requiring a sophisticated theoretical apparatus. The coordinating professor's ethics consisted of respecting the student's training reality, relying on her authentic resources, and encouraging articulate musical thinking (Markham, 2017).

Good practice: learning through model analysis and dialogue

An effective principle in vocational coordination is learning through model analysis examples (Björk, 2023) an activity in which the coordinator suggests a model analysis fragment, discusses it with the student, and then they adapt it to fit the student's work. In this way, the young researcher does not formally imitate, but learns how to think in a structured way and write coherently. In the case of another bachelor's degree thesis written by a graduate of the *Music* program, thesis entitled -*Comparative stylistic aspects between Ludwig van Beethoven's Violin and Piano Sonata No. 5, Op. 24 and Johannes Brahms' Violin and Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 100* - this method was used successfully, with the student analyzing, together with the coordinator, pieces of the same genre from the Romantic and Neoclassical stylistic areas, then applying the same principles in the commentary on the works under consideration. Constant dialogue between the coordinator and the student, in the form of regular meetings, written feedback, and encouragement of self-assessment, was essential. The result was a rigorous thesis, which, although not pretending to be theoretically original, was valid in its consistency, argumentation, and judicious application of the tools learned.

Avoiding an inappropriate model: the failure of standardization

A telling counterexample is the imposition of a rigid academic model on a graduate with a bachelor's degree in *music*, whose perception of research activity can be located at an intermediate stage. In this case, they find themselves in the unenviable position of having to go through all the known stages of writing a rigorous scientific thesis in a condensed and superficial manner: complex critical apparatus, comparative analysis, extensive references. The result will materialize in a thesis lacking in-depth understanding, produced mechanically, with passages taken from partially verified sources, which, in turn, are integrated irrelevantly. From an ethical viewpoint, this approach becomes problematic, generating frustration and disengagement, without achieving the desired educational objective (London, 2022).

These examples support the idea that coordination ethics requires differentiated pedagogy (Lindner, Katharina-Theresa & Schwab, Susanne 2020), adjusted not only to the student's level of competence, but also to the specificity of the musical field. In arts education, rigor is not opposed to empathy, and high standards must also include the human and aesthetic dimensions of training.

Conclusions and perspectives

The ethics of scientific coordination of music students with intermediate specialized training cannot be confined to a simple set of academic conduct rules. It is a complex educational practice at the intersection between pedagogy, epistemology, and the psychology of training. The coordinator is not merely a specialist sharing knowledge, but also a mediator between artistic sensitivity and scientific rigor, between performative tradition and the demands of modern research.

Throughout this paper, it has been argued that ethics in this context implies:

- respect for the student's specific training and valuing their performing experience;
- promoting a climate of trust, dialogue, and reflection that encourages the development of scientific thinking;
- avoiding the imposition of unrealistic standards or rigid research patterns;
- assuming a formative role that balances exigency with empathy, criticism with support, professional distance with teaching openness.

A coordinator who is conscious of ethical principles does not abandon rigor, but adapts it to the student's level of understanding; does not impose their own views, but encourages the development of a personal critical voice; does not oversimplify the content or turn it into an insurmountable obstacle. Therefore, coordination is not an act of authority, but a process of formative guidance, oriented towards autonomy, reflexivity, and meaning.

In the long run, adopting solid ethics in coordinating students with vocational backgrounds contributes to:

- improving the quality of education in arts institutions;
- training reflective musicians who are capable not only of performing, but also of critically understanding the art they practice;
- encouraging interdisciplinarity and dialogue between music theory, aesthetics, pedagogy, and cultural sociology.

There is therefore a need for a constant rethinking of the role of the coordinator in relation to the transformations of contemporary music education, in a spirit of intellectual responsibility and ethical openness. Only in this way can the act of scientific coordination become a true space for training and intellectual emancipation for young musicians.

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Synergistic approaches in music academic education through designing interdisciplinary projects

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ABSTRACT: In today's education, both traditional and modern teaching methods are needed, as well as the teaching of theoretical knowledge specific to a particular discipline and the corroboration of information with terms, phenomena, and methods of systematization taken from other fields. This research aims to take a synergistic, multilateral, interdisciplinary approach to university music education by combining the knowledge taught in theoretical disciplines such as Musical Forms and Analysis, Music Theory, Music History, Stylistics, Harmony, Counterpoint and the organization of extracurricular activities, projects, partnerships between institutions with the purpose of implementing a viable strategy over time for the development of current and future generations of music students.

KEYWORDS: Teamwork; interdisciplinary approach; co-teaching; co-learning; blended/hybrid learning; open educational resources;

Introduction

Education is a complex process that is constantly changing, affecting all the parties involved, requiring teachers, professors, mentors in every institution to adapt, improve, and even transform in order to ensure the necessary and relevant updates in the context of cultural, social, and political conditions in general. Proposals for change and reform in education and contemporary society are inevitable because, over time, each historical era has brought with it different innovations, opportunities, and challenges in teaching and learning activities. The need for improvement and updating does not only refer to content, but also focuses on teaching methods, application, consolidation, evaluation, and the development of an adequate level of emotional intelligence on the part of the

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disciples, regardless of their age and level of study.

In the current period of the first decades of the 21st century, the educational process is becoming increasingly challenging for mentors and disciples equally, due to numerous changes in mentality, currents of thought, technological innovations, and global issues (immigration, pandemics, wars). The most challenging situations in a university teaching career arise when teachers must quickly find solutions to unexpected situations, adapt to new means of communication, and provide students with study materials, practical applications, learning exercises, and forms of knowledge assessment that motivate them to continue the learning process. An approach based on collaboration, cooperation, mutual support, and the stimulating circulation of ideas will always lead to better results in both teaching and learning, streamlining both teaching and research in the field of academic education.

Premises and general aspects of synergy

In general terms, **synergy** means interactive, multidirectional, and reciprocal cooperation between two or more entities (people, communities, organizations, subjects of study, etc.) to produce a stronger impact than the sum of their separate effects. The term comes from the Greek *synergos*, which means "to work together." In the *Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language*, *synergy* is defined in two ways: as the association of several organs or tissues to perform the same function, but also as "the combined power of a group of things when they are working together that is greater than the total power achieved by each working separately (Cambridge Dictionary on-line). Therefore, some basic aspects of synergy are:

- cooperation and collaboration, referring to the forms of activity through which those involved work together to achieve a common goal;
- complementarity, considering the individual skills and unique personal perspectives of each person involved in an activity, traits that complete each other, in order to create the aimed synergistic effect;
- exponential growth which, by the very meaning of the two associated terms, refers to the result of an activity achieved through participation and synergistic involvement (often greater than the sum of its parts). In other words, this parameter, created through collaboration and complementarity, determines achievements that exceed individual possibilities.

Synergy can be observed in many areas – science, technology, economics, education, culture –. The form in which it is promoted and implemented in work activities is the **team**, whose members can be more efficient together, can bring innovative ideas, and discover optimal solutions to challenging situations.

In university music education, synergy refers to the integration of knowledge that is specific to a discipline into other courses and subjects studied, due to the need to relate

to a broader context than that of a single discipline, through the intertwining of information and the circulation of ideas in a stimulating, interactive, and enlightening manner. Active collaboration between different disciplines of study serves to enrich the learning process for students and the methods of applying the knowledge they have assimilated, contributing to the creation of an educational experience that is as useful, enjoyable, and effective as possible. In academic contexts, music can not only be approached in an interdisciplinary manner, but **must** and **should** also be perceived by teachers and transmitted to students from a synergistic perspective by combining theoretical and practical, technical and aesthetic, normative and creative aspects, bringing together multiple points of view in order to provide a holistic understanding of music in all its dimensions. Therefore, collaboration between teachers and students is necessary, as is the use of effective methods, both traditional and modern, and the development of a learning environment that encourages teamwork, interaction, and creativity.

Analysis of literature

Previous research in studies and articles from specialized journals

Synergistic approaches in university music education are well represented in the specialised literature, focusing on the organisation and collaboration of disciplines, the adaptation of the *curriculum* to the context, and the use of different working methods to create a more consistent and effective learning environment.

A relatively recent study that caught our attention due to its direct approach to highlighting certain situations in higher education, not only in Europe, but also on other continents around the world, was written by Ashley Bear and David Skorton (2019). This research emphasizes and demonstrates the idea that holistic education, through the integration of the arts, humanities, natural sciences, and technology, helps students acquire skills and behavioural traits that are more attractive to employers, giving them the chance to develop a richer, more adaptable, and relaxed cultural and psychological profile adaptable, and relaxed, leading them to a balanced existence and a successful career. In the near future, one of the most important goals for university education will be to encourage students to discover and understand the connections between different forms of knowledge. The study strongly emphasizes the idea that employers are increasingly interested in individuals who are both professionally well-trained and capable of solving problems that go beyond the boundaries of disciplines or specializations. "In order to realize a vision of higher education that emphasize the importance of a holistic, integrative education, institutions must first ensure that effective teaching practices are a priority for faculty and administrators. This may mean re-examining incentive structures such as tenure and promotion criteria, which, as everyone knows, too often emphasize and reward publication and grant funding over teaching practices, integrative or otherwise." (Bear & Skorton, 2019, p. 62)

Another study that made a significant contribution to this area of research was published in 2005 by Patrick Schmidt, who explores ways in which music education can be reconceptualized and transformed using the pedagogical principles of renowned Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire (1921-1997). Schmidt argues that music should be understood as a "way of perceiving" and "a means of interacting with the world." (Schmidt, 2005, p. 9). Synergistic approaches inspired by P. Freire's pedagogy can transform music education, thanks to their emphasis on critical learning and collaborative pedagogy, which determine the power of music to influence human development as a transformative practice. According to the Brazilian philosopher, music should not be approached as a discipline, as an object of study, as this status creates a separation from the reality of the concerns of the world we live in, and music has always contributed to cultural, social, and historical transformations, becoming an integral and inseparable part of other concerns for human well-being and the development of society. If Freire saw education as a process of practicing freedom, in which students become aware of their power to act, Schmidt aims to analyse and demonstrate in his study how critical pedagogy can be applied in music education to actively engage pupils, students, disciples of any age to awaken their motivation, desire to get involved, and their initiative to take concrete actions to enjoy music and freely practice artistic activities. Dialogue is essential in Freirean pedagogy, being a two-way process through which teachers and students work together in an atmosphere of respect and collaboration. The transformative framework through which learning and studying music can encourage students' critical thinking must include a flexible *curriculum* that is relevant to students' experiences and interests, depending on cultural and social diversity. The role of teachers should be as facilitators of learning, guiding students toward discovering information from multiple sources, without imposing themselves as the sole sources of knowledge in the classroom. Schmidt emphasizes the need for a fundamental change in music teaching through the implementation of Freirean practices, in order to make the educational process more relevant, more connected to the general socio-human context and to the needs of students. The study proposes a model of music education that is not only instructive but also transformative, so as to create a secure, motivating, and stimulating learning environment for the development of students as social beings and future members of society.

Renée Crawford (2016) explores in another article the results of an online music education project used in a blended learning or hybrid learning context, an idea that was conceived and implemented with the aim of providing high-quality music learning resources for rural and isolated schools in Australia. Across all continents, it has become clear that teaching and learning pedagogy needs to be rethought for the 21st-century education systems, as a result of the growing needs and changing societal demands. Thus, in Australia, government authorities have expressed concern about the significant

discrepancy between the education promoted in classrooms and what happens in contexts outside of school. In response to this change in mentality brought about by economic, socio-political, and technological transformations, it has become imperative to apply online resources and applications, available to both teachers and students, in all subjects taught in schools, high schools, colleges, academies, and universities, regardless of the field of study.

The project, designed by a group of Australian teachers, is designed for online teaching of music subjects, due to the need identified in regions far from large cities, where there is a widespread problem with the efficiency of teaching methods and the poor quality of the technologies used in teaching both music and other subjects of study. In her research study, R. Crawford formulated three objectives for the project in response to the shortage of music education in the identified target areas: (1) to provide students and teachers in rural and isolated schools with access to high-quality learning materials and resources; (2) to facilitate the use of online music technology in a blended learning context and to engage students in online music composition; (3) to help build capacity within these schools to enable music education and the use of online technology to continue after the project ends. The premise of this project was to find sustainable ways to provide musical experiences and useful resources for students and teachers with limited opportunities to attend elite concerts or high-level artistic events due to location and cost. As education systems adapt to the challenges of the 21st century, blended learning will become a necessity in music education. The music project carried out in Australia was "an example of the positive learning and teaching outcomes that can occur when new technologies are implemented in an authentic and multidimensional way." (Crawford, 2016, p. 210)

Extensive research in individual books or collective volumes with a unifying theme

In addition to studies and articles published in specialized magazines, periodicals, and journals dedicated to both pre-university and academic music education, research topics in the areas of synergy, interdisciplinarity, collaborative teaching, team learning, and mixed methods through the integration of technology into teaching processes have also been addressed in more extensive works such as collective volumes with a unifying theme or individual books, in which these modern perspectives and strategies for working with pupils, students, disciples of different ages and developmental stages have been explored in depth.

Lindsay McGregor and Carol Webb (2019) explore in their volume how these approaches in university teaching can improve the entire educational process in the field of music. The book highlights the importance of integrating music with other academic fields, such as the social sciences, natural sciences, literature, and technology, through courses that combine music theory with aspects of music psychology, historiography with

socio-cultural context research, technology, and even engineering with musical composition and performance. It also discusses pedagogical methods that facilitate interdisciplinary learning, such as group projects, practical workshops, and the use of educational technology. The emphasis is on active assimilation and participatory involvement, with students being encouraged to collaborate to explore and solve complex problems together. However, the interdisciplinary approach also brings numerous challenges, the most important of which are the creation of a coherent and well-structured *curriculum* that effectively combines different disciplines, the need for close collaboration between faculties and departments through flexibility and openness to organizing workshops, communication sessions, and round tables, which involves the acquisition of adequate resources for the development of new teaching methods and educational events. The book emphasizes the need for continuous training and professional development for teachers in order to effectively implement interdisciplinary approaches.

Another significant book of research in this area of investigation is signed by Janet Salmons (2019), who presents strategies for encouraging collaboration among students both in classrooms and in online learning environments, providing examples of theoretical frameworks and case studies to illustrate effective collaborative learning practices. J. Salmons discusses the importance of creating learning environments that facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration and synergy, based on the idea that they aim to “synthesize multiple processes that involve both individual and collective efforts.” (Salmons, 2023, p. 13) Collaboration involves several types and degrees of cooperation, requiring a clear delineation of tasks from the outset of the project and the possibility of interfering with actions in case of need for support between members and mutual takeover of tasks. An important idea highlighted by the author is that successful collaboration requires a carefully thought-out work plan for finding and using material resources, managing and resolving possible crisis situations, and effectively managing work and interpersonal relationships. And in the case of online activities, team partners must agree on work strategies and the types of technology used, both for real-time synchronization and for individual activities, which must be carried out and completed within the time frame set for the efficient functioning of the entire team and the project.

An important source for research into synergy in contemporary music education is a volume bringing together theoretical works and practical case studies, edited by Helena Gaunt and Heidi Westerlund in their collective research published in 2013. The authors of the chapters have attempted to respond to the challenge of encouraging teachers and mentors in the field of music to become more aware of the multiple implications of interaction and collaboration in music learning, through the need to organize interdisciplinary projects, to introduce and apply collaborative teaching methods, active learning, or through individual courses, all of which are so necessary in

the contemporary context of rapid changes in the cultural industry and in higher education today. Among the topics covered in the studies in this volume are collaborative creativity, the creation of communities of practice, peer learning, collaborative teaching and learning (co-teaching and co-learning), assessment and curricular structures, challenges and opportunities in contemporary music education, emphasizing the need to prepare students for versatile careers that involve teamwork. We note the idea that “the dominant one-to-one mode of tuition has tended to be extended into group contexts, and specifically collaborative possibilities of learning have featured less. This situation is paradoxical: on the one hand music involves, as a necessary element of it, a great amount of individual work (e.g. Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 2008); on the other hand, music is largely collaborative in nature – music-making is rarely a solo affair. Collaboration takes place on multiple levels: between performers, between composers and performers, performers and audiences, teachers and students, and creative artists and their participants.” (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013, pp. 32-33). This volume offers numerous case studies from various higher music education institutions, presenting concrete examples of collaborative projects and educational initiatives. It highlights the role of technology in facilitating co-learning by using online platforms and digital tools that allow students to collaborate remotely. The future of collaborative learning looks at future trends and perspectives in education, emphasizing the need for innovation and adaptability in higher arts education programs.

Formulating a possible theory of synergy in university music education

In order to outline a possible theory of synergy in university music education, a multidimensional approach to this concept would be necessary, including the following aspects: the definition and conceptualization of synergy in the field of music, the philosophical and theoretical foundations of synergy in general, its origins, and theoretical models for unifying, multidisciplinary, and interconnected thinking, followed by pedagogical models and theories developed by worldwide-known musicians, whose work has led to the creation of validated, accredited, and practiced theories in music teaching in international educational systems, ultimately reaching the concrete methods and practices through which synergy can be applied in the academic curriculum in the field of music.

Defining and conceptualizing synergy in the field of music

Synergy can be defined as a dynamic interaction between the components of music education (both pre-university and university) that has the potential to generate results superior to those obtained through individual activity. This principle involves the fusion of the theoretical, practical, and creative aspects of music, both through an interdisciplinary approach and through collaboration between mentors (joint projects,

collaborative teaching, partnerships with teachers from other relevant institutions), between disciples (collaborative learning), between mentors and disciples, as well as between specialists in the same field of research who teach a discipline or between musicians with multiple activities who are concerned with a holistic perspective on music.

The philosophical and theoretical foundations of synergy in a general sense

The foundation on which such a theory of learning should be built requires the bringing together of powerful, interconnected ideas with enduring and universal value, applicable in any contemporary teaching and learning context – aspects formulated by Renée Crawford in a 2014 research study and which we have adapted for university/higher music education.

- **Valued knowledge** – Learning content, including skill development and teaching methods, should be considered relevant and necessary for social contexts. There are significant discrepancy and some tension between what educational institutions consider to be valuable knowledge in education and what students actually value.
- **Authentic learning** – Teaching and learning should be experience-based and connected to students' real-life learning environments. Students' lack of motivation and low interest in participating in classroom activities can be explained by the fact that the knowledge taught in educational institutions is not related to their daily experiences or the specific needs of their future careers, which is why the music they study is not perceived by them as authentic.
- **Multidimensional/non-linear learning** – Teaching and learning practices should reflect today's society, which is multifaceted due to the presence of electronic devices in most places where people live, work, and relax. Therefore, the teaching of music subjects should also integrate technology, online activity programs, and individual study using seamless platforms.

These three concepts work simultaneously, contributing to the holistic practice of learning and to the shaping of a particular phenomenon, referred to by R. Crawford (2014) as *the whole-person phenomenon*, emphasizing the essential impact of a synergistic perspective on the disciplines in the field of music, which involves numerous ramifications and interdisciplinary connections, and is imperative for the harmonious development of the human being, both in its internal structure, through its direct relationship with the psyche, reason, spirituality, and also in the relationship between humans and the external universe, through the way they integrate into different social, economic, and cultural environments.

Origins and theoretical models

In education, synergy is based on theories formulated in other fields of activity,

whose operating mechanism has proven effective in the arts education as well, by transposing basic principles into different contexts.

A theory that exemplifies this is **social constructivism**, promoted through other concepts specific to the field of education by Russian psychologist and theorist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), who emphasized the importance of social and cultural interactions in the cognitive development of human beings at all stages of life. Applying this theory to music education involves collaborative teaching and learning in groups of students. Vygotsky did not use the term “social constructivism” in his writings, but the ideas he promoted formed the basis of this theory:

- the social origin of the mind (Vygotsky believed that human mental and cognitive abilities are not biologically determined, but are created and shaped by using language in the process of interaction and construction of the cultural and social environment);
- the importance of cultural mediation (learning and development are mediated through cultural artifacts such as language, symbols, social tools, and knowledge is transmitted through cultural mediation, unable to develop in isolation from the social context);
- *Zone of Proximal Development* (Vygotsky introduced this concept, abbreviated as ZPD, referring to the difference between a child's current level of development and the level they can reach with the help of tools provided by people with a higher level of knowledge and experience);
- the significance of game and play (which were considered fundamental to children's development, building and practicing mediation skills) (Bruffee, 1986).

As a matter of fact, studies on the use of classroom discussions among students as learning methods are based on the theories that gave rise to social constructivism. Engaging in group discussions allows students to generalize, debate, and correlate their knowledge with each other, playing an essential role in increasing students' ability to test their ideas, synthesize the perspectives of others, and better understand what they are learning. Group discussions give students the opportunity to practice self-regulation, take ownership of their learning, and persevere in completing tasks, increasing motivation and stimulating collaboration skills to solve problems more effectively. In addition, the sense of belonging to a community and teacher-led collaboration in the classroom contribute to raising self-esteem and confidence in one's own abilities by creating opportunities to express oneself, defend a point of view, and discover solutions together with others.

Another theory that provides a solid foundation for theorizing synergy in education is that of **experiential learning**, proposed by the American educational theorist David Kolb (n. 1939). In the early 1970s, the *Experiential Learning Model* – ELM – (Kolb & Fry, 1975) was developed, which promoted learning through direct experience

and individual reflection, generating a cycle consisting of four stages: (1) concrete experience, (2) reflective observation, (3) abstract conceptualization, and (4) active experimentation of new concepts, followed by their repetition in the same order, generating a perpetual cycle of learning. Although this model is widely used in various fields, the theory has been criticized for its lack of flexibility and excessive simplification. Kolb also gained appreciation in the field of education for his *Learning Style Inventory* (LSI), which refers to the existence of two mutually continuous relationships that constitute the essence of learning:

Active experimentation ↔ Reflective observation
Abstract conceptualization ↔ Concrete experience

By associating each learning style with a principle from the other inter-influence report, four categories of disciples involved in the learning process emerge:

1. **converging** (active experimentation + abstract conceptualization), who are effective at applying ideas in practice and solving problems;
2. **diverging** (reflective observation + concrete experience), who are good at generating ideas and visualizing multiple perspectives;
3. **accommodating** (active experimentation + concrete experience), who are good at adapting to new situations and implementing strategic plans;
4. **assimilating** (reflective observation + abstract conceptualization), who are good at formulating theories and understanding abstract information. (Peterson & Kolb, 2017).

This "inventory" was designed to determine a person's learning preferences based on their native and acquired skills, in order to assimilate new knowledge and develop new skills. Learning is seen as a continuous, cyclical process, necessary throughout life, involving both thinking (observation and reflection) and action (personal experiences, and also application, testing of theoretical ideas). David Kolb's model is widely used in professional development, management and leadership training, both in pre-university and higher education, as well as in adult education courses.

In the context of music education, the principles of experiential learning can be applied to improve the teaching process by integrating theory and practice in the form of group projects, in which the four stages are followed and applied in a coherent learning cycle, using collaborative working methods and personalized development techniques in equal measure (adapting the learning styles identified by Kolb to help teachers personalize learning experiences to better suit the individual preferences and needs of students).

Educational models, pedagogical theories

In the context of music education, teachers, performers, composers, and researchers from different geographical areas and cultural backgrounds have become famous for

developing innovative educational models and pedagogical theories that can also be applied to promote synergy in the vocational academic curriculum. The theories developed by renowned musicians such as Zoltán Kodály, Carl Orff, Shinichi Suzuki, Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, and Edwin Elias Gordon are well known. Combining elements from the methodological systems created and implemented by these musicians, researchers, and educators can lead to the creation of integrative, holistic, comprehensive music education programs adapted to different learning styles and needs. Auditory training exercises inspired by Kodály develop musical literacy and sound comprehension skills. The involvement of parents and the community, promoted by the Suzuki method, creates a positive learning environment that stimulates student motivation and engagement. The movement activities proposed by Dalcroze are ideal for kinesthetics' learners, contributing to an understanding of rhythm and musical expressiveness through physical involvement. The Orff-Schulwerk approach, which integrates music, movement, speech, dramatization, and simple percussion instruments, stimulates creativity and active involvement in the process of musical creation. This multisensory method develops children's imagination and helps them experience music and other arts in a syncretic way. On the other hand, Gordon's method, focused on listening, helps students assimilate musical concepts into their own thought processes, contributing to cognitive development and artistic performance.

The **Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance** method was not "invented" by a particular teacher but has its origins in the intuitive practice valued by many musicians around the world, who are performers, teachers, composers, and theorists alike. The method is based on a strategy of working with students in group activities that require the involvement of a larger number of participants than classroom lessons, such as choirs, orchestras, and instrumental ensembles of various sizes. The method promotes a holistic approach to music education, integrating theoretical disciplines and musical analysis, vocal or instrumental performance, and even some notions, skills, and attempts at composition and conducting. Within this theory, rehearsals are not just activities for practicing performance together, but are approached as workshops in which students are encouraged to observe and understand the components of musical discourse (melody, rhythm, harmony, notation, timbre, form) by analysing the score to be rehearsed, as well as other musical works, by participating in various specialized courses, taking on "roles" such as vocal or instrumental performance, improvisation, arrangement, composition, conducting, and music analysis (information available on the website of Wisconsin Music Educators Association).

The Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance (CMP) project was initiated in the US state of Wisconsin in 1977 as a way to bring together and support teachers in improving music teaching and performance on various instruments through a deeper understanding of theoretical concepts and awareness of them during musical

practice. The project began with a group of music teachers from different school districts and a project steering committee that developed the administrative framework of the association. The teachers developed and tested a process for planning and conducting music instruction in target groups from different schools. The initial need for the project was formulated and argued by well-known educators such as Charles Benner, who wrote that "in order to have an impact on musical behaviour, there must be a planned effort on the part of the teacher to enrich the experience of performance with additional modes of musical understanding." (Benner, 1972) The choice of musical styles or genres to be addressed starts with an assessment of the student's needs or previous experiences, with the analysis facilitating the recognition of those musical elements that need to be learned in order to develop comprehensive musical competence through performance. Teachers' strategies aim to bring music and performers together so that effective learning and successful performance of a score take place through interweaving, complementing, and consolidating in the same work sessions. This vision promotes an integrative and inclusive form of music learning through teamwork, promoting cohesion among ensemble members, and approaching interdisciplinary knowledge in related musical disciplines, thus contributing to the creation of a coherent and flexible curriculum, the development of a music-specific vocational education system, and the deepening of artistic research.

By integrating these methods, teachers, mentors, and educators capitalize on the strengths of each approach, providing students with a diverse and important musical experience for harmonious development. A balanced educational strategy can integrate elements from each working system to access the artistic potential of students as deeply as possible, giving them the opportunity to develop their skills effectively, regardless of their learning style.

* * *

The following pedagogical models are not specific to the field of music, but are particularly relevant to educational systems around the world, having proven their effectiveness over time through numerous studies and research on these topics and through methods of implementing ideas drawn from theories originating in other fields of study, adapting them and applying them in teaching activities with different age groups and levels of experience.

Transformative pedagogy, theorized by Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, was mentioned and discussed in one of the previous chapters of this study, in which we discussed the existing literature on synergy in education. Even though it is not a method of teaching music *per se*, this approach is important in a general sense for the field of education, as it emphasizes the process of social and personal transformation, going beyond the transmission of knowledge from teacher to students. The key concept promoted by Freire is *critical consciousness*, whereby education should help students become aware of the social, economic, and political realities that influence their lives,

implying awareness of the general systems, critical analysis, sense of agency, action and transformation. The idea behind this education system is that there is no such thing as a neutral educational process, as education either functions as a tool used to shape the formation of generations according to the norms of society and to facilitate their integration into the logic of that system, or it becomes the *practice of freedom*, that is, a distinct path of formation and development of critical thinking through which students, future citizens of society, consciously confront the reality of their time and discover how to contribute to changing, correcting, or improving the system in which they live. In Freirean transformative pedagogy, the teaching process is based on dialogue, promoting the exchange of ideas between teachers and students in a relationship of equality, and education acquires extraordinary power as a practice of freedom, providing students with the thinking tools necessary to intervene in community life and in the socio-political decisions that influence their lives. Thus, students are encouraged to become co-creators of knowledge, not just passive recipients, so that education is an active, implicative and participatory process.

Co-teaching [Collaborative teaching] methods (Robinson * Schaible, 1995; Benjamin, 2000; Helms et al. 2005; Anderson & Landy, 2006; Bouck, 2007; Vlahopol, 2018) constitute a pedagogical approach in which two or more teachers work together, in an equal partnership, to design, plan, and organize lessons together and to implement common teaching, reinforcement, and assessment methods, providing personalized support and effective activities for a common group of pupils, students, disciples, aiming to optimize learning outcomes through the use of synergy and professional openness to novelty, diversity, and collaboration. The implementation of this working model in academic music education involves creating a curriculum that allows teachers to participate in each other's courses, encouraging continuous training through the possibility of traveling and regularly attending workshops and debates on the efficiency of higher music education, to ensure the development of projects and activities that integrate the principles of collaboration and the interweaving of knowledge assimilated in several disciplines and, as a much-desired outcome at the end of semesters or study cycles, to include the holistic assessment of students through evaluating methods that take into account their progress from multiple perspectives, in several directions of the training process and professionalization.

In the same area of collaborative education, there are numerous studies and research projects (Goodsell et al. 1992; Panitz & Panitz, 1997; Luce, 2001; Kelly, 2002; Nel & Wilkinson, 2006; Vlahopol, 2016) on the application of **Co-learning [collaborative learning] methods** among pupils and students, by organising them into small groups of three to four people, assigning distinct tasks to each team member, with the aim of achieving common learning objectives and obtaining better results together than individually. At the same time, this way of working contributes to the development of

communication skills and critical thinking through interaction and the ability to cooperate with colleagues through effective debates and the selection of optimal solutions. As a pedagogical strategy, collaborative learning aims to give students responsibility for their own learning, while the teacher rethinks their role in the classroom, changing their mindset from being the sole source of knowledge to that of a coordinator or team coach, directing the learning process by being among and alongside their students to facilitate the understanding of information and the use of knowledge acquired in team activities.

By applying these renowned pedagogical models, university music education can become more effective, providing students with a balanced and useful musical education in the long term.

Applying synergy in the academic curriculum in the field of music

In The concrete forms through which synergistic pedagogical approaches can be implemented are interdisciplinary activities, such as concerts, performances, recitals, as well as scientific events such as conferences, symposiums, communication sessions, or practical workshops, collaborative projects between teachers within the same discipline (courses with teams of teachers) and between mentors who teach different disciplines in the field of music (combined courses), cooperative tasks between students (group projects), creative or research laboratories, online digital platforms that meet the need for widely accessible and available educational resources (Open Educational Resources), Blended/Hybrid Learning methods (face-to-face teaching combined with distance learning, using digital programs and resources), sessions for presenting one's own work (compositions, arrangements, analyses, research, concert repertoires to be conducted, etc.) with critical feedback from peers and teachers, lessons or moments in the lesson dedicated to student self-assessment, in order to identify their own strengths and areas for improvement.

In the context of academic education, synergy can be achieved through various methods and professional practices that combine musical expertise with other fields:

a. Integrating ideas of individual contribution, creation and composition into the discipline of Theory. Solfeggio. Dictation

As students assimilate the fundamental principles of Music Theory, developing their skills in intonation of solfeggio pieces of varying degrees of difficulty and in the correct notation of musical dictations, this knowledge is supplemented, during the years of their studies, with increasingly advanced skills through the study of theoretical disciplines such as harmony, counterpoint, and musical forms. The assimilation of basic concepts and techniques in these areas of study allows their application in the process of composition. Thus, activities that stimulate musical creativity can also be approached with students studying specializations other than composition, through interactive workshops and practical projects, where students can experiment with their ideas, giving rise to original works. The analysis of established musical creations from the European academic

repertoire contributes even more to the creation of a deep connection between theoretical knowledge and practical application, developing students' imagination and their ability to use principles of construction, writing, and elaboration based on a thorough understanding of musical mechanisms.

b. Contextualizing compositional, performative, and analytical practices in historical contexts with their corresponding musical styles

Music history is a particularly vast and elaborate academic course, branching out into a multitude of connections with other theoretical and practical disciplines alike. Starting from learning about historical periods, artistic currents, and traditional compositional schools, as well as the styles, genres, and musical languages representative of each historical stage, every student must learn that all this knowledge is not only made of abstract notions and facts that took place in temporal sequences disconnected from our days, but consists of phenomena, conditions, and processes of universal circuit in constant motion, transformation, interaction. The social, cultural, economic, and political context determines the evolution of performance practices and the conditions for organizing events for the presentation of musical creations in different environments and locations (closed or open spaces, religious institutions or halls for cultural-artistic events, private or public places, intended for either a wide or limited audience). A synergistic approach to teaching music history may include listening to old recordings, studying manuscripts available in online archives, comparative analysis of two or more documentary sources, interpretations or critical commentaries from the same period, referring to the same musical phenomenon or the same performed work. Through this process, students learn to appreciate and distinguish between particular features of artistic currents, to understand how cultural and social contexts have shaped compositional styles, writing techniques, and performative practices, so that they can build in their minds an informed and authentic overview of music history.

c. Stimulating students' interest in ethnomusicology, world music traditions, and cultural studies in musicological research

Students can explore the diversity of musical traditions around the world, analysing not only elements of genre, style, and musical language, but also the social, cultural, and geographical context in which they were formed and developed. Cultural identity is a topic of current interest in all fields, and the way in which music reflects and influences different cultures around the world requires a special approach within the academic curriculum so that students can learn about, respect, and appreciate the values, traditions, and artistic concerns of other peoples, sometimes even learning about the social issues or conflicts that determine certain currents of thought, education, and artistic expression in a geographical-cultural area. Coordinating teachers can engage students in discussion and debate sessions, in individual or group research projects, which can result in research studies and bachelor's theses on topics related to these areas of interest. They

can also organize international mobility programs to facilitate the exchange of intercultural experiences, so that there are numerous benefits for a balanced understanding of global musical diversity, by connecting to the most authentic sources of documentation and experimentation.

d. The study of specific teaching methods and musical systems by integrating them into their historical context and adapting them to contemporary education

The pedagogical models described in subchapter 4.4. are referential methods in the field of music education worldwide, but they are not included and studied in all institutions that train future musicians. It is necessary for these methods to be studied primarily by students enrolled in programs focusing on music pedagogy or music in general, but also by future conductors, composers, musicologists, and performers, because any musician will need this knowledge in their career. Whether working with younger or older age groups, with children, young people, or adults, with individual students in instrument or singing lessons, with classes of students, or with choral or orchestral ensembles, etc., a musician must possess knowledge and skills related to teaching, in addition to the professional training corresponding to their specialization. The future is often unpredictable, and the subsequent path of a graduate in the field of music may undergo changes in direction and context, requiring the adaptation of acquired knowledge and experience to unforeseen situations. Therefore, knowledge of the Kodály, Orff, Suzuki, Dalcroze, Gordon, Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance, and transformative pedagogy methods, Co-teaching [collaborative teaching] and Co-learning [collaborative learning] methods are important in the training and development of future generations of musicians, as the specific nature of an artistic career generally involves working with people, interacting with the public, disciples, members of an ensemble, contact with the press, so communication skills and the ability to convey complex information in an essentialised form are necessary, through the ability to synthesise and simplify scholarly concepts and through the adaptative use of working tools specific to the aforementioned teaching methods.

All these ideas and techniques for applying the concept of synergy in academic music education promote a collaborative learning environment that is stimulating for both mentors and disciples, leading to significant changes in students' attitudes toward the subjects they are studying, in particular, and toward the learning process in general. An important idea to highlight is that synergistic approaches in the educational process do not seek to eliminate classical teaching methods (based on the teacher's lecture and the students' written notes), but aim to combine the traditional style with modern techniques, so that they coexist in a balanced and efficient way, promoting active learning, debate, testing, and the application of ideas.

Synergistic assessment also involves combining traditional forms of assessment with new methods, through daily or weekly observations, quick tests and questionnaires,

classroom discussions, questions and answers sessions, feedback on previously proposed topics and lessons taught in class, but also by requesting the writing of summary essays, diagrams with essential information on a given topic, oral presentations based on certain ideas suggested by the teacher, etc. A fair and effective assessment must always consider the improvement of the learning process in real time and the quantification of results at the end of a study unit, semester, or school/university year, to observe the degree of achievement of the teaching objectives. Thus, assessment adapted to a synergistic teaching-learning style involves both ongoing assessment (formative assessment) and final examination (summative assessment), as it aims at continuous learning, regular and frequent feedback, ongoing improvement of students' level, as well as the overall measurement of their progress and performance level, and their ability to synthesise and extract the necessary information from the knowledge they have assimilated so as to solve a specific task.

Conclusions – Benefits of synergistic approaches in university music education

A balanced educational system, involving both traditional methods and new techniques adapted to the contemporary context of life, which emphasizes both the stimulating evolution of teachers and the harmonious development of students, brings numerous benefits to all parties involved in this process, leading to an increase in the overall level of motivation, commitment, satisfaction, and preparation for a fulfilling career. Synergistic education values communication, cooperation, and creativity, contributing to the development of social skills and adaptability, improving individual expression and the ability to collaborate in team projects, taking responsibility, stimulating critical thinking, and discovering viable solutions.

Applying synergy in university music education requires a shift of paradigm in the pedagogical approach, necessary for the training and multilateral formation of future generations of musicians, so as to provide them with sufficient training to enter the field of work, perform at the highest level, and adapt to the dynamic demands of an artistic career in today's world, which is in constant motion and transformation. An integrative approach is essential for synergistic teaching processes, which must be designed in a structured and organized manner to enable students to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to use them as effectively as possible.

The implementation of a synergistic educational system will lead to improvements in academic performance in the short term, and in the long term, it will contribute to the development of a complex and versatile artistic personality, ensuring the multidimensional evolution of both students and mentors alike. Creating a holistic perspective on music helps young graduates integrate harmoniously into society,

providing them with the necessary tools for thinking about the essential role that music plays on all existential levels.

Therefore, synergy is both an educational strategy and a vital pragmatic perspective on the 21st century, encouraging people to think in multiple directions, observe connections, understand mechanisms, collaborate, and work effectively together in an increasingly interconnected and complex world.

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Pablo de Sarasate: *Zapateado* for violin and piano, op. 23, no. 2

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ABSTRACT: Pablo de Sarasate was a famous Spanish violinist and composer, internationally recognized for his perfect technique and refined expressiveness. A defining aspect of his musical language is his closeness to Spanish folklore. Sarasate was fascinated by the diversity and colorfulness of the traditional music of the regions of Spain, which he masterfully transposed into his own compositions. This synthesis between popular music and academic art was essential in defining a personal aesthetic, in which traditional dances, specific modes and Iberian rhythms acquire a noble, stylized expressiveness. An eloquent example of this synthesis is the series of Spanish Dances for violin and piano, pieces directly inspired by the folk dances specific to the various regions of Spain, from Andalusia to Navarre. In the composition process, Sarasate did not limit himself to the simple transcription of folk melodies, but combined pre-existing elements of national folklore (including quotations from folk songs, some taken from famous contemporary composers, others coming from anonymous oral tradition) with his own means of artistic expression. Thus, the Spanish Dances are not only works of violin virtuosity, but also creations of profound cultural authenticity.

KEYWORDS: Sarasate; Spanish; dances; violin; piano; analysis;

Introduction

Pablo de Sarasate (1844–1908) was a famous Spanish violinist and composer, internationally recognized for his perfect technique and refined expressiveness. Born in Pamplona, northern Spain, Sarasate demonstrated from an early age an extraordinary aptitude for music, especially for violin. At just eight years old, he gave his first public concert, astonishing audiences with his mastery of instrumental technique and the musical naturalness with which he interpreted difficult pieces.

His exceptional talent led him to further studies at the Paris Conservatory, where

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he became one of the most highly regarded students of his time. Throughout his career, Sarasate performed in the most important halls in the world, to the acclaim of European and American audiences alike. He was often compared to other great violinists of the time, such as Joseph Joachim or Henri Vieuxtemps, but his unique style, influenced by his Iberian roots, clearly differentiated him from his contemporaries.

In addition to his performing career, Sarasate was also a prolific composer. His works, mainly dedicated to the violin, highlight the technical and expressive potential of the instrument to the fullest. He composed numerous works for violin and orchestra, including the famous *Fantasias concertantes* on operatic themes (such as those from *Carmen* by Bizet or *Faust* by Gounod), as well as an impressive number of miniatures for violin and piano, virtuoso works that have secured him a significant place in the violin repertoire (Sagadia, 1977).

A defining aspect of Sarasate's musical language is his closeness to Spanish folklore. The violinist was fascinated by the diversity and colorfulness of the traditional music of the regions of Spain, which he masterfully transposed into his own compositions. This synthesis between popular music and academic art was essential in defining a personal aesthetic, in which traditional dances, specific modes and Iberian rhythms acquire a noble, stylized expressiveness. The series of *Spanish Dances* for violin and piano serves as a compelling illustration of this synthesis. Composed between 1877 and 1882, the collection was initiated by Sarasate and released by German publisher Fritz Simrock, in four volumes: Book I (Op. 21, 1878), Book II (Op. 22, 1879), Book III (Op. 23, 1880) and Book IV (Op. 26, 1882), each featuring iconic pieces such as the *Malagueña*, *Zapateado*, *Romanza andaluza* and *Vito* (Nagore-Ferrer, 2017).

These works are directly inspired by the folk dances specific to the various regions of Spain (from Andalusia to Navarra) and reflect a special rhythmic and melodic richness. In the composition process, Sarasate did not limit himself to the simple transcription of folk melodies, but combined pre-existing elements of national folklore (including quotations from folk songs, some taken from famous contemporary composers, others coming from anonymous oral tradition) with his own means of artistic expression. Thus, the Spanish Dances are not only works of violin virtuosity, but also creations of profound cultural authenticity.

Interpretative landmarks and technical rigor

Zapateado, op. 23, no. 2 by Pablo de Sarasate is a famous work in the violin repertoire, appreciated for its spectacular virtuosity and authentic Spanish character. *Zapateado* is part of the *Spanish Dances*, op. 23, being the second piece of this notebook, published in 1880.

The title refers to a traditional Spanish dance, specific to the Andalusia region,

characterized by the rapid and rhythmic beating of the dancer's feet on the floor (in Spanish, the word *zapato* means shoe). *Zapateado*, renowned for its vivacity and overflowing energy, is closely linked to the tradition of *flamenco* music, but also to the influences of gypsy music, both characterized by a special expressive force and an ardent temperament. *Flamenco* is a musical genre that emerged and developed in Spain, especially in the Andalusia region, characterized by a pronounced rhythm through the use of castanets (Laiu-Despău, 2007). Sarasate transposes all these characteristics musically with remarkable refinement and verve.

The work is composed in the key of *A major*, in 6/8 time and follows a free *rondeau* form, in which we will find contrasting sections that alternate in terms of themes and timbres, yet maintain their interdependence through an *ostinato* rhythm and the recurrence of the principal motifs (Teodorescu-Ciocănea, 2014). The overall structure is marked by the character of a *perpetuum mobile* (with the exception of the changing stanzas) and can be divided into four harmonic sections: A (*A Major*) - B (*D major*) - C (*D minor*) - A (*A major*).

The work opens in *Allegro*, with a short 19-measure Introduction; this energetic theme, first presented by the piano (mm. 1-14), is inspired by another *Zapateado*, composed for voice and piano by Isidoro Hernández and included in his album *Flores de España* (Pomés Jiménez, 2018). In the two figures below, we observe that Sarasate will retain the rhythmic pattern of measure 6/8, but will modify the tonality by replacing *D major* with *A major*:



Figure 1a Isidoro Hernández, *Zapateado* from *Flores de España*, mm. 13–17¹



Figure 1b Sarasate, *Zapateado*, op. 23, mm. 1 - 10²

¹ Note. Image from https://www.academia.edu/45563594/PABLO_SARASATES_SPANISH_DANCES_A_CONTEXTUAL_STUDY_AND_FLUTE_TRANSCRIPTIONS [Thesis_submitted_in_fulfillment_of_the_Degree_of_Doctor_of_Philosophy_in_Music_Performance], licensed under CC0

² Note. Image from [[https://imslp.org/wiki/Spanish_Dances,_Op.23_\(Sarasate,_Pablo_de\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Spanish_Dances,_Op.23_(Sarasate,_Pablo_de))], licensed under CC0

In the final five measures of the Introduction (mm. 15 - 19), the violin takes the lead through a very exuberant anacrusis *solo* passage, organized in repeated eighths of the sound *E* at perfect octave intervals in three different registers, with the role of preparing the appearance of the Refrain.

Stanza A (Refrain), built from two periods of wide breathing, $a = 15$ measures (20 - 34) and $a1 = 25$ measures (35 - 59), presents an extremely rhythmic and bouncy theme on the violin, based on a dotted rhythm, danced in *staccato* and *spiccato*. The Refrain-Theme has an energetic, rhythmic character, marked by precise accents and syncopations and is enriched with ornaments and double strings, doubled by an active and dynamic articulation of the fingers of the left hand:



Figure 2 Sarasate, *Zapateado*, op. 23, mm. 13 - 26³

In the first section, is required a controlled *spiccato*. It should be practiced first slowly, then with a metronome, gradually increasing the *tempo*. The rhythmic beats must be clearly marked in 6/8, without omitting the accents on the weak beats. The piano provides the harmonic basis of *A major* through an energetic *ostinato* rhythm, which imitates the guitar. It actively participates in the musical dialogue, sometimes taking over independent thematic fragments or creating dynamic echoes in coordination with the violin.

In the following period $a1$ (mm. 35 - 59), the musical discourse of the violin is enriched with various double stops, scalar passages in the high register and artificial scalar harmonics, which are alternated according to the dynamic evolution and emotional register changes of the melody. The double stops are used to highlight strong nuances (*f* and *ff*), while the harmonics and high register notes emphasize the contrasting, blurred character of the softer dynamics (*p*). In order to convey the general character of

³ Note. Image from [[https://imslp.org/wiki/Spanish_Dances,_Op.23_\(Sarasate,_Pablo_de\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Spanish_Dances,_Op.23_(Sarasate,_Pablo_de))], licensed under CC0

the piece (playful, full of verve, explosive, yet controlled), we must understand the percussive nature of the dance, emphasizing energy, rhythm and brilliance. The short phrases, thrown with precision, are constructed like exchanges in a *flamenco* duel between the dancer and the guitar.

The final nine measures of the secondary period (mm. 51 - 59), built in the form of an external expansion (4 + 4 + 1), have the role of completing and concluding the end of the first section through the cadential repetition of the I - V - I progression. This melody was taken by Sarasate from the Zarzuela *La guerra Santa* by Emilio Arrieta, entitled *Canción de Carranza*, no. 9 (Pomés Jiménez, 2018).

Zarzuela is a genre of Spanish musical performance, similar to *operetta* in which spoken dialogue is alternated with singing and dancing scenes (Corominas, 1980). The original melody, built through the *ostinato* repetition of some arpeggiated-type figures, is transposed on the violin from the key of *E major* to the key of *A major* and subsequently enriched by adding the left-hand *pizzicato* technique alternating with *legato* to emphasize Sarasate's characteristic violin virtuosity:



Figure 3a E. Arrieta, *Canción de Carranza*, no. 9, *La guerra Santa* (mm. 1 - 11)⁴



Figure 3b Sarasate, *Zapateado*, op. 23, mm. 50 - 58⁵

⁴ Note. Image from

[https://www.academia.edu/45563594/PABLO_SARASATES_SPANISH_DANCES_A_CONTEXTUAL_STUDY_AND_FLUTE_TRANSCRIPTIONS_Thesis_submitted_in_fulfillment_of_the_Degree_of_Doctor_of_Philosophy_in_Music_Performance], licensed under CC0

⁵ Note. Image from [[https://imslp.org/wiki/Spanish_Dances,_Op.23_\(Sarasate,_Pablo_de\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Spanish_Dances,_Op.23_(Sarasate,_Pablo_de))], licensed under CC0

From a technical and interpretative standpoint, in this section we must clearly differentiate between passages played expressively in *legato* (through precise control of the bow pressure on the string, intelligent bow distribution and the use of an wide *vibrato* adapted to the broad-breathing phrases) and those constructed in a *veloce* character (by achieving flexibility in the fingers joints and right-hand wrist, controlling the intonation in high positions and by maintaining the clarity of the left-hand finger articulation).

Stanza B (mm. 60 - 105) opens in *D major* and is composed as a contrasting episode, lyrical and slightly melancholic, yet still in an Iberian spirit. This section, also organized in two periods: b = 27 measures (60 - 86) and b1 = 19 measures (87 - 105), features a musical discourse for the violin based on the same dynamic and character alternation characteristic of the previous section:



Figure 4 Sarasate, Zapateado, op. 23, mm. 62 – 74⁶

Short lyrical fragments alternated rapidly with passages of an explosive, improvisational character, achieved through various violinistic techniques (varied bowing styles, such as *staccato*, *legato* or *spiccato*, double stops and three-note chords, wide-interval leaps, left-hand *pizzicato* alternated right-hand *pizzicato*), all of which require a controlled mastery of instrumental virtuosity. The final eight measures (95 - 102) of the secondary stanza, reintroduce the theme from Emilio Arrieta's *Zarzuela*, presented this time in *D major*.

Through a brief three-measure modulating passage (mm. 103 - 105), the composer transitions from *D major* to its parallel minor to prepare the appearance of the section C (mm. 106 - 178). This episode of violin bravura is organized into four periods: period c = 17 measures (106 - 122), period c1 = 16 measures (123 - 138), period c2 = 24 measures (139 - 162) and period c3 = 16 measures (163 - 178).

The foundational key of this section is *D minor*, with the exception of the final period c3, which suddenly shifts to *D major*. Each period of this section is organized into

⁶ Note. Image from [[https://imslp.org/wiki/Spanish_Dances,_Op.23_\(Sarasate,_Pablo_de\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Spanish_Dances,_Op.23_(Sarasate,_Pablo_de))], licensed under CC0

two symmetrical phrases, thematically similar, which are slightly enriched rhythmically and melodically following a variational pattern.

The first phrase of period c is constructed from ascending and descending scalar passages, marked by dramatic accents; the secondary phrase is varied rhythmically (through diminution), melodically (through the addition of passing tones) and technically (through the use of a spectacular bowing technique called flying *staccato*):



Figure 5 Sarasate, *Zapateado*, op. 23, mm. 106 - 122⁷

Unlike period c1, which is more lyrical, periods c2 and c3 are characterized by instrumental virtuosity; to underline and differentiate the contrasting nature of these thematic episodes, a breath must be created between the expressive arch of the lyrical section and the fireworks characteristic of the bravura passages:



Figure 6 Sarasate, *Zapateado*, op. 23, mm. 139 – 162⁸

⁷ Note. Image from [[https://imslp.org/wiki/Spanish_Dances,_Op.23_\(Sarasate,_Pablo_de\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Spanish_Dances,_Op.23_(Sarasate,_Pablo_de))], licensed under CC0

⁸ Note. Image from [[https://imslp.org/wiki/Spanish_Dances,_Op.23_\(Sarasate,_Pablo_de\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/Spanish_Dances,_Op.23_(Sarasate,_Pablo_de))], licensed under CC0

Through a nine-measure transition (mm. 179 - 187), constructed on an eighth-note *ostinato* pedal on *D*, the *Refrain* (mm. 188 - 227) is reintroduced. This final stanza unfolds identically in both theme and character, following the initial pattern.

Virtuosic passages are defined by spectacular bowing techniques such as flying *staccato*, *sautillé* or *ricochet*; these nearly acrobatic sections, rich in both technically and ornamentally variety, culminate in a triumphant final character. To master these articulations, it is recommended to practice in small groups of three or four notes per bow stroke, which allows the performer to sense the natural weight of the stick on the string, ensuring a spontaneous rather than forced bounce.

The composer also brings to attention other virtuoso violin techniques based on rapid scales and arpeggios passages, diversified by natural and artificial harmonics and alternating with on wide-interval leaps in the high register. The wide and warm *vibrato* in the melodic section must be alternated with the rapid and intense one in the tense passages. For each thematic evolution, the color of the timbral palette must be diversified. It is recommended to vary the articulation of the left-hand fingers in order to achieve differentiated musical expressivity.

Practicing in slow *tempo* is advised, using short fragments of four to eight measures, focusing attention on resolving each specific problem before accelerating. Work should also include simulating the performance in front of a mirror or a fictional audience, while emphasizing body expressivity to support the character of the piece through stage presence.

It is recommended to practice intonational accuracy on the double stops, both in lower positions and in the high register. Technical passages should be studied slowly, without *vibrato*, adding expression only later. Perfect synchronization between the left hand and the bow is essential. Left-hand *pizzicato* should be practiced separately, then alongside the bow to achieve coordination between both hands; this can create a theatrical yet precise effect. The differentiated use of *staccato* and *legato* combinations can highlight dramatic accents. The variety of attacks will evoke the impression of a *flamenco* improvisation. Finally, intelligent dynamic development can be achieved through the use of sudden contrasts (*pp* - *ff*).

This vibrant work, inspired by traditional dance from Andalusia, combines the energy of *flamenco* with the refinement of romantic virtuosity, an explosive dialogue between Iberian temperament and pure violin technique. Zapateado is more than a bravura piece; it is an artistic statement, an explosion of color and rhythm that requires the violinist not only mastery of technique, but also an authentic stage presence and Spanish expressiveness. The ideal performer does not just play the piece, but dances with the bow.

Conclusions

Through his work, Pablo de Sarasate made a decisive contribution to the affirmation of a Spanish musical identity in the landscape of European classical music and influenced entire generations of violinists and composers. His refined style, interpretative elegance and passion for folklore remain a source of inspiration in the world of violin music to this day.

Zapateado, op. 23, no. 2 is today one of the most popular and frequently performed works by Sarasate, being a regular in international violin competitions and solo recitals. Although it is part of the bravura repertoire, its musical value is not reduced to virtuosity because the piece has an authentic power of expression, which transcends technical difficulties.

Zapateado is an emblematic work for Sarasate's style: spectacular, virtuoso, deeply connected to the roots of Spanish culture. The piece perfectly synthesizes his artistic vision, an art of technical brilliance and Iberian passion, and remains one of the most technically demanding in the entire Romantic repertoire for violin.

The utilized violin techniques include:

- Various bowing features, such as *spiccato* and *sautillé*, employed to convey a rapid and percussive dance-like impression, or *ricochet*, where the bow bounces in a controlled manner on the strings to produce notes groupings in a single bow stroke;
- Double stops and natural and artificial harmonics, which embellish the texture and add color;
- Virtuoso passages in high positions, often alternating with rapid position changes;
- Left-hand *pizzicato* alternated with *staccato* and *legato*.

All these elements are used without a purpose; they serve the characteristic Spanish dance style of the *Zapateado*. The rhythm is accentuated, incisive, evoking exactly the pulsation of *flamenco*. Syncopation, eighth-note and sixteenth-note groupings and dotted values are frequently employed. Although the meter is 6/8, the auditory effect suggests an alternation between ternary and binary structures, leading the piece a vivid and unpredictable character. The melodies have a modal outline (influenced by folk modes, especially Dorian and Phrygian), often based on ornamented Spanish scales. Rapid descending motifs frequently appear, reminiscent of the vocal ornamentation of songs from Andalusia. Although the piece is conceived for violin and piano, the accompanying instrument is not a simple passive accompanist. In certain sections, the piano provides a compact orchestral texture, imitating the *flamenco* guitar through *staccato* chords and accentuated rhythms.

Sarasate does not only pursue technical effect, but creates a piece with a clear national identity. *Zapateado* is a demonstration of mastery and at the same time an

expression of the Spanish temperament: passionate and intense. Each musical phrase is thought out with precision, but also with apparent spontaneity, evoking a dancer improvising in real time. Through this stylistic recall, the composer manages to create a strongly suggestive atmosphere, in which music becomes a profound language, capable of transposing the listener into a sound universe dominated by movement and pure emotion. This vibrant impression not only captures attention, but also stirs the senses, remaining deeply imprinted in the affective memory of those who listen to it. The composer combines the essential characteristics of the noise produced by shoes during dancing (where anacrusic and syncopated rhythmic cells are marked by clear accents) with the various virtuoso violin techniques to enhance the restless and impulsive character, as if born from an irresistible inner need for liberation and the affirmation of a tumultuous identity. The intensity of the music conveys to the listener a sensation of continuous tension, but also of freedom and passion.

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Reconfiguring Plastic Arts Lessons Through International Method

Maria Negoita^a,

ABSTRACT: This article examines the reconfiguration of plastic arts education through international pedagogical methods in a globalized context. It emphasizes how integrating local artistic traditions with global STEAM and collaborative models fosters creativity, adaptability, and social responsibility in students. The study analyzes the interplay between traditional and modern approaches, the role of arts in developing global competencies, and the impact of innovative teaching on motivation. Drawing on international research, it offers holistic strategies for underfunded Romanian and Moldovan schools, highlighting the importance of arts education for critical thinking, empathy, and sustainable development, aligned with UNESCO objectives.

KEYWORDS: artistic education; global reconfiguration; STEAM integration; cultural awareness; pedagogical innovation;

Introduction

In the globalization era, artistic education, particularly plastic arts, contributes to the formation of creative and culturally aware citizens. Adapting lessons through international methods allows the integration of local traditions with modern approaches, inspired by STEAM programs and collaborative models, promoting an inclusive and innovative education (Desai, 2024).

The purpose of this study is to analyze the integration of traditional and modern methods in artistic education, highlighting the role of plastic arts in developing creativity and international competencies. Based on a review of recent literature, the article proposes a holistic approach for teachers in Romania and the Republic of Moldova, aiming to improve lessons and prepare students for an interconnected world by combining artistic, digital, and intercultural competencies (Buruntong et al., 2025).

In the digital era, plastic arts become a tool for the development of critical thinking

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and empathy. UNESCO emphasizes the role of artistic education in promoting social inclusion and innovation. However, in many systems, including the Romanian one, lessons remain traditional, without modern technologies or global perspectives. This discrepancy highlights the need to integrate elements from international programs, such as those in Finland or collaborative projects in the United States (Du & Nian, 2021).

The article is structured into four main sections, following the proposed plan: the necessity of plastic arts lessons and the integration of traditional and modern methods; their role in creativity and international competencies; a pedagogical model with international collaboration; and the impact on students' motivation and competencies. It will wrap up with conclusions and practical recommendations for implementation.

The necessity of plastic arts lessons and the integration of traditional and modern methods in an international style

Artistic education, particularly the plastic arts, is essential for holistic development, balancing cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions. In modern societies dominated by technology and STEM disciplines, the arts stimulate imagination, personal expression, and creative thinking, preventing the decline of skills for solving complex problems. The integration of traditional methods, such as drawing or sculpture, with modern approaches is necessary to align the curriculum with global standards, while preserving the connection with cultural heritage and relevance for digital generations (Naguliak & Rudoy, 2019).

Modern methods in artistic education, inspired by international practices, include digital art, augmented reality, interactive installations, and AI-based projects. In programs such as those at MoMA in the United States, students combine manual drawing with digital software (Adobe Photoshop, Blender), modernizing lessons and making art accessible even in disadvantaged areas. In Europe, initiatives such as Erasmus+ enable Romanian teachers to learn Finnish models of integrating art with nature, combining en plein air painting with digital techniques and 3D mapping (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2023).

A successful example comes from Malaysia, where STEAM programs have combined traditional arts with project-based learning (PBL), integrating manual drawing with digital 3D modeling and increasing engagement and creative competencies. This approach promotes multiculturalism and reduces prejudice. Platforms such as Google Arts & Culture facilitate virtual visits to global museums, combining traditional and digital experiences. Studies from Australia and Canada show that such methods reduce school dropout rates, and in Romania their adoption could revitalize the artistic curriculum, preparing students for a global creative economy (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2019).

Research indicates that cross-border cultural integration improves the quality of

education and provides perspectives on national identity in a global context. In Singapore, art programs combine traditional Asian techniques with Western digital tools, forming adaptable and innovative students. In Romania, applying this model could include projects in which students recreate traditional works using AI, stimulating curiosity and creativity (Lian, 2024).

Plastic arts play a major role in promoting social inclusion. Traditional methods can be adapted for students with special needs, while modern ones, such as tactile applications for the visually impaired, increase accessibility. In countries such as Sweden, the integration of art into inclusive education has increased the motivation of marginalized students. Without the adoption of international methods, educational systems risk perpetuating inequalities and marginalizing students from rural or disadvantaged backgrounds (Almqvist & Christophersen, 2017).

Additionally, the global economic context underscores this necessity: according to the World Economic Forum report, creative competencies will be among the most in-demand by 2030. Plastic arts lessons, reconfigured through international methods, can contribute to the development of these competencies by combining the traditional with the modern to create a resilient curriculum. For example, in Japan, art programs blend traditional calligraphy with digital design, preparing students for global creative industries (Arts Education Partnership, 2014).

The implementation of new methods faces challenges, such as teachers' resistance and the lack of technological resources. International models, for instance from South Korea, demonstrate that continuous professional development and partnerships with tech companies can overcome these barriers, while European funds can support the transition in Romania. The benefits include student development, the promotion of cultural dialogue, and the reduction of global tensions. In Italy, combining Renaissance art with virtual reality has increased student interest by 40%; in Romania, lessons could integrate Byzantine tradition with digital animations, connecting the past with the future (Pearson Education, 2010).

In conclusion, the integration of traditional and modern methods in an international style transforms plastic arts lessons from a marginal discipline into a driver of educational innovation. Without this reconfiguration, we risk missing the opportunity to form creative and adaptable generations.

The role of plastic arts lessons in creativity and international competencies

Plastic arts lessons stimulate creativity through free expression and experimentation, offering students the opportunity to explore drawing, painting, or sculpture. These activities develop divergent thinking, innovative problem-solving, and transferable cognitive skills, contributing to holistic development (Regent International

School, 2023).

Plastic arts foster cultural awareness and intercultural communication, helping students appreciate global diversity. By exploring artworks from various cultures, they cultivate empathy, adaptability, and cross-border collaboration, preparing themselves for global careers (Kennedy Center, 2022).

Students' creativity is amplified through interdisciplinary artistic programs that combine art with science and technology, stimulating innovation and critical thinking. Studies show that engagement in plastic arts improves performance in mathematics and reading due to the transfer of creative skills. Furthermore, the arts develop emotional resilience, helping students manage failures and persevere—key competencies in a global context (Juntunen & Partti, 2023).

Plastic arts lessons shape global citizens by addressing themes such as migration, inequality, and sustainability. Collaborative programs and culturally responsive curricula develop empathy, critical thinking, and creativity, preparing students for global competencies and intercultural connections (Hower, 2023).

Creativity in plastic arts stimulates innovation and the development of solutions to global challenges, while reducing stress and supporting emotional resilience. International approaches such as TAB (Teaching for Artistic Behavior), VTS (Visual Thinking Strategies), Reggio Emilia, Design Thinking, STEAM Integration, Project-Based Learning, Art-Led Inquiry, Digital Storytelling, Critical Pedagogy in Art, and Choice-Based Art Education promote intercultural competencies, critical reflection, and empathy. Curricula that celebrate diversity and artistic exchanges create safe spaces for expression and global dialogue. Thus, plastic arts become a vehicle for transformative education, preparing students for an interconnected and innovative world. Exposure to global artists and movements amplifies creativity, while interdisciplinary collaborations prepare students for competencies such as critical thinking and adaptability. In this way, plastic arts become a vehicle for transformative education, integrating creativity and intercultural competencies for a more connected world.

In conclusion, the role of plastic arts lessons is pivotal in cultivating creativity and international competencies, providing a framework for holistic and global development. By integrating these elements, artistic education prepares students for the challenges of the future.

Pedagogical Model with International Collaboration

An effective pedagogical model for reconfiguring plastic arts lessons must integrate elements of international collaboration, promoting a hybrid learning environment that combines online and face-to-face methods. This model draws on global experiences, such as those from international art networks, and aims to develop students' artistic, intercultural, and digital competencies. In the context of artistic education, where

resources are often limited, such a model offers opportunities for cross-border exchanges, facilitating access to diverse and innovative perspectives. The model proposed here, inspired by international practices, is called the Hybrid Collaborative Model (HCM) and involves partnerships between schools in different countries, using digital platforms for joint projects (Sramek et al., 2025).

The HCM begins with collaborative planning, where teachers from partner countries, such as Romania, Finland, or the United States, design joint lessons on global themes, such as sustainability or cultural identity. The selection of accessible digital platforms and the establishment of interaction rules promote respect for diversity and student engagement, with students contributing to the choice of themes and methods.

During implementation, students create hybrid works, combining traditional art techniques with digital elements, such as augmented reality or Blender software. Examples include integrating folk motifs with Asian styles through online exchanges and intercultural feedback, intensive workshops, and joint exhibitions.

Assessment is carried out through intercultural feedback, surveys, reflections, and visual documentation, analyzing the impact on competencies. The model develops empathy, critical thinking, and student motivation, demonstrating the effectiveness of international artistic education even under conditions of limited resources (New York University – Steinhardt, 2023).

The applicability of the HCM in Romania is achieved through European partnerships, such as Erasmus+, which enable collaborations with institutions from countries such as India or the USA, integrating visual storytelling programs and artistic performances. The model promotes project-based learning (PBL), in which students co-create installations or digital exhibitions, using visual journals and audio recordings to document the creative process. International collaboration includes teacher training through workshops and the exchange of best practices, facilitating the integration of the arts into the curriculum with ICT and other disciplines, while promoting social inclusion and holistic education (Escala et al., 2024).

The HCM promotes collaborative ecologies, using virtual worlds and interactive platforms to stimulate intercultural creativity and the digital skills required for the 21st century. International examples, such as Chile and Collective Body, show how virtual art projects develop a common visual language and overcome language barriers. Strategies include global knowledge networks, advocacy for funding, and partnerships with non-profit organizations, ensuring continuity and professional development. Interdisciplinary projects integrate visual arts with theater and music, and documentation becomes a tool for reflection, transforming classrooms into artistic laboratories. Through intercultural exchanges and experiences that celebrate diversity, the model supports inclusion, global awareness, and the development of intercultural dialogue skills.

The challenges of the HCM include institutional barriers and lack of support, but

strategies such as balanced partnerships and the selection of dynamic platforms help overcome them. Conversations with educators and students provide points for reflection and adaptation. In the Romanian context, the HCM can be implemented through Erasmus+, ensuring sustainability and impact (Patterson, 2025).

Through exposure to global artists, the HCM stimulates creativity and the integration of diverse influences, while interdisciplinary collaborations develop international competencies. Thus, the model becomes a tool for transformative education, offering an applicable framework for plastic arts lessons, promoting international collaboration and holistic development, with a significant impact on artistic education.

Impact on Students' Motivation and Competencies

Reconfiguring plastic arts lessons through international methods increases student motivation by making lessons culturally and emotionally relevant. The integration of visual arts transforms activities into interactive experiences, reducing school dropout rates and improving performance. Collaborative programs develop student autonomy and competence, while creative expression through drawing or digital projects reduces stress and strengthens self-confidence. Artistic experiences contribute to revitalizing attention and concentration in other disciplines, as demonstrated by programs in the USA and Europe (Kakungulu, 2024).

In addition to motivation, cognitive competencies are enhanced through plastic arts, developing skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving. Detailed observation of artworks encourages in-depth analysis, transferring these skills to mathematics or sciences. Studies indicate an improvement in academic performance among students exposed to visual arts, due to brain stimulation through creative processes that enhance memory and attention.

Social and emotional competencies also benefit, as art promotes empathy and collaboration. International group projects, in which students share cultural creations, reduce prejudice and improve intercultural communication. This holistic approach helps shape global citizens capable of navigating diversity, with measurable benefits in reducing school conflicts and increasing emotional resilience (Walden University, 2023).

In schools with integrated artistic programs, extrinsic motivation is transformed into intrinsic motivation through creative rewards, such as international virtual exhibitions. This motivates disadvantaged students by providing them with a sense of achievement and belonging. Research from Australia and Canada shows that such initiatives increase active participation, reduce absenteeism, and improve overall grades.

Artistic competencies themselves develop alongside digital ones through the integration of modern tools into lessons. Students learn to use design software, preparing themselves for careers in global creative industries. This impact is evident in STEAM programs, where art enhances technical competencies, stimulating innovation and

adaptability (Arts Education Partnership, 2014).

Student motivation is stimulated by intercultural feedback in collaborative projects, where appreciation from diverse perspectives increases self-esteem and reduces anxiety, enhancing enthusiasm for learning. In Romania, such models could support rural schools with limited access to the arts. Critical competencies developed in plastic arts, such as observation and interpretation, transfer to other fields as well, and the analysis of complex artworks improves cognitive skills and the understanding of abstract concepts (Tyler & Likova, 2012).

Plastic arts increase students' emotional engagement by providing an outlet for expressing feelings and reducing school burnout. International programs, such as those in Finland, show that daily integration of art increases happiness and the desire for exploration—an aspect of major importance in post-pandemic contexts. Intercultural competencies develop through exposure to global arts, promoting tolerance, empathy, and communication skills in multicultural environments, contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, according to UNESCO (Kisida & Bowen, 2019).

Plastic arts develop fine motor skills and coordination, which are essential for early development, and improve concentration as well as physical and mental health. Students with special needs benefit from the therapeutic effects, increasing motivation through tangible successes. Motivation is amplified by gamified elements in international lessons, such as online artistic competitions, which provide recognition and immediate rewards, stimulating perseverance and autonomous learning. In Malaysia, such methods have increased student engagement by 30% (University of Florida, 2022).

Exposure to the arts amplifies academic competencies, correlating positively with scores on standardized tests and developing transferable skills, such as information synthesis and applied creativity. Challenges, such as frustration from artistic failures, are transformed into lessons of resilience through appropriate guidance and international support. In Romania, global models offer scalable solutions for limited resources. In the long term, art stimulates the discovery of passions, inspires creative entrepreneurship, and contributes to the formation of motivated and competent adults, with a positive impact on society (Edutopia, 2023).

Reconfiguring plastic arts lessons develops digital, technical, and artistic competencies through the use of modern tools, such as AR, thus preparing students for the future. In rural schools, art provides access to global cultures, increasing motivation and reducing isolation, as demonstrated in Pakistan and India through low-cost programs. Emotional competencies are stimulated through artistic reflection, supporting resilience and mental health. Group projects and international collaborations encourage leadership, teamwork, and initiative. Thus, international methods enhance motivation, emotional engagement, and holistic development, promoting equitable and effective education.

Conclusions

Reconfiguring plastic arts lessons through international methods combines tradition with modern approaches (STEAM, Erasmus+). The model based on international collaboration and digital platforms stimulates hybrid projects and intercultural feedback, increasing students' motivation and competencies and forming global citizens. These methods support social inclusion, sustainability, and equitable education in the Republic of Moldova.

Recommendations. For the effective implementation of plastic arts lessons using international methods, the following are proposed: digital workshops and training sessions for teachers; Erasmus+ collaborations and international projects; prioritization of budgets for equipment and materials; evaluation through intercultural feedback and motivation indicators; integration of global themes and adaptation for students with special needs.

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Career coaching through the arts: an innovative approach to personal and professional development

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ABSTRACT: Coaching has become, over the past decades, a central concept in the field of personal and professional development. It goes beyond the simple transmission of information or advice, functioning rather as a process of accompaniment, reflection, and exploration of an individual's inner resources. This subchapter aims to clarify the definitions of coaching, its fundamental principles, and the connections it establishes with each person's life and career trajectory. There are numerous definitions of coaching proposed by specialists and international organizations. The International Coaching Federation (ICF) defines coaching as a partnership with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.

KEYWORDS: Self-awareness; goal setting; motivation; personal development; emotional intelligence;

Introduction

Coaching has become, over recent decades, a central concept in the field of personal and professional development. It goes beyond the mere transmission of information or advice, being rather a process of accompaniment, reflection, and exploration of an individual's inner resources. This subchapter aims to clarify the definitions of coaching, its fundamental principles, and the connections it establishes with each person's life and career path.

There are numerous definitions of coaching proposed by specialists and international organizations. The International Coaching Federation (ICF) defines coaching

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as “a partnership with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential” (Downey, 2014,, p. 30).

John Whitmore (2009), one of the pioneers of modern coaching, views coaching as “unlocking a person’s potential to maximize their own performance and to help them learn rather than be taught.” Thus, coaching is distinguished by its solution- and future-oriented focus, the exploration of open-ended questions, and the empowerment of the individual (Downey, 2014, p. 57).

Among the core principles of coaching are:

- Focusing on the person rather than the problem;
- Promoting responsibility and autonomy;
- Building a relationship based on trust and confidentiality;
- Orienting the process toward clear goals and measurable outcomes;
- Exploring the individual’s latent potential.

If you wish, I can also adapt this translation to a more academic, policy-oriented, or practice-focused style, depending on where it will be published (thesis, article, project proposal).

These principles are found in all forms of coaching, whether we refer to career coaching, educational coaching, organizational coaching, or arts-based coaching. Personal development, in turn, involves a continuous process of self-knowledge, growth, and the refinement of one’s own abilities (Brown, 2016, p. 3).

Coaching contributes significantly to this process by facilitating reflective experiences, stimulating awareness of values, and identifying strategies for development. Through open-ended questions and the techniques employed, the coach supports the individual in discovering inner resources, defining clear objectives, and building an action plan to achieve them.

On a professional level, coaching facilitates career orientation, decision-making regarding career pathways, and the development of leadership, communication, and collaboration competencies.

An essential aspect is that coaching does not provide ready-made solutions, but rather encourages individuals to construct their own answers. In this sense, professional coaching supports adaptation to changes in the labor market, the management of organizational challenges, and the achievement of a balance between personal and professional life.

The concept of coaching has its origins in high-performance sports and was later adopted in the fields of education, organizational psychology, and personal development. The term derives from the English word *coach*—trainer, mentor, guide—designating a person who supports the individual in the process of achieving personal and professional goals (Whitmore, 2009, p. 5).

John Whitmore, one of the founders of modern coaching, defines the concept as

follows: "Coaching is the art of helping others to learn for themselves rather than teaching them directly." This perspective shifts the focus from the transmission of knowledge to the stimulation of potential, autonomy, and awareness (Brown, 2016, p. 128). Sir John Whitmore (2009) defines coaching as a process of "unlocking a person's potential to maximize performance," while Timothy Gallwey (2000), in *The Inner Game of Work*, emphasizes the reflective dimension of the process, in which the client (coachee) clarifies their own internal barriers, developing self-confidence and clarity of purpose.

Methodological and artistic aspects

Furthermore, the International Coaching Federation (ICF, 2021) offers a globally recognized definition: "Coaching is a partnership between the coach and the client in a creative and thought-provoking process that inspires the individual to maximize their personal and professional potential" (Finch, 2019, p. 10).

Coaching is also grounded in well-established psychological theories, in particular:

- Humanistic psychology (Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, 1977), which emphasizes the individual's potential for self-actualization;
- Experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), which explains that deep learning occurs through reflection on experience;
- Positive psychology (Seligman, Csíkszentmihályi), which brings to the forefront well-being, resilience, and personal values;
- The GROW model (Goal–Reality–Options–Will), developed by Whitmore, which structures the coaching process into four essential stages: goal setting, analysis of reality, identification of options, and commitment to action (Albers, Michael J., 2018).

Thus, coaching is not limited to a counseling conversation, but represents a structured process based on active listening, reflective questioning, constructive feedback, and shared responsibility between the coach and the beneficiary.

Accordingly, personal development involves the continuous process through which an individual cultivates skills, attitudes, values, and inner resources in order to reach their full potential (Goleman, 2001). Coaching contributes to this process through:

- increasing self-awareness;
- clarifying personal values and intrinsic motivation;
- developing emotional competencies (empathy, self-regulation, resilience);
- stimulating critical and creative thinking;
- strengthening the balance between personal and professional life [5, p. 79].

According to Anthony Robbins (2017), personal coaching (life coaching) is "the art of guiding individuals toward conscious action, in alignment with their own values and goals." In this sense, coaching becomes a catalyst for personal transformation, helping individuals move from intention to action (Finch, 2019, p. 90).

In the professional sphere, coaching is used as a strategic tool for the development of leadership competencies, career management, organizational performance, and team effectiveness.

Richard Boyatzis (2008) emphasizes that “resonant leadership” involves the development of emotional intelligence and empathy—qualities that can be cultivated through coaching processes. In educational and university environments, coaching becomes a method of continuous professional development for teaching staff, stimulating self-reflection, motivation, and innovation in the teaching process (Zeus & Skiffington, 2002, 5, p. 170).

Professional coaching provides a safe space for exploring career goals, developing transversal competencies (communication, collaboration, strategic thinking), and creating a realistic and personalized action plan.

Coaching represents an integrative method for the development of the contemporary individual, unifying the personal and professional dimensions. While personal development focuses on self-knowledge and inner balance, professional development targets performance, competence, and adaptability. Coaching connects these dimensions within a dynamic process based on self-reflection, feedback, and action. Therefore, coaching becomes an essential instrument of transformative learning, fostering the transition from knowledge to wisdom, from individual performance to social contribution. A relevant example is the use of coaching in the university environment, where trainees/students are guided to discover their professional interests, develop self-confidence, and build a personalized career portfolio (Ciobanu, 2021, p. 27).

Likewise, in organizational settings, coaching is applied to team development, performance enhancement, and leadership formation. In personal life, coaching techniques help individuals set priorities, improve relationships, and sustain motivation.

Coaching is a powerful and flexible tool situated at the intersection of personal and professional development. By promoting self-awareness and stimulating inner resources, it supports individuals in the process of reaching their maximum potential. The relevance of coaching in contemporary society is emphasized by the growing need for adaptability, creativity, and authentic leadership (Ciobanu, 2021, p. 55).

Arts coaching is a special partnership between a coach (a kind of mentor or guide) and an artist. Its purpose is to help the artist achieve their goals, develop their potential, and overcome both creative and professional blocks.

It is not a traditional lesson in which someone shows you how to paint or sculpt. Instead of telling you what to do, an arts coach asks questions and helps you find the answers yourself. It is like a personal trainer, but for your mind and your artistic soul (Ciobanu, 2021, p. 104).

Here are some aspects addressed by a coach:

- Clarifying the vision: helping you define what you want to express through your

art and what your short- and long-term goals are.

- Overcoming creative blocks: when you feel “stuck” and lack inspiration, the coach helps you identify the causes of this situation and possible solutions.
- Developing discipline: offering support in establishing a working routine and remaining consistent.
- Professional aspects: guiding you in building a portfolio, promoting yourself, setting fair prices, or exhibiting your work.

The difference between a teacher, a mentor, and a coach:

- A teacher teaches specific techniques (for example, how to use watercolors).
- A mentor shares personal experience and offers advice based on their own life path.
- A coach helps you discover your own path and solutions, without imposing a particular method. The focus is on your personal development and the goals you have set for yourself.

Arts coaching helps you become a more confident artist, clearer in your intentions, and more effective in transforming your own potential (*Gagim, 2003, p. 97*). Arts coaching is based on the idea that artistic processes (music, literature, theatre, dance, visual arts) provide a safe and expressive framework for self-knowledge, creativity development, and the discovery of personal resources. Rather than being a simple transfer of knowledge, it focuses on dialogue, reflection, and creative experiences, where art becomes the main instrument of transformation.

The coach does not provide solutions, but creates a space for exploration through artistic exercises (musical improvisation, free drawing, theatrical role play, etc.), asks exploratory questions that stimulate reflection, guides participants toward awareness of inner resources and personal values, and encourages authentic expression—transforming artistic experience into insight (an insight represents a sudden and clear discovery of the true nature of something, a fundamental understanding of a situation, problem, or behavior; it often changes perspective and leads to effective solutions or action), applicable to both personal and professional life (*Brown, 2016, p. 107*).

For example, the image entitled “*How We Listen to Music*” presents a set of simple and clear steps for the conscious listening of a musical work. From the perspective of arts-based coaching, this image becomes a methodological guide that supports the development of attention, self-awareness, and personal expression through music. Below is a brief analysis of each point from a coaching perspective:

1. We create complete silence before the music begins. This stage reflects the creation of a space of safety and inner calm, essential in any coaching process. In arts-based coaching, initial silence creates the mental and emotional framework necessary for receptivity and mindful presence.
2. We focus on the aspects we need to follow in the musical work. *Coaching*

significance: this involves training selective awareness and observational capacity. The arts coach invites the client to observe not only sounds, but also emotions, memories, or inner images triggered by the music, thus developing guided introspection.

3. We maintain silence until the end of the musical piece. Cultivating patience and deep receptivity is an essential skill in personal development. Within an arts coaching framework, this attitude allows authentic insights to emerge, at each participant's own pace.
4. We get used to listening to music at an appropriately high volume. Choosing an "appropriate volume" symbolizes inner balance and the regulation of stimuli. In coaching terms, this corresponds to calibrating one's emotional intensity and developing self-regulation.
5. We wait a few moments for impressions to settle, then begin discussing the music we have listened to. This stage supports the integration of experience. Post-listening reflection is essential in arts-based coaching, as it allows the transition from emotional experience to conscious understanding and its expression through words, drawing, movement, or reflective writing.

This image is not merely a process of musical listening, but a comprehensive framework of artistic-reflective practice, perfectly integrable into arts-based coaching sessions. It cultivates deep listening, introspection, emotional self-regulation, and conscious expression—all of which are fundamental pillars of a personal transformation process through creative means.

Stages of arts-based coaching:

1. Establishing the relationship and objectives – clarifying intentions: personal development, career growth, emotional balance.
2. Activation through art – using an artistic exercise (music, poetry, dance, painting) that triggers emotions and thoughts.
3. Reflection – open discussion of the experiences and symbols that emerge.
4. Identification of resources – becoming aware of strengths, values, and motivations.
5. Application in the personal/professional sphere – developing an action plan inspired by the artistic experience.
6. Evaluation of progress – monitoring changes in attitudes, behavior, and outcomes.

According to the researcher Ion Gagim, music represents one of the most profound forms of manifestation of the human spirit, possessing a complex structure that goes beyond the acoustic sphere and extends into the domains of psychology, inner experience, and the relationship between the individual and the world. In Ion Gagim's view, music should be understood not only as a sonic art, but as a total psychological

phenomenon, since it simultaneously activates the fundamental dimensions of human existence: cognitive, affective, imagistic, volitional, sensory, and spiritual (Brown, 2016, p. 77).

The musicologist Ion Gagim emphasizes that music reaches a level of consciousness that transcends empirical psychology. It brings human beings closer to experiences of depth, meaning, and transcendent aspirations. From this perspective, music becomes a space of interiorization, a pathway toward identity and self-understanding.

This dimension is essential in arts-based coaching, where the beneficiary is encouraged to explore fundamental questions:

1. Who am I?
2. What am I seeking?
3. What is the meaning of my path?
4. What values define me?

Music facilitates these explorations through the mechanism of “inner resonance” (Gagim, 2003, p.93).

Conclusions

The arts are a transformative psychological instrument. They are not merely an object of study, but a living experience that shapes sensitivity, character, ways of relating, emotional balance, and the coherence of personality.

The musical process thus becomes a pathway to:

- psychological balance;
- activation of inner resources;
- expression of the deep self;
- refinement of aesthetic and existential experiences.

Any authentic contact with different forms of art awakens an inner dynamic within the individual: affective flows, mental representations, spiritual resonances, bodily sensations, and existential attitudes. From a psychological perspective, music does not merely “describe” emotions, but evokes genuine experiences, offering individuals the opportunity to encounter their deep self in a way that is not mediated by rationalization. This authenticity is essential in arts-based coaching, where working with emotions and personal meanings becomes a truly transformative process (Gagim, 2003, p.123).

Within the context of coaching, music functions as a symbolic catalyst, facilitating access to layers of personality that often remain inaccessible through rational discourse. A melody can activate latent resources, clarify inner tensions, or open new perspectives on the professional self.

Thus, exercises of conscious listening, vocal or instrumental improvisation are not merely artistic activities, but profound psychological practices capable of restoring

emotional balance and stimulating the reflective processes necessary for personal development—processes that are especially vital in the contemporary era of globalization and digitalization.

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The Formative Values of Decorative Arts in the Development of Transversal Competencies: Modern Educational Perspectives

Viorica Negruț^a

ABSTRACT: This paper analyzes the formative values of decorative arts in the contemporary educational context, highlighting how they contribute to the development of transversal competencies essential for the 21st century. Decorative art is no longer viewed solely through the lens of its utilitarian function, but becomes a complex pedagogical tool that emphasizes the details necessary for a harmonious psychological climate and for the development of aesthetic taste. The study demonstrates that practical activities such as modeling, ceramics, or tapestry act as catalysts for fine motor skills and coordination, having a direct impact on brain development at early ages. Beyond the motor aspect, the artistic process cultivates fundamental character traits such as patience, perseverance, and attention to detail, teaching students to manage frustration and transform mistakes into learning opportunities. The integration of decorative arts into the curriculum, through modern approaches such as project-based learning (PBL) and STEAM education, facilitates the decompartmentalization of disciplines and the formation of transferable skills in critical thinking and creativity. Creativity is defined in this context as “the seed of innovation,” being the main leadership competence required on today’s labor market. At the same time, the paper emphasizes the importance of collaboration and communication within collective artistic projects, where students learn to negotiate roles and assume responsibility for a shared final product. In conclusion, decorative arts represent a discovery-based learning environment that transforms education from a simple accumulation of theoretical knowledge into a process of self-knowledge and human emancipation.

KEYWORDS: Decorative art; transversal competencies; creativity; aesthetic education; interdisciplinarity; STEAM; critical thinking; fine motor skills;

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Introduction

Decorative art occupies a fundamental place in the contemporary environment, contributing significantly to the enhancement of the details required for a harmonious interior and to the creation of a healthy psychological climate. Beyond its aesthetic dimension, this field — which includes ceramics, textiles (tapestry, embroidery, and printed fabrics), artistic glass, and ornamental design — functions as a complex pedagogical instrument in the development of personality.

Within the context of modern education, the focus has shifted from the simple memorization of information toward the development of transversal competences (Lungu, n.d), which are essential for adapting to the rapid transformations of contemporary society and the labor market. Competence can be defined as an integrated system of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students mobilize in order to solve real-life problems.

Transversal competences such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, and autonomy represent priorities within European educational policies, as they contribute to the formation of an adaptable workforce and encourage active participation in democratic processes. Decorative arts provide a discovery-based learning framework that rekindles students' motivation and transforms the school from a space dedicated to the transmission of ready-made knowledge into an environment that promotes active exploration and experiential learning.

The Conceptual Framework of Aesthetic and Artistic Education

Aesthetic education (Rusu, n.d) represents the process of shaping personality through the experience and understanding of beauty found in nature, society, and art. Its main objective is the development of sensitivity and a general receptiveness toward the surrounding world. Although closely related, artistic education has a more specific scope, operating strictly within the sphere of artistic values (literature, music, and visual arts) in order to cultivate profound creative capacities.

In primary education, this formative process begins with sensory and perceptual training and gradually evolves toward the decoding and understanding of the symbolic language of artworks. Historically, decorative arts originated from essential practical needs – such as protecting the human body through textiles or preserving food in clay vessels – but they quickly evolved toward a synthesis between utilitarian purpose and spiritual expression.

This duality is essential in education, as students learn that an object should not only fulfill a functional role but also create a visual and tactile balance. The materials used, whether organic (such as wool or stone) or artificial (such as glass or plastic), generate different psychological responses and stimulate both visual and tactile perception. Consequently, through the study of decorative arts, the child does not merely produce

objects but gradually builds their own artistic and aesthetic culture (Gînju, 2022), becoming a *homo aestheticus* capable of understanding and experiencing life through the perspective of cultural values.

The Development of Critical Thinking and Creativity (Aspect 1)

Critical thinking (Cottrell, 2005) is frequently and incorrectly perceived as a “difficult” activity or as one limited exclusively to the academic environment. In reality, it represents a cognitive process through which facts are examined, analyzed, and interpreted in order to formulate well-grounded conclusions. Within the field of decorative arts, critical thinking (Şofron, 2010) is continuously exercised through the necessity of evaluating different options: selecting appropriate materials, choosing techniques that ensure durability (such as riveting or welding), and identifying optimal chromatic solutions that contribute to the compositional balance of the artwork.

The student does not merely execute technical operations mechanically but reflects on their choices, transforming the technical process into an exercise in logical reasoning and argumentation. Furthermore, creativity, is currently regarded as one of the most important leadership competencies. It should not be understood as a talent exclusive to artists, but rather as a capacity that can be systematically cultivated and developed through education.

Artistic education encourages exploratory behaviors and free, non-punitive forms of expression, offering students the autonomy required to move beyond previously established patterns of thinking. Decorative arts, through techniques such as batik or abstract tapestry, allow students to experiment with nonfigurative forms, fostering a mindset capable of identifying original solutions in situations where others perceive only obstacles. A contemporary educational strategy that supports this process is Design Thinking, which trains students to address real-world problems through empathy, creativity, experimentation, and iterative testing.

Interdisciplinarity and the Integrated Approach (Aspect 2)

Contemporary education increasingly promotes the transition from monodisciplinary approaches to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary models, thereby overcoming the rigid boundaries traditionally separating school subjects. One of the most representative educational frameworks in this direction is STEAM education, which integrates the arts with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in order to encourage holistic and innovative learning experiences.

Decorative arts (Spînu, 2019) represent an ideal field of convergence for such interdisciplinary connections. For instance, the creation of a ceramic object requires knowledge related to the chemistry of materials and the physics of the firing process, while textile design often relies on mathematical principles such as geometry, rhythm,

and symmetry. Another essential pedagogical approach in this context is Project-Based Learning (PBL). This method positions the student as an active participant in their own learning process, challenging them to solve authentic problems by designing and producing a concrete final product.

For example, a fashion design project or the creation of a collaborative decorative panel requires students to work cooperatively, manage time and resources effectively, and establish meaningful connections between theoretical knowledge and practical application. At the same time, the integration of modern technologies—such as virtual reality (VR) and 3D modeling—within the study of art history enables the virtual reconstruction of cultural heritage, offering immersive learning experiences that connect artistic, technological, and historical perspectives.

The Role of Decorative Arts in the Development of Practical and Social Skills

The creation of objects from materials such as clay, textile fibers, or glass has a significant impact on the development of fine motor skills. This capacity for coordination, precision, and control is essential for cognitive and neurological development, as manual activities involve a substantial part of the cerebral cortex.

Students who develop manual dexterity through modeling, textile techniques, or decorative drawing often demonstrate improved memory, concentration, and the ability to use a more complex and structured language. Beyond their aesthetic dimension, decorative arts contribute to the cultivation of fundamental character traits:

- Patience and perseverance are essential qualities fostered through artistic practice. The creative process is rarely instantaneous; activities such as weaving, ceramic firing, or textile sewing require time, attention, and sustained effort. Students also learn to manage frustration and transform mistakes into opportunities for reflection and improvement.
- Another important dimension is collaboration. Collective artistic projects, including murals, decorative installations, or public space interventions, encourage negotiation of ideas, responsibility for shared outcomes, and respect for diverse perspectives. Such experiences reduce conflict and strengthen the sense of belonging within the school community.
- Communication skills are also developed through the presentation and interpretation of artistic works. Students learn to articulate aesthetic choices, employ specialized vocabulary, and express personal ideas in a clear and structured manner.

Furthermore, decorative arts possess a significant therapeutic and formative value, supporting self-knowledge and emotional regulation. Artistic activities are particularly effective when working with students who experience social marginalization or learning

difficulties, as they provide alternative forms of expression and enhance self-confidence, thereby contributing to improved academic engagement.

Conclusions

In conclusion, decorative arts (Spînu, 2019) represent far more than simple activities of embellishment or manual practice; they function as complex educational tools that contribute to the holistic development of the individual. Their integration into the contemporary educational curriculum facilitates the development of essential transversal competencies (Lungu, n.d), including creativity, critical thinking (Cottrell, 2005), perseverance, and social interaction skills.

Within current educational paradigms (Bucur, n.d.), such as STEAM education and project-based learning, decorative arts acquire an increasingly relevant role in preparing students to become adaptable, reflective, and creative individuals in a rapidly changing society.

Therefore, the educational system should recognize and promote the formative potential of decorative arts, transforming the learning process into an authentic experience of personal and intellectual development. In this context, students are encouraged not only to understand what to learn and how to learn, but also why knowledge and creativity are fundamental for their personal and social development.

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PART II: FINE ARTS

Artistic Interiorization of the Horizon: A Five-Year Arts-Based Inquiry into Place, Light, and Lived Landscape

Ana-Maria Aprotosoai-
Iftimi^a

ABSTRACT: This article examines how sustained artistic engagement with the same landscape can transform an external view into an inner structure of perception, attachment, and creative knowledge. Based on a five-year arts-based autoethnographic inquiry conducted from a fixed observational point on Galata Hill, Iași, Romania, the study investigates the author-artist's repeated encounters with sunrise, sunset, seasonal rhythms, atmospheric changes, soil, wind, vegetation, and the lived materiality of place. The research corpus consists of photographs, drawings, paintings, reflective notes, and embodied observations generated through continuous contact with the same horizon. Methodologically, the article combines arts-based research, a/r/tographic inquiry, autoethnography, phenomenological orientation, and reflexive thematic analysis. Five interpretive themes are identified: the transformation of landscape into inner place; light as a mediator of perception; the pedagogy of natural elements; the body as an instrument of knowledge; and artistic practice as a mode of knowing. The article contributes to qualitative arts-based research by proposing the concept of artistic interiorization of the horizon, defined as the process through which repeated visual, embodied, and creative engagement with a landscape transforms an external horizon into a lived, affective, and generative structure of artistic knowledge. By situating a Romanian local landscape within international debates on place attachment, phenomenology, sensory inquiry, and arts-based research, the study offers a situated contribution to the understanding of art, environment, and lived experience.

KEYWORDS: arts-based research; autoethnography; a/r/tography; phenomenology of place; place attachment; landscape; artistic research; sunrise; sunset; sensory inquiry

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Introduction

The relationship between human beings and place has become an increasingly important concern in qualitative research, environmental psychology, art education, and artistic inquiry. In contemporary life, the acceleration of technological mediation, urban expansion, and everyday distraction can weaken the direct sensory relationship between the body, the natural world, and the rhythms of place. Yet places are not passive backgrounds. They are lived, perceived, remembered, worked, drawn, photographed, cultivated, and transformed through repeated experience.

This article explores the transformation of a particular landscape — Galata Hill in Iași, Romania — into an inner horizon of artistic perception. The inquiry began from a long-term personal and artistic engagement with the same place: a hill observed repeatedly over approximately five years from a relatively stable viewpoint. Through this sustained observation, the hill gradually ceased to be merely a visible landscape and became an affective, sensory, spiritual, and creative structure. What might appear to another observer as “a hill” became, through repeated artistic attention, “The Hill”: a lived place, a field of perception, and a source of artistic knowledge.

The study is grounded in a corpus of visual and reflective materials: several hundred photographs, drawings, paintings in watercolor, pastel and pencil, reflective notes, and embodied observations connected to gardening, soil, plants, wind, water scarcity, seasonal change, sunrise, sunset, and atmospheric transformation. These materials were produced through repeated contact with the same horizon and culminated in the exhibition *Dealul. Povești cu Soare răsare și Soare apune*.

The central research problem is not simply how a landscape is represented artistically, but how a landscape becomes interiorized through sustained artistic practice. The article therefore asks: How does repeated artistic observation transform an external landscape into an inner place? How do light, atmosphere, soil, plants, wind, and seasonal rhythms mediate this transformation? And how can photography, drawing, painting, and reflective writing function not only as aesthetic outputs, but also as qualitative data and modes of knowledge?

To address these questions, the article brings together arts-based research, a/r/tography, autoethnography, phenomenological inquiry, place attachment studies, and reflexive thematic analysis. It proposes the concept of artistic interiorization of the horizon to describe the process through which repeated visual, embodied, and creative engagement with the same landscape transforms an external horizon into an inner structure of perception, attachment, orientation, and artistic knowledge.

Theoretical Framework

Place, attachment, and lived landscape

Place is not reducible to physical location. It is constituted through experience, meaning, memory, affect, and embodied relation. Research on place attachment has shown that the relationship between people and places is complex, dynamic, and multidimensional. Scannell and Gifford (2010) propose a tripartite model of place attachment organized around person, process, and place. This model is especially relevant for the present inquiry because the artist's relationship with Galata Hill involves a personal history, affective and cognitive processes, and a specific material environment.

Lewicka (2011) notes that, despite globalization and mobility, places continue to function as objects of strong attachment. However, she also argues that place attachment research has often emphasized the individual more than the place itself or the processes through which place becomes meaningful. The present study responds to this gap by examining how attachment is formed through repeated observation, artistic production, bodily engagement, and seasonal exposure to the same landscape.

Manzo (2003) argues that emotional relationships with places are not limited to domestic or idealized settings. They may include a broad range of emotions and physical environments. This is significant for the present research, where attachment to the hill emerges not through comfort alone, but also through difficulty: wind, drought, insufficient water, waiting, failed growth, bodily effort, and the gradual learning of natural rhythms.

Stedman (2003) emphasizes that the physical environment contributes substantially to sense of place. Meanings are not purely social constructions; landscape attributes matter. In this inquiry, the hill's altitude, openness, wind exposure, soil composition, vegetation, horizon line, and solar visibility are not neutral details. They actively shape the artist's perception, bodily experience, and creative response.

Thus, the article approaches Galata Hill not as scenery, but as a lived landscape: a material, affective, temporal, and artistic field.

Arts-based research and a/r/tography

Arts-based research provides a methodological framework for understanding artistic practice as a way of producing knowledge. Rather than treating art as illustration or decoration, arts-based inquiry recognizes that making, sensing, imaging, and reflecting can generate forms of understanding that are not fully accessible through discursive language alone.

Springgay, Irwin, and Kind (2005) describe a/r/tography as living inquiry through art and text. A/r/tography is particularly relevant here because the researcher is simultaneously artist, researcher, and interpreter of lived experience. The distinction between making and knowing becomes porous: the painting, the photograph, the

drawing, and the reflective note are not separate from inquiry, but part of the inquiry itself.

La Jevic and Springgay (2008) further emphasize the embodied and ethical dimensions of a/r/tography. Their focus on visual journals and embodiment supports the present study's treatment of drawings, paintings, and reflective notes as intertextual spaces in which image, body, and meaning are co-produced.

More recently, Lasczik, Hotko, Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles, and McGahey (2022) have developed propositional a/r/tography as an analytical protocol, suggesting that a/r/tographic renderings can function as analytical gateways rather than merely as expressive outcomes. This perspective is important for the present article because the visual corpus — photographs, drawings, paintings — is not interpreted as secondary evidence but as an active field of analysis.

Illeris, Fossnes, and Anundsen (2024) propose the concept of “landtimescaping” through a/r/tographic fieldwork with a landscape in Southern Norway. Their work is close to the present inquiry in its concern with landscape, time, land, and artistic fieldwork. However, the present study differs by focusing on a single Romanian hill, a fixed horizon, the recurring phenomena of sunrise and sunset, and the gradual interiorization of place through individual artistic practice.

Autoethnography, reflexivity, and lived experience

Autoethnography allows personal experience to become a legitimate site of cultural and qualitative inquiry. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011) describe autoethnography as an approach that uses personal experience to describe and analyze broader cultural experience. In the present study, the artist's relationship with Galata Hill is personal, but it is not merely private. It opens broader questions about how humans relate to land, light, place, time, ecological rhythms, and artistic formation.

The study also draws on phenomenological orientation because it is concerned with lived experience: how the hill is seen, felt, worked, remembered, and transformed through perception. CohenMiller (2018) demonstrates the value of visual arts as a tool within phenomenological research, especially when visual expression enables access to dimensions of experience that are difficult to articulate verbally.

Reflexivity is essential because the researcher is not a detached observer. The artist's training, affective attachment, bodily involvement, family history, spiritual sensitivity, and long-term contact with the land shape the selection, interpretation, and meaning of the data. Following Levitt et al. (2018), the article makes the researcher's position explicit in order to strengthen transparency and qualitative rigor.

Aesthetic experience and transformation

Klein (2018) argues that everyday landscapes can become sites of aesthetic awareness, mindfulness, and transformative learning. This idea is central to the present article. Galata

Hill is not an extraordinary tourist destination or monumental landscape. Its significance emerges from sustained attention. The ordinary becomes transformative through repetition, artistic sensitivity, and embodied relation.

The study therefore approaches landscape not only as an object of representation, but also as a pedagogical force. The hill teaches rhythm, waiting, resistance, vulnerability, and perception. The elements — earth, water, air, heat, light — become agents in the formation of artistic and inner knowledge.

Methodology: Artistic Research as Phenomenological Practice

Research design

This study adopts an arts-based autoethnographic phenomenological design, informed by a/r/tographic inquiry and analyzed through reflexive thematic analysis. The design is appropriate because the research does not rely on interviews with external participants, surveys, or experimental procedures. Instead, it examines a longitudinal corpus generated by the artist-researcher through repeated observation and creative engagement with the same landscape. The researcher is both the producer of the artistic materials and the interpreter of the lived experience from which those materials emerged.

The inquiry is qualitative, interpretive, reflexive, and situated. It does not aim to generalize statistically, but to produce transferable conceptual understanding regarding the relationship between place, perception, art, and inner transformation.

Research context

The research was conducted on Galata Hill, one of the hills surrounding the city of Iași, Romania. The observational point is situated on a ridge, approximately 133 meters above sea level, with a panoramic opening toward the horizon. From this position, the artist observed another ridge of the hill, a valley-like space with vegetation, old trees, young trees, meadows, shrubs, gardens, scattered houses, and a solitary white house positioned near the edge of the opposite hill.

The site allowed repeated observation of sunrise and sunset, as well as variations in light, atmosphere, wind, seasonal vegetation, and horizon line. The place was also connected to gardening and family life. The artist worked the soil, planted trees and flowers, observed plant growth, experienced water scarcity, and encountered the strong winds characteristic of the hilltop position.

The landscape was therefore not only viewed from a distance. It was inhabited, cultivated, touched, worked, and emotionally invested.

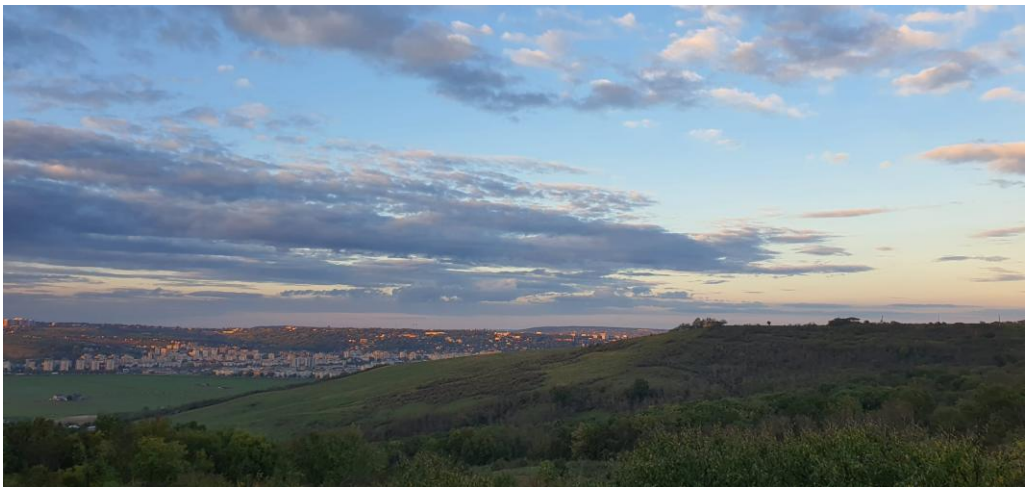


Figure 1. Sunrise observed from the fixed viewpoint. The image illustrates the role of morning light as a temporal and perceptual threshold in the artist’s relation to place.

Data corpus

The empirical corpus consists of longitudinal observations, photographic documentation, drawings, paintings, reflective notes, embodied gardening observations, atmospheric and sensory observations, and exhibition-related material. These data were generated through approximately five years of repeated engagement with the same landscape.

The corpus was not produced for a conventional research project at the outset. Rather, it emerged through artistic life-practice and was later organized as a qualitative research corpus. This is consistent with arts-based and autoethnographic approaches, where lived practice and research inquiry may develop in interwoven ways.

The research corpus was organized into several categories of qualitative data. These categories include visual, textual, sensory, embodied, and artistic materials generated through repeated engagement with the same landscape. Table 1 summarizes the main data types, their mode of generation, analytical function, and contribution to the study.

Table 1
Data Corpus and Analytical Treatment

Data type	Source / mode of generation	Approximate scope	Analytical function	Contribution to the study
Longitudinal field observations	Repeated observation from the same viewpoint on Galata Hill, Iași	Approx. five years	Documents continuity, repetition, seasonal variation, and perceptual	Supports the analysis of how a landscape becomes an inner place through sustained attention

Data type	Source / mode of generation	Approximate scope	Analytical function	Contribution to the study
			transformation	
Photographic documentation	Photographs of sunrise, sunset, atmospheric change, vegetation, horizon, surrounding houses, and seasonal transformations	Several hundred photographs	Visual archive; observation of light, weather, and temporal change	Supports the themes of light, horizon, temporality, and visual transformation
Drawings	Pencil and other graphic studies based on direct or remembered observation	Multiple works produced across the observation period	Slows perception; translates visual experience into line, rhythm, and structure	Supports the claim that artistic practice functions as a mode of inquiry
Paintings	Watercolor, pastel, and other pictorial works inspired by the hill, sunrise, sunset, plants, and atmosphere	Multiple works, including works related to the exhibition	Transforms sensory and emotional experience into color, composition, and pictorial atmosphere	Supports the theme of artistic interiorization of the horizon
Reflective notes	Written reflections on perception, place, light, atmosphere, emotional states, spiritual relation, and artistic process	Notes accumulated throughout the process	Provides reflexive access to the artist-researcher's lived experience	Supports autoethnographic and phenomenological interpretation
Embodied gardening observations	Manual work with soil, plants, water scarcity, wind exposure, heat, shade, growth, and seasonal cycles	Recurrent observations over several years	Connects visual perception with bodily, ecological, and material experience	Supports the theme "the pedagogy of natural elements"

Data type	Source / mode of generation	Approximate scope	Analytical function	Contribution to the study
Atmospheric and sensory observations	Observations of wind, fog, rain, heat, air quality, light intensity, and bodily sensation	Repeated observations across seasons and times of day	Captures the multisensory dimension of place	Supports the argument that the body is an instrument of knowledge
Exhibition material	Works and conceptual material connected to <i>Dealul. Povești cu Soare răsară și Soare apune</i>	Exhibition, August 2025	Serves as artistic synthesis of the research process	Shows how long-term observation culminated in public artistic expression

Alignment between research questions and data sources

To strengthen methodological transparency, the research questions were aligned with the main data sources and analytical focus. This alignment clarifies how each category of data contributes to the interpretive claims of the study.

Table 2
Alignment Between Research Questions, Data Sources, and Analytical Strategy

Research question	Main data sources	Analytical focus	Expected finding
RQ1. How does repeated artistic observation transform an external landscape into an inner place of perception and meaning?	Longitudinal observations; reflective notes; drawings; paintings	Repetition, attachment, interiorization, affective relation to place	The landscape becomes an inner horizon through sustained artistic attention
RQ2. How do light, sunrise, sunset, atmosphere, soil, wind, vegetation, and seasonal rhythms mediate the artist's relationship with place?	Photographs; atmospheric observations; gardening observations; sensory notes	Light, temporality, natural elements, bodily perception	Natural elements as mediators of perception and inner transformation
RQ3. In what ways can photography, drawing, painting, and writing function as notes?	Photographs; drawings; paintings; reflective paintings; exhibition notes	Artistic process, visual analysis, reflexive knowledge	Artistic practice as both method and result of inquiry

Research question	Main data sources	Analytical focus	Expected finding
qualitative data and material modes of artistic knowledge?		production	

Researcher positionality and reflexivity

The researcher is an artist whose long-term relation with the hill shaped the research process. The observations are not neutral recordings of an external object, but situated perceptions shaped by artistic training, bodily presence, emotional investment, and repeated exposure to the same place.

The artist’s sensitivity to color, light, form, atmosphere, and composition influenced what was noticed and how it was interpreted. At the same time, manual work with the land — digging, planting, watering, waiting, observing growth and failure — introduced a bodily and ecological dimension to the inquiry. The researcher’s position is therefore not a limitation to be erased, but a condition of knowledge production.

Reflexivity was maintained by treating the visual materials and notes not as transparent evidence, but as interpretive traces of a relationship between artist and place. The analysis therefore attends to how perception was formed, not only to what was perceived.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019). The analysis involved five main stages.

First, the visual and written corpus was reviewed repeatedly to identify recurring perceptual, affective, and material motifs. Second, initial codes were generated, including: light change, horizon, waiting, wind, soil, plant resistance, bodily calm, sunrise movement, sunset color, water scarcity, artistic translation, and attachment. Third, these codes were grouped into broader interpretive themes. Fourth, the themes were reviewed in relation to the visual corpus and reflective notes. Fifth, the concept of **artistic interiorization of the horizon** was developed as a theoretical synthesis of the findings.

The themes were not treated as discoveries that simply emerged from the data. In line with reflexive thematic analysis, they were constructed through sustained interpretive engagement between the researcher, the corpus, the artistic process, and the theoretical framework.

Findings

From landscape to inner place

The first theme concerns the transformation of the hill from an external landscape into an inner place. At the beginning of the process, the hill could be perceived as a geographical form: a ridge, a view, a natural scene. Over time, however, repeated

observation changed its status. It became a point of orientation, a site of return, and an affective structure within the artist's inner life.

The distinction between "a hill" and "The Hill" is central. This linguistic shift marks a deeper phenomenological transformation. The place is no longer interchangeable with other landscapes. It becomes singular. It acquires density, memory, rhythm, and presence.

This transformation occurred through repetition. The same horizon was observed under changing conditions: morning, evening, spring, summer, autumn, winter, rain, fog, heat, wind, silence, and sound. Through repetition, the hill became familiar, but not exhausted. Each return revealed difference. The landscape remained the same and became different at the same time.

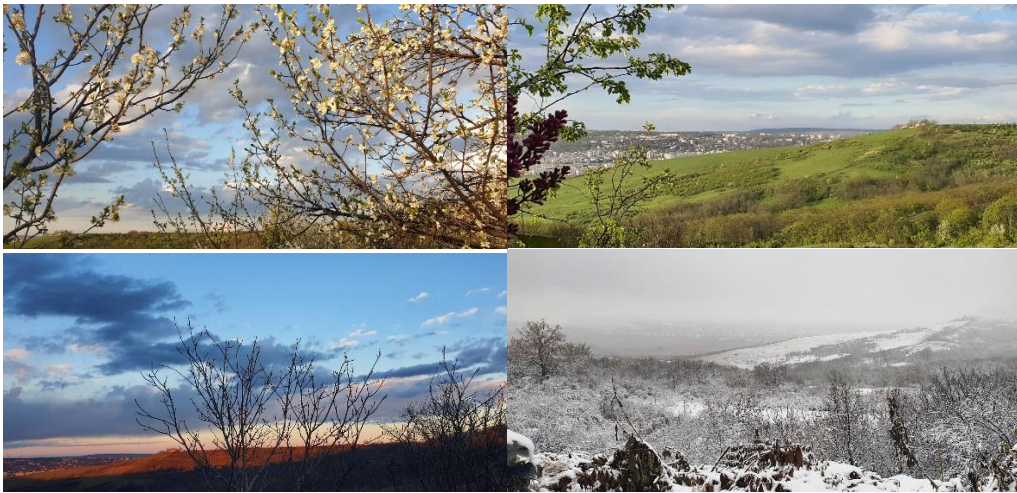


Figure 2. Seasonal variations of the same observational horizon: spring, summer, autumn, and winter. The panel demonstrates the longitudinal character of the visual corpus and the changing atmospheric identity of the place

This finding extends place attachment theory by showing how attachment is not only an emotional bond with a location, but also a perceptual discipline. The artist learns to see the place by returning to it. The hill becomes interior not because it is possessed, but because it is repeatedly encountered, attended to, and re-created through artistic practice.

Light as a mediator of perception

The second theme concerns light as a mediator between landscape and inner experience. Sunrise and sunset functioned as temporal anchors of the inquiry. They marked the beginning and ending of days, but also opened a field of visual and affective transformation.

The artist observed the changing position of the sun across the year, the quality of morning light, the chromatic intensity of sunset, the emergence of fog, the movement of

clouds, and the way atmosphere altered the visibility of the hill. Light did not merely illuminate the landscape. It changed the meaning of the landscape.



Figure 3. Sunrise observed from the fixed viewpoint. The image illustrates the role of morning light as a temporal and perceptual threshold in the artist's relation to place.

Morning light was associated with emergence, freshness, and awakening. Sunset light was associated with closure, contemplation, and intensity. The horizon became a threshold: a line where the visible and invisible, the material and spiritual, the exterior and interior met.

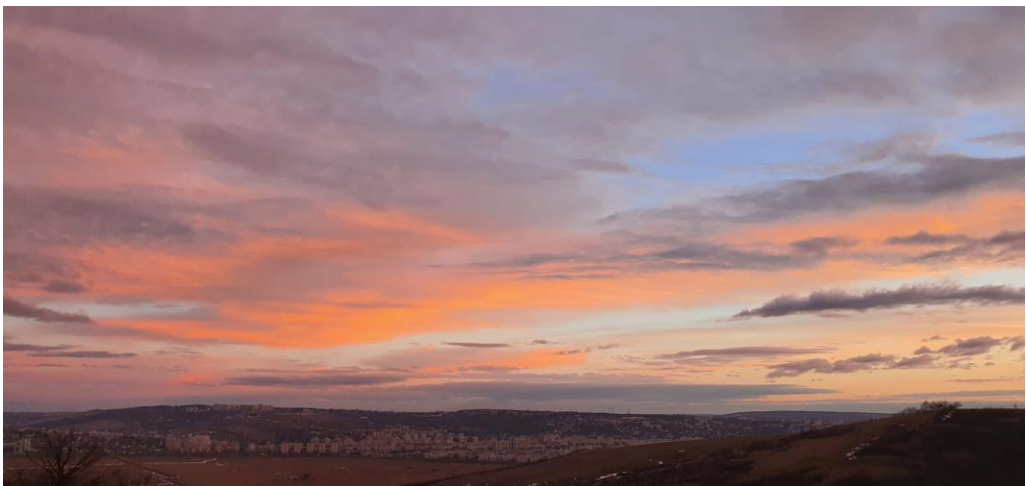


Figure 4. Sunset over the Galata Hill landscape. The chromatic transformation of the horizon reveals how the same place becomes visually and affectively different across the day.

Through painting and drawing, light was not simply recorded. It was translated. Artistic practice transformed light into color, gesture, surface, and rhythm. The act of

painting required a second mode of seeing: not only seeing what appears, but seeing how appearance becomes form.

In this sense, light became a teacher of perception. It revealed that the same place is never visually identical to itself. The landscape is temporal. The hill is not a fixed object, but a changing relation between atmosphere, solar movement, season, and the perceiving body.

The pedagogy of natural elements

The third theme concerns the formative role of the natural elements: earth, water, air, and heat. These elements were not abstract symbols. They were encountered materially through gardening, weather, soil, plant growth, and bodily effort.

The earth was experienced through digging, planting, touching, cultivating, and observing differences in soil composition. Some areas were more clay-like, others more sandy or dry. The land demanded attention to specificity. It did not allow general assumptions. Each plant required a particular relation to light, shade, water, and soil.

Water appeared through scarcity. Because the site was located on the ridge of the hill, access to water was limited. This scarcity shaped both gardening and perception. Plants that required abundant water struggled. More resistant, woody, deeply rooted plants adapted better. The absence of water became a condition of knowledge: it taught the limits of desire and the necessity of understanding the place on its own terms.

Air appeared through wind. The hilltop position exposed the site to strong gusts. Wind was heard, felt, and endured. It shaped what could grow and how the body inhabited the space. Wind also made the invisible visible: through movement of leaves, bending of plants, sound, resistance, and bodily sensation.

Heat appeared through summer light and the intensity of the sun. It affected plants, soil, bodily comfort, and the rhythms of work. Heat was not simply temperature; it was a condition of exposure.



Figure 5. Embodied engagement with land: soil, plants, and growth conditions on Galata Hill. The image supports the analysis of natural elements as pedagogical agents in the artist's process of perception and transformation.

Together, these elements formed what may be called a pedagogy of natural elements. The hill educated perception by resisting control. It taught waiting, adaptation, humility, and attention. The artist's initial impatience with plant growth gradually changed

into a deeper understanding of natural rhythm. Germination, flowering, fruiting, drying, and returning to seed became temporal lessons.



Figure 6. Fog and atmospheric diffusion over the observed landscape. The image illustrates how partial visibility contributes to the phenomenological experience of place.

This theme is especially important because it differentiates the study from purely visual approaches to landscape. The hill is not only seen. It is worked, touched, endured, and learned from.

The body as an instrument of knowledge

The fourth theme concerns the body as an instrument of perception and knowledge. The inquiry began with looking, but it did not remain visual. The body became a site where the hill was registered.

The artist felt the wind directly, experienced the texture of soil through the hands and feet, sensed heat, fatigue, calm, impatience, and emotional transformation. Bodily contact with the place altered inner states. Working the land for a few hours could bring calm. Waiting for plants to grow moderated impatience. Observing seasonal change produced a different relation to time.

This bodily dimension complicates the idea of landscape as an object viewed from a distance. The artist was not outside the landscape. She was situated within it. The hill entered perception through skin, breath, movement, gesture, and effort.

The body also mediated between observation and artistic production. Drawing and painting are bodily acts. The hand translates perception into line, color, pressure, and rhythm. The artwork therefore carries traces not only of what was seen, but of how the body responded to seeing.

This theme aligns with a/r/tographic and sensory approaches to research, where knowledge is produced through embodied relation rather than detached observation.

The body does not distort knowledge; it makes a particular kind of knowledge possible.

Artistic practice as a mode of knowing

The fifth theme concerns artistic practice as a mode of knowing. The photographs, drawings, and paintings are not merely representations of the hill. They are ways of thinking with the hill.

Photography allowed repeated documentation of light, atmosphere, and temporal variation. It captured moments that could later be revisited, compared, and interpreted. Drawing slowed perception. It required selection, simplification, and attention to line, proportion, rhythm, and structure. Painting introduced color, atmosphere, affect, and translation. Through painting, the hill was not copied but re-experienced.



Figure 7. From photographic observation to artistic translation. The juxtaposition shows how the observed landscape is transformed through drawing or painting into an interiorized visual structure.

The visual corpus therefore functions simultaneously as archive, interpretation, and transformation. Each image is a trace of encounter. Together, the images form a longitudinal record of how perception changed over time.

Artistic practice also made visible the movement from exterior to interior. The hill seen in the world became the hill carried in memory, imagination, and gesture. The artwork is the site where this transformation becomes perceptible.



Figure 8. Exhibition view from *The Hill: Stories with Sunrise and Sunset*. The installation presents the artistic synthesis of the five-year engagement with place, light, and horizon.

This finding supports the claim that arts-based research can produce knowledge

that is neither reducible to verbal explanation nor separate from it. Image and text work together. The article itself, like the artistic corpus, is an attempt to articulate what occurs when a landscape becomes an inner horizon.

Discussion

Artistic interiorization of the horizon

The central contribution of this article is the concept of artistic interiorization of the horizon. This concept refers to the process through which repeated visual, embodied, and creative engagement with the same landscape transforms an external horizon into an inner structure of perception, attachment, orientation, and artistic knowledge.

The concept has four components.

First, it is **visual**. The process begins with looking: observing sunrise, sunset, light, atmosphere, color, and form.

Second, it is **embodied**. The place is not only seen, but felt through wind, soil, heat, fatigue, work, and bodily presence.

Third, it is **temporal**. Interiorization requires repetition. It occurs across days, seasons, years, and cycles of return.

Fourth, it is **creative**. The transformation becomes visible through artistic practice: photography, drawing, painting, and reflective writing.

The horizon is therefore not only a visual boundary. It becomes an inner axis. It organizes attention, memory, affect, and creative response. The artist does not merely observe the horizon; she is gradually shaped by it.

Contribution to place attachment research

The study contributes to place attachment research by showing how attachment may be formed through artistic repetition and embodied practice. In contrast to studies that measure place attachment through questionnaires or analyze it through interviews, this inquiry examines attachment as a lived and creative process.

The findings support Scannell and Gifford's (2010) view that place attachment involves person, process, and place. However, the present study emphasizes that artistic practice can intensify all three dimensions. The person is transformed through perception; the process unfolds through repeated observation and making; the place participates through its material and atmospheric characteristics.

The study also supports Stedman's (2003) argument that the physical environment matters. The hill's openness, wind, soil, light, and vegetation are not incidental. They shape meaning. Attachment is not projected onto an empty surface; it is negotiated with the material specificity of the landscape.

Contribution to arts-based and a/r/tographic research

The article contributes to arts-based inquiry by treating visual practice as both method and analysis. The artwork is not an appendix to the research. It is part of the research process itself.

Springgay et al. (2005) describe a/r/tography as living inquiry, and this study extends that understanding into a long-term relation with a specific landscape. The artist's practice is not separate from daily life, gardening, family history, spiritual reflection, and ecological observation. It is a living inquiry formed through repeated contact with place.

Lasczik et al. (2022) suggest that a/r/tographic renderings can become analytical gateways. In this study, the visual corpus functions precisely in this way. The photographs, drawings, and paintings allow the researcher to return to moments of perception and to identify recurring structures of experience.

The study also resonates with Illeris et al. (2024), who explore a/r/tographic fieldwork with landscape. However, the present article offers a distinct contribution by focusing on the horizon as a repeated visual-spiritual threshold and by situating the inquiry in a Romanian landscape.

Contribution to art education and environmental aesthetics

Although the article is based on an individual artistic inquiry, it has implications for art education and environmental aesthetics. It suggests that artistic formation can be cultivated through sustained attention to ordinary landscapes. Students and artists may learn not only by studying techniques or images, but by returning to the same place, observing its changes, and allowing perception to deepen over time.

The study also suggests that aesthetic experience can support ecological awareness. The artist's relation with the hill did not remain visual or symbolic. It became practical and ecological through soil, plants, water, wind, and seasonal limits. The place taught through resistance and care.

In this sense, artistic education can be understood not only as training in representation, but as training in relation.

Conclusion

This article examined how sustained artistic engagement with Galata Hill transformed an external landscape into an inner horizon of perception, attachment, and creative knowledge. Through a five-year arts-based autoethnographic inquiry, the study analyzed photographs, drawings, paintings, reflective notes, and embodied observations related to sunrise, sunset, light, atmosphere, soil, wind, vegetation, and seasonal rhythms.

The analysis identified five themes: the transformation of landscape into inner place; light as a mediator of perception; the pedagogy of natural elements; the body as

an instrument of knowledge; and artistic practice as a mode of knowing. These findings show that place is not simply observed, represented, or remembered. It is gradually interiorized through repeated sensory, bodily, and creative engagement.

The article proposed the concept of artistic interiorization of the horizon as its main theoretical contribution. This concept names the process through which the horizon becomes more than a visual line: it becomes an inner axis of orientation, attention, memory, affect, and artistic creation.

The study is limited by its single-site and first-person design. However, this limitation is also its methodological strength. The depth of the inquiry depends precisely on sustained, situated, and reflexive engagement with one place over time. Future research may apply this concept to other artistic practices, ecological settings, or pedagogical contexts, especially where repeated observation of the same place becomes a means of artistic and existential formation.

Ultimately, the article argues that a landscape becomes meaningful not only because it is seen, but because it is returned to, worked with, endured, drawn, painted, remembered, and allowed to transform the one who sees.

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Parodic attitudes in performative photography

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ABSTRACT: As a medium and tool that attributes its power of meaning in the art world, photography has been appealing to the narrative function since the historical era of its emergence as a means of communication. Identified today by the phrases of performative or staged photography, the practice of the scene constructed and narrated in front of the camera frequently uses parodic attitudinal approaches encompassing different strategies of expression and touching on a wide variety of subjects. The series of examples access segments of life found in intimate space, in socio-political, post-colonial analysis, but also in the criticism of the environment or of historical aspects of art.

KEYWORDS: Performative photography; staging, parody; narrative; visual communication; contemporary photography;

Introduction

Viewed in a generalized way, parody is understood as a performative work that has the function of imitating another work with the aim of ridiculing and ironizing it. Coming from the Greek “para-odos” (“counter-song” or “alongside”) – in which the linguistic particle “para” has the meaning of both “alongside” and “against” – parody is seen as one of the major forms of self-reflexivity of moderns, being understood as a form of inter-artistic discourse (Hutcheon, 1982). As art forms have become increasingly suspicious of external criticism, they have been designed to incorporate critical commentary into their own structures, in a kind of self-legitimizing short-circuiting of normal critical dialogue, to the point of integrating their own critical self-commentary (for example, the self-critical

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distancing in Rene Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*). The ironic distance of modern parody also stems from the loss of humanist confidence in the continuity and stability of culture, which ensured the sharing of codes necessary for understanding doubly coded quotations, such as, for example, symbolic images from the Renaissance or Baroque. In this context of modern interrogation of the nature of self-referentiality and legitimacy, the contemporary interest in parody, the genre that has been described as both a symptom and an instrument of the modernist episteme, also appears.

Parody as a visual artistic practice

As a working technique, parody refuses the romantic postulate of the author and regards the work of art as a text, or rather inter-text, presupposing the reading of the image and the understanding of references to meanings belonging to other works or cultural signifiers, such as, for example, advertising messages. Among these working techniques we can talk about quotation, collage, pastiche and appropriation. Parody can be said to have at least two authorial voices – that of the author of the work and that of the appropriated one – and, implicitly, at least two overlapping meanings (Hutcheon, 1982). In this way, parody parasitizes other forms of art, being similar to deconstruction. The dominant definition would be that parody is a stylistic confrontation, a modern recoding, which would introduce difference into the process of similarity, repeating an image, a code towards which both a critical distance and a tendency for imitative repetition and differentiation can occur. In turn, the operational definition claims that “parody would be a structural modeling process of revisiting, playful resuming, inversion and trans-contextualization, respectively of overcoming the initial context of signification of previous works of art as well as of “cultural recycling” (Hutcheon, 1982).

Thus, instead of appropriate works of art, the parodic reference can include cultural conventions, visual and behavioral clichés, cultural or social codes, etc. For example, in his video work *Runoff* (1973), in which Vito Acconci rubs his naked, unpainted body against a wall, the artist directly refers to Yves Klein's performances in *Anthropometries* and *Monotonous Symphony* and at the same time parodies the conventions of performance in relation to painting (the use of the body as a support).

Among the functions of parody, one can list the critical function, not necessarily of the work used as a parodic support, the function of recoding, through the playful use of reading conventions (of an image, of a cultural code, etc.) and the function of “criticism of ideology”; for example, on the one hand it functions as a liberator against the “false consciousness” produced by already familiar cultural codes, especially by their social consumption, destabilizing their meanings, and on the other hand, it brings meaning to the “surface”, demonstrating that, at least in postmodernity, the surface (of a structure or image) is the very meaning of the moment.

Initially, the category of parody would represent a work with a humorous or

satirical character, consisting of a caricatured imitation of another work, by resuming in a comic manner the themes, motifs and specific artistic means. It would also designate, in addition to a parodistic imitation, an unsuccessful imitation. Traditionally finding its filiation in the comic, the aesthetic category of parody is, at least from the point of view of contemporary artistic practice, much more complex. Its meanings refer to more than an imitation of a work or its manner. A multitude of interpretative, conjunctural, informational considerations compose the diversity of meanings through which parody can be understood today.

Thus, deviations occur, they interact with other categories considered in the comic sphere: burlesque, grotesque, ridiculous, cynicism, irony, derision, caricature, idiocy. If burlesque refers to that extravagant, grotesque and often vulgar comic, being associated with an active, bodily attitude, idiocy, grotesque and ridiculous are associated with passive states of observation. Grotesque includes extreme poses, deliberately disproportionate contrasts, frightening, monstrous, violent, physical and moral ugliness; ridiculous arouses hilarity, mockery, the ridiculous; cynicism defies moral norms and rules of social coexistence, openly and without shame supporting such an attitude.

Unlike burlesque, parody does not necessarily imply a ridiculous component. Parody also differs from the aesthetic category of satirical, as a subcategory of the comic, which is moral and social in its objects and ameliorative in its intentions. In Hutcheon's opinion, parody can be serious, redefining it in this context as repetition with critical distance. Hutcheon treats irony and parody as similar, since they both presuppose the coexistence of at least two meanings on the surface of the text (cultural discourse). Unlike another close genre, pastiche, parody does not simply imitate, but emphasizes the difference in repetition. It transforms and reinterprets the quoted text or image. Compared to the simple process of quoting, parody re-codes the borrowed quotation. Regarding the distinction between parody and irony, this would consist in the fact that in a parody, irony functions as a signal of difference from the borrowed text, code, work or image, and from its meanings (Hutcheon, 1982). In turn, defining parody from a semiotic perspective, Margaret Rose differentiates parody and satire through the referent: while parody uses a pre-determined language or code, satire re-codifies or re-interprets reality, uncoded (Rose, 1979).

The tendency to dissolve art into life, declared with virulence by the Dadaists, supports the annexation of banal, brutal, unadorned, anti-aesthetic reality through various artistic attitudes, including parody. Analyzing art as a language that encompasses form and content, a distinction could be made between the work of art and the aesthetic object if one were to take into account the intentional attitude of the artist, distinct from the aesthetic experience of the receiver.

The main characteristic of parody is the appeal to collective memory. Therefore, the main working method is comparative work, which is carried out between the targeted

element of collective memory and the cultural product that makes creative reference to the former. Other procedures for developing parody would be allusion, deviance, recontextualization, speculation, combination, formal analogy, tendentious copying, etc. Parodying cultural, social, political space and time becomes an emphasized practice in the art of parody. Parodic is the effect of distancing oneself from clichés, establishing difference, of slipping away from cliché or given. The goal of parody is not a better world, but a world different from the one usually proposed, and thus, protected by ideologies, by the passive conformism of the receptors and by paralyzing routine.

The artistic production of this end of the millennium has signaled a sustained interference with consumer and advertising production. Punctuated almost a century ago by the incipient forms of Duchampian institutional declassification and continued by the neorealists, through crude formulas that suggested a new aesthetic of the everyday, contemporary art is now revealing itself in directions that use the skeleton and even the media procedures of the audiovisual and the Internet.

If artists borrow formally, and often critically, the advertising language, so too, the modalities of artistic construction are taken over as patterns by advertising production. Situated somewhere on the border with design, fashion photographs transcend a so-called subcultural world through images that propose decodings (interpretations) on a multitude of levels of reception. These multiple decodings are primarily based on the combined use of several technical and conceptual elaboration procedures, two of which are the subject of the present analysis: parody and performativity.

Ziva Ben Porat defines parody as "an alleged representation, often comic, of a text or other artistic object – that is, a representation of the modeled reality, which is itself already a representation of the original 'reality'. Parodic representations expose the conventions of the model and expose its devices by the coexistence of two codes within the same message" (Ben Porat, 1979). Likewise, Ziva Ben Porat defines satire as "a critical representation, always comic and often caricatured, of non-modeled reality, that is, of real objects (their reality may be mythical or hypothetical), which the receiver reconstructs as referents of the message. The original reality satirized may include mores, attitudes, types, social structures, prejudices, etc." (Ben Porat, 1979).

From the perspective of cultural criticism, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh notes that parody has a double effect on cultural conventions and the idea of tradition, because on the one hand, it preserves a convention, and on the other hand, it transgresses the conventions of a genre by recoding it (Buchloh, 1982). In the first case, Buchloh notes, for example, that Picabia's drawings, although they parody the author and the aesthetic function of the drawing, replacing them with the style of engineering plans and diagrams, in fact highlight the notion of the author, replacing one aesthetic with another, an austere one (Buchloh, 1982). In the second case, Buchloh sees Polke's paintings as combinations of ironic appropriations of "low" cultural forms (as in the case of pop art) and cultural

quotations from "high art". The result of this essentially parodic combination is a "reification of codes and a subversive recoding" (Buchloh, 1982, p. 33). In this context, Buchloh analyzes parody in relation to appropriation, concluding that the effects of parody, which began as a self-reflexive attitude, are ultimately the dissolution of modern individualism, along with the critique of the idea of "ownership" of a cultural asset.

Self-reflexive parodic forms

Since 1920, recorded on film by his good friend Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp duplicates himself by photographically interpreting the poses of a fictional character, invented by himself, *Rose Sélavy* (fig. 1). The representation does not aim to be a simple staging of a transvestite, the artist declaring that the figure in question could also be a man as long as there was a correspondence between it and the text. Duchamp alias Rose Sélavy resorts to a pun to construct a title with multiple meanings. The character's name decoded as Eros, c'est la vie, translated Sex, this is life, represents an aphorism that synthesizes the author's concept of the artistic act. In Duchamp's imagination, the erotic implies the need to escape the taste of the lock created by the static tradition. Through the iconic image of Rose Sélavy he tries to find a form that preserves chance. In this association with art, Duchamp believes that erotic formulation implies the preservation of taste, while sex itself is different because it is not repetitive. Thought becomes erotic when it manifests itself as a thought in constant formation. In fact, referring to the short period in which he painted, he states in an interview taken from the Paris-Normandie newspaper on April 12, 1967: "Thanks to repetition you can do 3-4 exceptional things, but anything else is repetition. There is nothing more boring than repetition" (Castronuovo, 2003). The playful aspect is defining for all of Duchamp's work. "I have great respect for humor – he declares – it is a kind of protection that allows you to go through all the mirrors" (Viau, 2002). The construction of this parodic alter ego, the transformation of Duchamp into Rose Sélavy, triggers a game full of interpretation, a joy of living and always creating something new, but it also represents a categorical act that denounces the majority of artistic production as outdated and useless (Teodorescu, 2024).

The manifest discourses specific to the artistic avant-garde parody, following the evolutionary path in the field of ideas, the theoretical expositions of the trends that precede them. In his work *I Box*, from 1962, Robert Morris presents the subjective "I" of the production of the work of art as a body-object to be viewed (fig. 2). From a painting, a door in the shape of the letter I opens, making way for the view of a photograph depicting the naked, standing artist. By revealing the naked male body, re-presented through the mechanical process of photography, Morris reverses the tradition of Abstract Expressionist painting in which the canvas is the place of inscription of the artistic "I" revealed this time through the production of the sign (Morris, 1995). As in most modern

trends of this period, this time too, attention is directed towards the annulment of the dominant mode of expression, which promoted the transposition of the author's artistic identity through gesturalism. Morris does not only attack the pictorial plastic form, but intervenes at the level of the choice of medium, a hybrid installation construction having in the three-dimensional development of the sculpture, in the visual photographic transcription and in the performative approach of one's own body, the arguments of a solid artistic communication method.

The critical image of the star

The image promoted as a poster is also quite used, in different versions, in the criticism of contemporary society. Thus, in one of his four works in the *Art Magazine Ads* series, the one for the magazine *Artforum* through the appropriation of social and aesthetic conventions, Jeff Koons poses in front of children as a teacher, behind whom are written several phrases that parody the status of didactic assumptions: "exploits the masses", "banality is savior", thus confronting a certain moral crisis (fig. 3). The role brings the character into the position of a character found in Hollywood typologies, a pleasant, friendly figure, adored by the public, paradoxically extracted from the preferred interpretation of the American politician. Koons is aware of the power of advertising, his experience in his youth as a broker on Wall Street being decisive. His preoccupation with elements from popular culture qualifies him in this situation for the image of an art star, the visual emphasis having the role of both an affirmation of conceptions towards the cultural world and an ostentatious self-critical posture. Years before the name Koons became known, he hired an image consultant and paid for his own advertisements in international art magazines (Speetjens, 2009). The author understands that through his media intervention he short-circuits or calls into question the power relations of the participants within artistic institutions: artist, gallerist, critic, curator.

The author's intention does not always correspond to that of the photographed subject. In the late 1980s, *Vanity Fair* sent Helmut Newton to photograph Salvador Dali in his museum in Figueres. The dying painter was dressed in a silver satin robe and wore the decoration that the King of Spain had awarded him. According to Newton, Dali, who knew that the photographer wanted to depict him in daylight, made him wait for two days at the hotel before calling him on the third day, when the weather forecast announced severe storms. As soon as the sky darkened, Dali said: "I am ready for Newton, who has come because he knows that I am dying." Not having enough light, Newton had to use a 500-watt projector for this last historic photograph (fig. 4). Faced with imminent death, Dali has the power to parody himself by accepting to play the role of the eccentric to whom the world was accustomed. His aristocratic posture wrapped in glittering satin and outlined against the sumptuous setting, his twisted mustache, cannot save appearances, being exposed by the breathing apparatus hose (Wernik, 1986).

A completely different orchestration is found in another photograph, from 1999 by the same author, which depicts Vanessa del Rio in Miami, Florida (fig. 5). The woman in the image is known as the first black actress to reach star status in the adult film industry and more recently for her uninhibited biography, *Fifty Years of Slightly Slutty Behavior*, 2007, which investigates situations related to race and social class in relation to the context of violence and the sex trade. Vanessa occupies the center of the frame wearing a negligee, which rather reveals provocative underwear and generous cleavage, crossed by long strings of pearls accessorized with a giant cross. Her posture with one hand on her hip and the other resting on the handle of the vacuum cleaner evokes the domineering attitude of the mistress of her own apartment. Helmut Newton seems, at first glance, to be taking a common and quick photo due to the lighting directly coming from the camera flash. A closer look reveals that the author has parodically completed the scenography. The room populated with ceramic dolls dressed in puffy dresses, the furniture and carpet with leopard prints, the naive painting on the wall accompanied at the top by lace curtains, the portraits extracted from genre magazines, but especially the two stuffed flamingos build the true atmosphere of a kitsch ensemble. Against this context, Newton places in the foreground an album about interior design in New York. Moreover, he increases the interpretative level by introducing in close proximity the popular volumes entitled *Art of the 20th Century*, edited by Ingo F. Walther in 1998 (Teodorescu, 2024).

Parodic artistic expressions in advertising practice

The 1980s, through the work of several artists, established that staged photography that involves, in addition to the construction of environments related to the action, the subsequent processing of the image. For Erwin Olaf, the digital reconditioning in the guise of fashion photographs of the image of historical figures of royal blood, who died in tragic circumstances or were involved in notorious crimes, leads in the *Royal Blood* series (1997) to a performative-symbolic representation of historical memory (Olaf, 2019). The purity of the white space in which they make their ghostly photographic appearance, accompanied by the immaculate white of their garments, contrasts both chromatically and interpretively with the presence of blood, a sign of both royalty and eternal power as well as of their mortal condition. The characters of this series are immersed in a "bath of light", which doubles the supra-mundane effect of the modeling photo with the unreal one of the space of historical memory. For example, Lady Diana looks at the lens both seductively and authoritatively, having the logo of the Mercedes in which she was at the time of the fatal accident stuck in her arm (fig. 6), Marie Antoinette appears decapitated, Julius Caesar naturally exposes, in a withdrawn attitude, the dagger stuck in his back, and Jackie Onassis presents herself seductively again, stained with the cerebral remains of her former husband, the President of the United States, J.F. Kennedy (Teodorescu, 2023).

The connection with the world of advertising makes Jim Fiscus approach his themes from a relaxed-ironic posture. He finds certain locations with characters that narrate a history specific to that space. In an Italian butcher shop we meet, alongside the phlegmatic workers, armed with cleavers, cattle carcasses, and Jamie Oliver, a well-known figure in the culinary world, hanging with his head down, a sign that the action takes place in a story with Cosa Nostra from the 40s-50s (*The Unfortunate Moment of Misunderstanding*, 2009). The attitude of the characters, however, in a macabre posture, actually parodies their specificity; a tricolor emblem that would refer to their Italian origin is stuck to the backside of a cattle hanging from the ceiling (fig. 7). In another photograph, thematically related to the one previously discussed, a typical image from the seventies is reconstructed, in which, in a restaurant, we find a wiretapping and listening post installed by the FBI services, Diner, 2005. The image is populated by wiretapping agents who are positioned between routine behaviors (smoking, eating, drinking coffee) and their professional activity. Fiscus reveals in a parodic way a parallel, invisible world, built for surveillance (fig. 8).

For David LaChapelle, the forms of expression of fashion photography combine humor, sex, and social criticism with special emotions and strong colors. Symbols, scenes, and characters are taken from the contemporary world of commercial culture, art history, and religion and are mounted in frames that restart the perception of reality and give them completely new meanings. In several of his fashion "reportages," he visually describes how the idyllic petit bourgeois existence in a residential area is broken by giant cans of Coca Cola (*I Buy Big Car For Shopping*, 2002), confronted with the appearance of a gigantic crustacean invading a suburban swimming pool (*Crustacean Invasion*, 2001), or captures the pose of an enormous burger falling from the sky and crushing a model (*Death by Hamburger*, 2001, fig. 9). Behind the tumultuous, bright and cheerful surface of the images lies the desire to criticize the norms of society and culture regarding the ideal of beauty, sexuality and consumption. Through the female figures present in the images, charged with the symbolism of the parameters that identify perfection, in relation to the oversized objects cut from pop culture, LaChapelle parodically discusses the aspects of society located between the American way of life and the identity of American art paradoxically built on these principles of consumption. Although usually the criticism is striking in its simple clarity, sometimes the apparently spontaneous formulations of the captured actions reach a deliberate ambiguity that comes as if from the pleasure of the game (Allsop, 2010).

The social space between reality and fiction

The American photographer Ralph Eugene Meatyard created in 1970 a series of photographs entitled *The Family Album of Lucybelle Crater* in which he captured and edited various scenes from the life of the fictional character Lucybelle Crater in the style

of family photo albums (fig. 10). Meatyard's wife, Madelyn, played the role of Lucybelle, called in the series "the 21-year-old secretary, Crater's 46-year-old wife", being later replaced by other people, until the last photograph in which Lucybelle is played by the photographer himself (Cotton, 2004, pp. 18-19). In terms of poses, clothing and chosen locations, the construction of the images varies very little from the family snapshots, their routine being distorted only by the strange masks worn by the characters, which show their faces distorted and aged. However, Meatyard's suite of images also captures the relationship with his neighborhood neighbors in a profound early portrait of suburban America. The erasure of the face becomes a kind of democratizing strategy, perhaps superimposed on that ambition of postwar America to create a suburban world of equal citizens, equal opportunities, and identical homes filled with similar consumer goods. However, the foundation of such a vision finds its correspondence in the totalitarian regime, simultaneously developing in the Soviet Union, where individual rights did not matter, and state-produced goods - identical, shabby, and scarce - were the only ones available. In a strange way, this Cold War drama plays out in every tiny frame. Meatyard's images are both sympathetic and provocative, and it is this tension that makes them so interesting and enduring.

Life on the busy streets of New York, his adopted city, is the subject of the Danish artist Peter Funch's series *Babel Tales* (2006). Initially, the viewer tends to perceive documentary photographs, but as visual clues appear in each image, such as the coincidental relationships between characters, it is obvious that he is witnessing the visualization of fictional scenes. The author notices the stereotypes of the inhabitants of the American metropolis and places them in the same frame by resorting to digital compositing, after a selection of between 1000 and 10000 images for each thematic situation (fig. 11). The series includes around 40 works in which we notice a different repetitive action each time: people yawning, running, taking pictures, smoking, etc. Attacking the premises of documentary photography, Funch parodically interrogates the presence of the "Decisive Moment" in an alternative time in which coincidences are perhaps too symbolic to be true (McClelland, 2011).

Moriko Mori constructs a post-media, artificial universe, a fabulous Oceanorium in which she finds herself in the form of a sequined mermaid, all of which are printed on a giant photographic wall support (Goldberg, 1999). Mariko Mori's large-scale photographs and video installations present scenes of radical unconventionality that meditate on the abundance of artifice in contemporary culture and extract elements of Eastern spiritual thought and art to express confidence in the life of the new millennium. Her works reflect the combination of influences from Eastern and Western cultures. Using computer image processing techniques, she places no line of demarcation in the fantastic scenes, transforming herself into a synthetic being. The same computer technology that Mori uses to make her techno-mermaid appear and reappear in *Empty Dream* (1995) changes

her into an oversized pop star doll in *Birth of a Star* (1995). This photograph is presented in a light box (a favorite format of commercial advertising) and with a special, three-dimensional effect that gives it a unique luminous quality. The work is accompanied by a pop song composed and performed by the artist, which emphasizes the experience of this captivating unreal figure. In the photographs *Play with Me* (fig. 12) and *Tea Ceremony*, both taken in 1994, Mori transforms into an android interface intended to make the connection between technology and reality or between technology and the traditional Japanese world. The robot parodically interpreted by the artist arouses compassion, the feelings conveyed being associated with those of alienated people, who live their drama of loneliness in an advanced but emotionally hermetic society (Teodorescu, 2024).

Provocative, as in most of his projects, Oleg Kulik presents himself in the series of images *Nouveau Paradis* (2001) together with his partner in a "Darwinian" spirit by reflecting in a window, behind which are stuffed wild animals. The narrative of the resulting photographic series, superimposing explicit sexual acts on images of an artificial habitat of the animal kingdom, cynically questions the naturalistic interpretation of human life and evolution (fig. 13). New Paradise is a project in which Kulik tries to restore a hypostasis of the lost paradise, of the coexistence of man with the natural world from ancient times, but which is possible only when we are absent. Either man or nature is about to immediately sacrifice its reality, in order to make this combination possible. The stuffed animals acquire the illusion of life. The viewer's eyes do not notice the painted backgrounds, the seams, the supports that suspend the birds, the predators frozen in their jumps, the antelopes' runs. What is interesting is the way in which the illusion is instead constructed that the reflections of living people on the glass, like ghostly semi-transparent apparitions, hallucinations appearing in someone's eyes or like visitors from nowhere, trying to return to the natural world they left, but who still remain disembodied shadows, barely visible. If man wants to bring nature back to life, Kulik seems to signal, then he must agree that he must remain nothing more than a visiting ghost so as not to confuse the "indifferent nature", which never needed him, with his living presence. But there is also a different approach to the subject promoted through a variety of such ostentatious sexual representations. From the perspective of the author's aggressive artistic practice, inclined towards the recovery of the "Soviet individual", deprived today of the levers of power of the system, we cannot help but imagine an anarchist scenario in which reconstruction should reset the human condition to the zero moment of cohabitation with nature (Diaconov, 2009).

Political, postcolonial and cultural aspects

The Czech photographer Jan Saudek uses a form opposite to fashion imagery. Shot in black and white or sepia, his images are later colored pictorially, following the old retouching process, painting constituting, besides, along with the format and appearance

of old postcards, a primary source of his cultural imagery. His models, coming from the immediate, banal world, complete the naturalness of a fascinating and fruitful creation in scenographies that often formally borrow the decor, costumes or postures from the genre scenes of 17th-century Flemish painting. In the baroque universe of his studio, the Czech artist releases the obsessions of carnality and fatalism. Intelligence, humor, subtlety, passion and sincerity relieve the tension in which obesity, immodesty, impudence make their way into his subjects. Saudek undresses his models to reveal the plasticity of their defects and brings them into poses that often border on the vulgar. The contrast between the excessive flesh of the woman and the dry corporeality of the male figures proposed for his couples symbolically denotes that the vitality and energy of the man is drained and rechanneled by the needs of the woman. The duplicity of this relationship of desired possession and involuntary dependence of the man on the woman, exercised at the level of sexuality, is accentuated by interventions within the body representation. By emphasizing and manually retouching the veins covering the nudes as symbolic channels of circulation of the vital flow and mediators of energy consumption, the author doubles the perception of an apparent baroque eroticism, which defies conventional representations and fantasies, with the discreet symbolism of a psychoanalytic commentary on the relations between the sexes (Teodorescu, 2024). In the case of the work *Holy Russia* (1996-2000), the power relationship acquires political valences, complicating the levels of reception of the staged situation. The woman embodied in the title of the work does not directly refer to a spiritual presence, but suggests an idealization of the dominance of a conjunctural matriarchy behind the Iron Curtain (fig. 14). The author uses the word "saint" ironically with reference to the idealizing concept of Pan-Slavism inoculated in Eastern Europe since the mid-19th century by the Russian Empire (Ghezzi, 2021).

British artist of Nigerian origin, Yinka Shonibare depicts five scenes from the life of a dandy, scenes performed by the artist himself. For his series, Shonibare constructs frames representing different moments of a day, staged in historical interiors with a consistent cast of actors and with the artist himself wearing elegant Victorian clothes (fig. 15). The Caucasian characters each play their roles in an extremely expressive way, but they seem to be blind to the artist's skin color. His place in Victorian society is protected by his figure as a dandy, his pronounced artificial stature, concerned with simulating a certain kind of authenticity. This series finds its correspondence in Hogarth's drawings, seen as a satire on the state of contemporary society, they being multiplied and published as prints, which actually represented the forms of mass transmission used in the 18th century. Shonibare's *Victorian Dandy* cycle works were first commissioned to be displayed as posters on the London Underground, and that is precisely why their function was highlighted in this place of popular and commercial imagination (Cotton, 2004).

For Wang Qingsong, photography is the main instrument of his social criticism,

which, although related to specific issues in China, transcends any culture. Socio-economic changes are happening all over the world, and the global village has created new expectations and ideas about the position of each culture in modernity. As these rapid transformations take place, tradition undergoes mutations and makes way for contemporary trends. As economic emancipation has progressively become one of the government's top priorities in its national policies, the country has continued to change, and the people of China have been no exception. Capitalism has "modernized" traditional economic forms. In the 1990s and 2000s, economic reform signaled significant achievements in China, which was previously a primarily agricultural country.

Some of Wang Qingsong's photographs parodically comment on the impact of Western cultural infusion on education. Wang Qingsong's work, entitled *Follow Me* (2003), depicts the author as a teacher in front of an enormous blackboard, four meters wide and eight meters long, mounted in the Beijing Film Studios (fig. 16). The artist covered the entire surface with slogans and elements of Chinese and English terminology, reflecting the changes in Chinese history, culture, and society brought about by the economic growth of recent decades. The texts were taken mainly from English and Chinese textbooks, but especially from one of the most popular English teaching shows on Chinese state television, called *Follow Me*, first introduced in 1982. About this phenomenon, Qingsong explains: "The significance of the English teaching program went far beyond learning English. It helped Chinese people learn about the West and the world, right after China emerged from its closed-door policy. (...) Farmers, workers, soldiers and students, even monks at the Lama Temple enjoyed watching the program, which offered a window to the world, to understanding how foreigners live." The unfolding of images in a panorama filled with texts suggests the representation of a globe on which the teacher indicates the globalizing economic and cultural connections (Wang, 2020).

The huge effort made for communication development and cultural rapprochement has not been entirely successful. The work *Follow Him* (2010) talks about the problem of education in China (fig. 17). Things are learned mechanically, but not retained according to Qingsong. Information is interpreted by teachers and transferred to students who regurgitate it in turn, so that many people fail to understand the real meaning of things. The image shows a man reading at a table sitting in the middle of a gigantic space that resembles a library. Thousands of books lying on the shelves, and crumpled papers thrown on the floor suggest the idea that the form through which knowledge is acquired, the method of learning, is most often poorly understood and applied in education systems around the world (Wang, 2020).

The photograph *Follow You* (2013) depicts a supposedly huge study space, with walls covered in prints and desks laden with books, with students sleeping on their heads (fig. 18). Their attitudes reveal exhaustion, a sign that their powers of concentration have been overcome. But between them, placed centrally in the frame, we discover the figure

of a young man aged prematurely, as shown by his whitened hair and beard, still supported by infusions. Wang Qingsong knows that these young people have come to learn for their parents and grandparents, but never for themselves, for the love of knowledge itself. He states that most of his works record ongoing stories in this dramatic society. Wang Qingsong, although he constructs complex performative photographs, acts as a photojournalist capturing the contradictions we encounter in a China in full transformation.

Conclusions

The diversity of parodic approaches finds a natural way of communication through the practice of staged and performative photography. The fact that the level at which the elements in the frame can be declared recognizable in a photographic image is superior and specific to other visual artistic media, urges the author to a symbolic mode of operation. This characteristic facilitates the development of descriptive modes of expression. The narratives approached therefore take on imitative, ironic, critical and sometimes aggressive forms, in which the references belong to a collective memory. Apart from the attitudinal aspect, important for the author is the interpretative formulation used both as a comparative expression and as a way of presenting personal concepts.

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Educational paradigms in the training of fashion designers

Cornelia Brustureanu^a,

ABSTRACT: Major transformations in the field of fashion design, driven by digitalization, require a profound reconfiguration of the educational paradigms that underpin the professional training of fashion designers. Analyzing the transition from the traditional paradigm, centered on knowledge assimilation, to transdisciplinary paradigms, which favor active learning, critical reflection, and the integration of emerging technologies, the study highlights the importance of the balance between the artistic, technological, and entrepreneurial dimension. The study proposes an analytical perspective on fashion design education, examining the need to adapt the curriculum towards an integrative educational approach, focused on skills, interdisciplinarity and innovation. The pedagogical implications determined by the need to adapt the curriculum are also discussed, emphasizing the importance of applying educational methods that stimulate creativity, autonomy and innovation capacity, essential for adapting future designers to the dynamics of the fashion industry. The conclusions reveal the need to articulate flexible educational paradigms, focused on the holistic training of the fashion designer, through which it becomes able to integrate into a constantly transforming socio-cultural context.

KEYWORDS: educational paradigms; fashion design; creative training; interdisciplinarity; innovation; artistic education;

Introduction

In a global context marked by accelerated digitalization, sustainability and the redefinition of cultural identities, the training of fashion designers is a complex process. In fashion design, the notion of paradigm takes on particular relevance, as this field is deeply influenced by cultural, technological and economic dynamics, the term "paradigm" being used in this case to designate that set of models, practices and concepts existing at a given time. Educational paradigms represent the way in which this field has evolved, their analysis being useful from the perspective of understanding

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creative and scientific evolution, as well as for identifying ways to educate and train a fashion designer, which today can no longer be reduced to the transmission of technical skills, but involves the development of critical, creative and interdisciplinary thinking.

The concept of paradigm was consecrated by Kuhn, who saw it as a set of practices and beliefs shared by a community, with each historical era being characterized by a dominant paradigm (Kuhn, 1996). Understood as an aesthetic and cultural system, it embodies not only trends but also expressions of profound cultural transformations. Transposed to fashion, the term designates the conceptual and aesthetic framework within which designers create, the paradigm in this case representing not only a formal model, but a system of meanings through which consumers interpret clothing products. From Kuhn's theory, an essential aspect is the idea of "paradigm shift", which in fashion manifests itself frequently and visibly, being generated by factors such as: technological innovations, social changes, global crises, etc. An eloquent example of a paradigm shift would be the transition from fast fashion to slow fashion, the dominant values characterized by rapid consumption being replaced by values that emphasize durability.

Educational paradigms in fashion design

If we relate to the fashion industry, the concept of paradigm represents a valuable theoretical tool, allowing its understanding not only as an aesthetic practice, but also as a cultural and social phenomenon. In fashion, paradigms are not fixed, but dynamic, they reflect the continuous changes of society. In an educational context, the paradigm defines the way in which the teaching and learning process is organized, it influences the curricular structure, pedagogical methods, the relationship between theory and practice. The teaching and professional training method influences the way in which designers think and create, its modification being dictated by the need to adapt the curriculum, the importance of applying educational methods with a role in stimulating creativity, etc.

In the training of fashion designers, one of the methods approached was that based on the master-apprentice relationship, characterized by the hierarchical relationship between teacher and student, the direct transmission of knowledge, with an emphasis on perfecting the techniques of prototype execution. This traditional manner constituted the starting point in the education of fashion designers, which, although ensuring a solid technical basis, limited the development of creative autonomy and the capacity for innovation, in the absence of a reflexive dimension, the student risking remaining an executor, not a creator (Schön, 1983).

As education in the field became institutionalized, the emphasis began to be placed on the exploration of individual creativity, on the development of one's own aesthetic language. This method oriented towards the expression of creative individuality, on the training of the designer as an author, capable of generating visual discourses, with an exclusively artistic orientation, also determined a dissociation from the economic and

functional realities of the fashion industry, forming graduates sometimes incapable of understanding the demands of the market (Kawamura, 2005).

In the contemporary context, fashion design education has registering more frequently embedded in an interdisciplinary paradigm. The need to integrate fields such as digital technology, social sciences and environmental studies, understanding the profession as an activity that works with projects and that must generate solutions, has conditioned the educational system to redesign its training practices (Rocha et. al., 2018). Training a fashion designer requires an interdisciplinary framework that integrates technology, sociology and anthropology with the ethics of production, prepared to understand fashion as a cultural and economic phenomenon, the acquired skills including consumer analysis, but also the use of emerging technologies and addressing sustainability issues (Fletcher, 2014).

In parallel, the student-centered educational model, characterized by learning through projects, involvement in multidisciplinary work teams, and the achievement of as many internships as possible, has constituted a model that directly involves the student, this being an active element of their own training. In the case of this training modality, direct contact with industry through internships and educational partnerships stimulates autonomy, responsibility, and adaptability, facilitating the student's transition from academia to the professional environment (Schön, 1983).

The growing awareness of the environmental impact of the fashion industry has determined to a sustainable approach, which has involved the use of biodegradable materials, the adoption of design practices that apply principles of waste reduction, the education of fashion designers including concepts such as circular economy, the use of renewable resources. The approach redefines the role of the designer who becomes an agent of social and ecological change, not just a creator of aesthetic objects (Fletcher, 2014; Gwilt, 2020). Education for sustainability has offered a means to unlock the paradigm of fashion education, towards an education based on the cultivation of culture, creativity and critical thinking, requiring fashion designers to be able to respond to global and local contexts in order to contribute to the prosperity of societies, cultures and economies (Dilys, 2013).

Education in the digital age includes advantages of accessibility and flexibility, but the use of design software, virtual stimulation and digital prototyping programs, and last but not least, online learning platforms, can represent real challenges. The loss of direct contact with materials and the diminution of the tactile experience can constitute an unsupervised learning experience, a type of machine learning. In addition, artificial intelligence can offer a wide range of services to fashion companies, which will force the elimination of many research stages from the concept phase of projects. This technology offers significant opportunities in terms of efficiency and innovation, but also raises questions about the loss of the tactile dimension and dependence on technology (Gwilt,

2020).

From the beginning, technology has had a profound impact on educational organizations, the transparency of services, student mobility, accessibility of information, interaction through digital systems with higher education institutions, the use of communication and information tools by students to manage their education, imply a rethinking of pedagogy, its preparation for the information and digital communication era (Beetham & Sharpe, 2013). In this context, reforming the teaching method assume re-articulating the field to a new context. The potential of digital technologies to disrupt norms, to change professions, implies adapting the curricula which, from a pedagogical point of view, must consider the introduction of completely new activities and forms of learning.

Conclusions

Over time, trainers have had to respond simultaneously to several educational requirements: expanding creativity, acquiring technical skills and integrating emerging technologies. Regardless of the objectives, all the methods mentioned coincided with understanding the role of the designer in the fashion industry, a determining role in the conception and development phase of a clothing project. Currently, there are several methods, processes and pedagogical practices for educating in clothing design, one technical and engineering, one conceptual, and another based on innovation. These methods leave their mark on the way a designer relates to the profession, one trained in a traditional paradigm will prefer technique and execution, while one trained in a contemporary paradigm will integrate concepts such as sustainability or digital design.

The analysis of educational paradigms has highlighted the fact that, over time, the main challenges have been maintaining a balance between creativity and industry requirements, accessibility to a complex education and the successful integration of technology, without losing the aesthetic and social dimension of the profession. The current trend is towards hybridizing educational models, where technical skills, artistic creativity, critical thinking and social responsibility are integrated into a coherent framework. In the future, a change and reassessment of the necessary skills is expected, and it is expected that educational paradigms in the training of fashion designers will reflect the profound transformations of the industry and implicitly of the profession.

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The Complexity of Hybridity Expression in the Art, from the Medial Aesthetic Intelligence Perspective

Geanina Havârneanu^a

ABSTRACT: This paper proposes a comprehensive model of hybridity and mediality in contemporary art, grounded in the quintessence of Dan Perjovschi's aesthetic practice, which is essentially summarized by the motto "Drawing ideas on unstable surfaces", signaling both the mobility of his artwork across media and the deliberate instability of his supports as an artistic reflexive strategy. Framed within Bhabha's theory of cultural hybridity, Rajewsky's paradigm of formal intermediality, Jenkins' thematic transmediality, Krauss' postmediality positioning, and Groy's & Bishop's reflexive institutional analysis, the study examines how Perjovschi's drawings, texts, installations, and performative actions blur the boundaries between art, journalism, and politics, marking a shift from easel-based practice to civic initiative materialized in artistic forms. The analysis conceptualizes Perjovschi's method as medial aesthetic intelligence (the ability to translate meaning through text, image, space, print, and digital circulation with semantic intensification), thus activating multiple cognitive registers (linguistic, spatial, logical, interpersonal, and reflexive/intrapersonal) viewed from a Gradnerian perspective, both in his artistic production and in the reception of his works. The abstract visuality of the drawings, the economy of line, and the conciseness of the aphorism operate as forms of conceptual compression, producing schematic visual equations that distill complex systems into minimal signs while drawing on context, temporality, and social commentary through a logic of intermediality. Perjovschi's practice functions as a transmediality participatory intervention in public discourse; his work is no longer defined by its support but by the experience, concept, or interaction it generates. Also, his works implement a postmediality strategy that foregrounds moving away from the medium toward a paradigm that emphasizes message, process, and context rather than the medium itself. From the perspectives of intermediality, transmediality, and postmediality, his artistic project exemplifies an aesthetic paradigm reconfigurable and perishable, documented and archived.

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KEYWORDS: Dan Perjovschi; hybridity in art; intermediality in art; transmediality in art; postmediality in art; conceptual art; Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences; medial aesthetic intelligence;

Introduction

Dan Perjovschi's artistic practice constitutes an eloquent example of visual and discursive engagement in contemporary art (Gheorghe, & Pancu, 2010). Through a conceptual, cultural, and institutional hybridity, the artist proposes an art form that reflects sociopolitical reality and critically and participatively interrogates it, offering a relevant model of intermediality, transmediality, and postmediality artistic expression.

Dan Perjovschi (born October 29, 1961, Sibiu) graduated from the Art High School in Sibiu in 1980 and the Art Academy in Iași in 1984. After 1990, he chose the Bucharest artistic environment, joining the anti-communist movement initiated by the Social Dialogue Group (Alb, 2023). His forms of manifestation in the field of visual arts are maintained in a coherence configured by a refined, strongly affirmed artistic ideal (Marjanović, 2023). In the film *Drumul [The Road]* (2016), directed by Liviu Varlaam (Varlaam, 2016), Dan Perjovschi explicitly presents his vision of a *manifestum artisticum*, consisting of the aesthetic and ethical foundations of his creation, built on an unmistakable imagery and a dense message, articulated through poetic, satirical and deeply civically and politically engaged ideation, the only declared limit of which is the "responsibility of expression" (Centrul de Proiecte Timișoara, 2025). The last exhibition event, Dan Perjovschi, Romania, A Retrospective 1985–2025, hosted by the Corneliu Miklosi Museum in Timișoara, brought together drawings, performances, civic actions, protests, publications, and ephemeral installations (Marinescu, 2025), all articulated in a variety of artistic languages that converge in a coherent and recognizable Perjovschian idiom, a form of visual Esperanto.

The artistic commitment of the visual creator Dan Perjovschi is highlighted by the succession of the two drawings in Image 1, which mark the transition from easel art to art as a civic action, deeply engaged with contemporary socio-political issues, as well as the conversion of a conventional practice into a conceptual one.

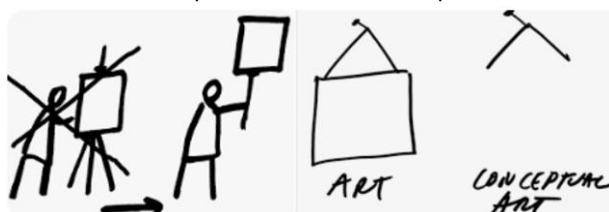


Image 1 The artistic commitment of visual creator Perjovschi (Bercea, 2011)

Note. Image from <https://www.dor.ro/artist-dan-perjovschi/>, licensed under CC0

If we define a subsequence of the visual intelligence by the term medial aesthetic

intelligence as the ability to think, communicate and create through multiple media (text, image, sound, video, space, digital interaction) and to translate meaning from one medium to another without losing the message and even enriching it, we could say that the way Dan Perjovschi practices visual art simultaneously provokes and embodies many of the intelligences theorized by Gardner (1983), from a dual perspective: that of the creator and that of the viewer.

The creator Perjovschi, as a multimodal activator of medial aesthetic intelligence, promotes a hybrid cognitive experience (language, image, logic, emotion), invites viewers to engage in combinatorial thinking, and embodies aptitudes that combine semiotics, humour, spatial design, and socio-political reasoning.

His visual thinking is clearly related to linguistic intelligence (Gardner, 1983). Perjovschi's iconic style is notable for his drawings, which are often word-image hybrids. Thus, Perjovschi extends linguistic intelligence into a form of intermedial literacy, where language and image merge into a single cognitive act. His art constitutes an assertive excursion and becomes a test of linguistic and symbolic knowledge, the necessity of understanding metaphorical processes, and discursive meaning intelligence.

Perjovschi's work is essentially a spatial symbolization of complex phenomena, using line, space, and negative space. His murals reorganize space into narrative maps of contemporary life, and his drawings often function as conceptual diagrams. Thus, he activates the viewer's spatial intelligence (Gardner, 1983) to decode the visual structure of his ideas; his entire practice can be understood as spatial thinking through social commentary.

What impresses most in his work is the conceptual compression synonymous with logical-mathematical intelligence (Gardner, 1983). He compresses the systemic analysis of concepts into a few lines, in a Brancusi paradigm, many works function as visual equations. Thus, his minimalist style encourages viewers to think in a logical manner by interpreting the designed conceptual algorithms in terms of social phenomena.

Perjovschi's art is deeply interpersonal because it excels in communicating with the general public in museums, on the streets, through interviews, in newspapers, magazines, podcasts. His works function as social mirrors, activating empathy, criticism or civic awareness. His style invites viewers to reflection and common dialogue. Thus, Gardner's interpersonal intelligence (Gardner, 1983) becomes visible in the way Perjovschi maps collective emotions, tensions and shared cultural knowledge.

Perjovschi's drawings often address philosophical questions, such as human rights, democracy, global inequality, existential anxiety (war, climate, technology), and the fragility of contemporary life, inviting the viewer to adhere to the principles of a profound cultural and existential intelligence (Gardner, 1983).

Many of Perjovschi's works involve self-irony, self-reflection and introspective criticism of society. By understanding felt states and ethical positioning, the artist's works

visualize with Gardner's intrapersonal intelligence (Gardner, 1983). In addition, Perjovschi's minimalist satire prompts viewers to examine their own attitudes, prejudices and biases.

Hybridity, a Matrix of Contamination between Forms

In the sense of Bhabha (1994), hybridity in a cultural context, and later applied in artistic environments, implies the coexistence and contamination between different registers, such as the aesthetic, political, discursive, or technological. In Dan Perjovschi's practice, hybridity manifests through the combination of drawing, text, installation, and interventions in public spaces, as well as by blurring the boundaries between art and journalism and between artistic and civic gestures.

In Dan Perjovschi's art, the concept of the Picasso (Havârneanu, 2026) effect can constitute a starting point for understanding the hybridity in his practice, in which the plurality of perspectives extends from visual language towards a regime of hybridity that becomes a principle of discursive structuring that generates thematic intermediality, processual transmediality, and a reflexive-conceptual postmediality. Thus, the artist becomes an anentropic vector of ideas and messages, and his works serve as a platform for intersemiotic translation across environments, contexts, and cultures.

In the two drawings (Image 2 and Image 3), hybridity, in the sense of Bhabha (1994), functions as an intermediate space in which aesthetic, discursive, and political registers contaminate one another. In the first drawing, the juxtaposition of the medical mask and the globe, framed by the formula "SINGLE USE", transposes the technical/commercial language of consumption over the planet, suggesting the ambivalence between the need for immediate protection and the logic of long-term waste. In the second, the anthropomorphized globe that says "I'M EXHAUSTED" introduces an affective voice in a format close to the comic strip and editorial, transforming an abstract crisis into a civic interpellation that is easy to circulate in the public space.



Image 2 Civism and conceptual art in the practice of Dan Perjovschi (Urban, 2020)

Note. Image from <https://www.urban.ro/expozitie-dan-perjovschi-muzeul-de-arta-moderna-din-new-york/>, licensed under CC0



Image 3 Dan Perjovschi and civic aesthetics in conceptual art (*Agenda LiterNet*, 2020)

Note. Image from <https://agenda.liternet.ro/articol/24922/Comunicat-de-presa/Arta-in-actiune-cu-Dan-Perjovschi-la-Platforma-Internationala-de-Teatru-Bucuresti-2020.html>, licensed under CC0

Media Hybridity: between Drawing, Installation, and Ephemeral Performance

Although it may appear minimalist or low-tech, Perjovschi's artworks involve sophisticated forms of mediality, conceptual, cultural, and discursive hybridity (Nae, 2026).

Media hybridity is expressed in Dan Perjovschi's art as a complex interplay between installation art and performativity. Although his works are often simple drawings in a caricature style or use a memetic vocabulary (Nae, 2026) (a set of memes, a visual convention used to communicate and remix meaning online), they are frequently integrated into the exhibition space, becoming site-specific installations or works in progress. The drawing thus becomes part of a spatial context, exceeding the limits of a classical artistic medium. The artist creates drawings on the walls of galleries, intervening directly in the exhibition space, so that his works are not only exhibited but also integrated and merged with the architecture of the galleries, playing an active role in shaping the public's interaction with the exhibition.

According to Bishop (2005), in contemporary art, an aesthetic of participation and contextualization has begun to predominate, in which the work is determined by the spatial and temporal context in which it is activated. This approach transforms the drawing into an installation medium, no longer just two-dimensional but an integral part of the exhibition's physical and social space (Bourriaud, 2002).

In this sense, Dan Perjovschi's drawings, even though they seem spontaneous, are rigorously anchored in sociopolitical current events and the architecture of the place (EMST, 2024). Although he does not declare himself a performer, the artist activates the space through a temporary intervention, sometimes during the exhibition's *pavoisement*, sometimes in front of the audience, which will be erased at the end, making his work an ephemeral art form with theatrical valences that remain deeply ingrained in the collective memory (Image 4, Image 5).



Image 4 Artist Talk with Dan Perjovschi, in Oradea (Buşu, 2024)

Note. Image from <https://www.bihon.ro/stirile-judetului-bihor/dan-perjovschi-fundamentul-artei-mele-este-momentul-in-care-se-cucereste-libertatea-de-expresie-4591724>, licensed under CC0



Image 5 Dan Perjovschi at Documenta exhibition (Universul.net, 2022)

Note. Image from <https://universul.net/dan-perjovschi-at-documenta-exhibition/> licensed under CC0

In these images, media hybridity manifests itself through the transition of the drawing from the area of the graphic object to that of an installation and performative practice, in which the work exists as a situated event and process. The projection in front of the audience transforms the image into a discourse device, as the drawing functions as a visual support, activated by the gesture of indication and commentary. In parallel, the drawing made directly on the gallery wall acquires a site-specific and work-in-progress character, as it depends on space, architecture, and the moment of execution, and the process becomes part of the work. In this logic, the drawing behaves as an installation medium (Bourriaud, 2002), organizing relationships, attention, and interaction, building an aesthetic of participation and contextualization (Bishop, 2005). Even if it is not performance art *stricto sensu*, the active, ephemeral, and corporeal component of the public performance is reminiscent of process art and the happenings of the 1960s–1970s (Goldberg, 2011), where the work is defined by temporality, situation, and the involvement of witnesses.

Conceptual Hybridity: between Visual Art, Journalism, and Political Criticism

As Groys (2008) notes, contemporary art often becomes a space for the production of knowledge, in which the artist no longer creates only objects but also critical meanings. Perjovschi creates a form of graphic journalism (Schlichting, 2016), in which image and word coexist in a way similar to press caricatures, but translated into the space of contemporary art.

This ambivalence between aesthetic and informative gives his works a character as a discursive device, in which the image becomes a vehicle for opinion and reflection. He employs an essentialized graphic language, akin to raw art or DIY ("Do It Yourself") aesthetics, which creates a productive contrast between the naive form and the profound, sometimes cynical or provocative content of his works (Petrache, 2025). Additionally, his works concretize a double temporality, the temporary drawings being often documented and archived, which creates a tension between ephemerality and permanence; thus, the emphasis falls on the idea, the conception, and the process of the work, considered more significant than the concrete, ultimate form of a particular creation (Meyer, 1972, p. 5).

In the mural intervention, titled Horizontal Newspaper (Perjovschi, 2021), the conceptual hybridity manifests through the overlap of visual art, journalism, and political criticism, where the drawing becomes a public statement with the function of an urban editorial.



Image 6 Civic message on a wall in Iași (Petrache, 2025)

Note. Image from <https://www.ziaruldeiasi.ro/stiri/artistul-dan-perjovschi-mesaj-civic-pe-un-zid-de-langa-plaja-nicolina-nu-va-fi-usor-depinde-numai-de-tine--1753614.html> licensed under CC0

The formal strategy (large, legible text, reduced in color and aligned with the aesthetics of the press title) transforms the work into a form of graphic journalism, oriented towards the rapid transmission of a position and its circulation in the civic space (Schlichting, 2016). At the same time, the visual procedure of correction/negation (the bar that intervenes on the word and produces the semantic slippage between democracy and demagoguery) functions as a critical gesture in itself, similar to an editorial intervention applied directly to political reality which produces meanings and critical knowledge in public space, in line with Groys's (2008) observation that contemporary art is an epistemic practice. The temporality is double: an immediate reaction to a political context, but also a retrospective formulation of a recurring pattern in democratic discourse.

Cultural Hybridity: between East and West, between Local and Global

Dan Perjovschi positions himself critically towards both major ideological axes - global neoliberal capitalism and the post-communist legacy of Eastern Europe. Thus, he operates in an area of cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 1994; Merritt, & Stolterman, 2012), in which artistic identity is fluid, allowing for a fringe perspective that can interrogate centers of cultural power. The themes addressed, from global warming to human rights, from political corruption to migration, are transnational issues, but filtered through a sense of humour and a visual aesthetic that retains a recognizable Romanian or post-communist

voice. This transcultural positioning is essential for understanding the international reception of Perjovschi's work: he exhibits in prestigious Western museums (MoMA, Tate Modern, Centre Pompidou) but maintains a critical tone towards the ideology of art institutions and the globalization of cultural discourses (Fraser, 2005).

In "LOCAL / GLOBAL," Perjovschi stages the tension between circumstantial belonging and transnational discourse, working in an East–West register of cultural hybridity.



Image 7 Perjovschi, Local versus global (Zachmann & Șerban, 2018)

Note. Image from <https://adevarul.ro/stil-de-viata/cultura/interviu-dan-perjovschi-artist-vizual-de-1860229.html> licensed under CC0

Drawn directly on the glass case in a minimal, DIY graphic idiom, the piece delivers sharp conceptual commentary on positioning and symbolic power. Its low-tech look versus discursive precision makes hybridity a strategy: local in form, global in address, without yielding fully to either Western centers or Eastern narratives.

Institutional Hybridity in Contemporary Art: Practices between Legitimate and Alternative Space

Institutional hybridity shapes Dan Perjovschi's practice. His interventions recontextualize objects and symbols as subtle resistance to institutional norms (Bușu, 2024) and extend into participatory art-education projects, questioning the idea of authority and structure, addressing both art institutions as authoritarian entities and the alternative of developing new forms of artistic knowledge that move away from the traditional canon (Kaufmann Repetto, 2024), such as cultural alternatives.

In the drawing that opposes CURATOR versus ARTIST, institutional hybridity is condensed into a visual allegory of the power relationship between legitimizing space and creative agent.



Image 8 Screening of the work Curator/Artist in 2009, at MNHN presentation (Armanca, 2023)

Note. Image from <https://romania.europalibera.org/a/cine-e-autorul-dan-perjovschi-artmark/32615208.html> licensed under CC0

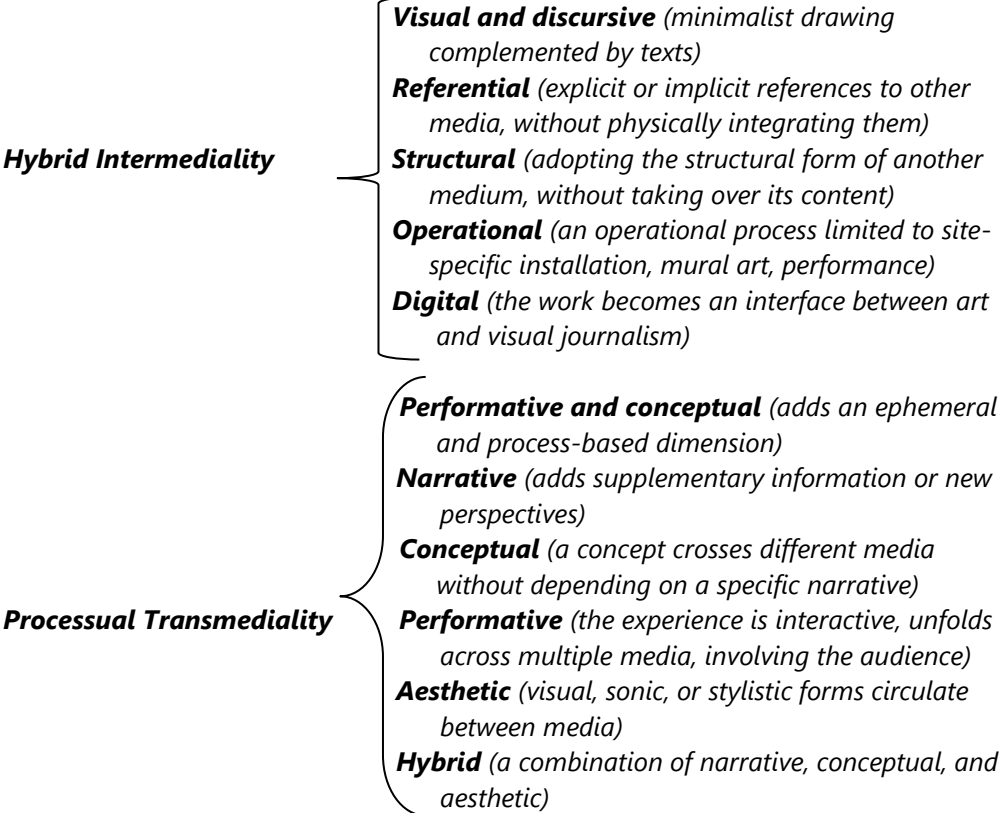
The figure of the curator appears hypertrophied, with extended arms that cover

and frame the artist's body, suggesting how the institution (through curation, selection, discourse, and mediation) can come to dominate the work's visibility and meaning of the artist. Graphic minimalism and explicit labelling transform the image into an editorial commentary, situated between art and social analysis.

Dan Perjovschi's Art Between Hybrid Intermediality, Processual Transmediality, and Reflexive-Conceptual Postmediality

Dan Perjovschi's artistic practice reflects how his works cross media, thematic, and spatial boundaries in a critical and innovative manner, thereby multiplying the dissemination of his message across public, institutional, and media spaces. He embodies a complex artistic practice located at the intersection of hybrid intermediality, procesual transmediality, and reflexive-conceptual postmediality. This type of approach illustrates how contemporary art can constitute itself not only as an aesthetic object but also as a form of critical intervention in public discourse, using minimal means to achieve maximum impact.

We synthetic structured the mediality expression as follows (a synthesis after Elleström (2010), Jenkins (2006), Krauss (1999), Rajewsky (2005), Weibel (2012)):



**Reflexive-Conceptual
Postmediality**

Conceptual (*emphasis on the central idea, independent of the medium in which it appears*)
Interactive / performative (*the audience's experience becomes an essential part of the work*)
Technological (*uses technology to remove the limitations of traditional media*)
Aesthetic / hybrid (*visual, sonic, or performative forms no longer depend on strict rules of a single medium*)

Intermediality: Interferences between Mediums

Intermediality in the visual arts refers to the interaction or fusion of different artistic media (such as painting, photography, video, performance, and installation) in a single practice or work. It is not just a juxtaposition, but an integration that generates new meanings. According to Rajewsky (2005), intermediality involves structural and functional relationships among two or more media, without necessarily assuming complete integration. In the case of Dan Perjovschi, we can discuss intermediality among drawing and text, between the artistic image and media discourse (similar to political caricature), and among supports (walls, windows, paper, and documentary video), depending on the exhibition context.

At the heart of Dan Perjovschi's artistic approach is a form of visual and discursive intermediality, in which minimalist drawing (often created with a marker on walls or temporary surfaces) is complemented by short texts, characterized by a pronounced ironic, satirical, or political tone. Thus, intermediality in his works is not only manifested at the formal level (combining the media, drawing with text), but also in the relationship with the context in which the work is exhibited, proposing an intersection between plastic art, visual journalism, mural art, and public space, which generates a new type of discourse, emergent, hybrid. It is a concept close to intertextuality, but applied to the level of artistic media (text, image, performance, video).

Referential intermediality functions through the interaction between media within a work, that is, how the relationships among codes, forms, and technologies are structured and perceived. In Dan Perjovschi's work, the interaction between visual art (drawing) and literature (aphorisms, slogans) is evident, as he constantly operates through references to other media, cultural contexts, and public discourse spaces. This type of intermediality involves explicit or implicit reference to different media, without physically integrating them, but evoking them as a source of meaning.

Structural intermediality is highlighted by adopting the structural form of another medium, without taking over its content. The artist's works are not only on paper or

canvas, but also ephemere, directly intervene on walls, windows, showcases, and even the walls of museums or public buildings (such as the MoMA in New York, the Leipzig Art Museum, and the MNAC in Bucharest), without creating stained glass windows or murals.

Operational intermediality (Elleström, 2010) constitutes the process by which the interaction between media in a work operates, that is, the way in which the relationship between codes, forms, and technologies is structured and perceived, materializing in an operational process that swings between site-specific installation, mural art, and spatial performance.

Digital intermediality involves fusions between media through digital technology, in which digital support enables the complete convergence of traditional media. In Dan Perjovschi's drawings, he addresses current themes, such as the climate crisis, immigration, politics, censorship, capitalism, and excerpts from the press and media. Thus, the work serves as an interface between art and visual journalism, often documented through podcasts.

Performative and conceptual intermediality brings an ephemeral, processual dimension, with the process being more important than the final product. The drawings are often made directly on the wall with a marker, without the intention of remaining permanent.

Visual and discursive intermediality

In the drawing CAPITAL ISM, the visual *discursive intermediality* emerges through the articulation of an extremely reductive image with a textual announcement that functions as a title and argument.



Image 9 Singularity and collectivity (Mariya, 2014)

Note. Image from <https://contemporaryartineastereurope.wordpress.com/2014/02/08/dan-perjovschi/> licensed under CC0

The word CAPITAL is separated by the suffix ISM, and a semiotic montage is built between them. Capital is associated with the singular individual (concentration, property, accumulation), and ism with the mass (system, ideology, multitude). The irony results from the fact that the economic logic that seems to privilege the singular (the owner of capital) is supported by a collective infrastructure (the multitude), which it repeatedly reduces to the anonymous. Through this combination, the work simultaneously becomes an image, a slogan, and a satirical analysis, demonstrating how, for Perjovschi, minimalist drawing functions as a discursive interface between art and socio-political criticism.

Referential intermediality

An eloquent example for *referential intermediality* is the poster for the exhibition Dan Perjovschi and Monotremu: (Școală-te!) Wake up! The wordplay in the title “Școală-te!” simultaneously activates two Romanian semantic registers, and it is precisely this ambiguity that produces an effect of referential intermediality (reference to other semantic media: education, discipline, civic mobilization, performance).



Image 10 Poster for the exhibition Dan Perjovschi and Monotremu:
(Școală-te!) Wake up! (Nasui, 2020)

Note. Image from <https://contemporaryartineasteurope.wordpress.com/2014/02/08/dan-perjovschi/> licensed under CC0

The meaning can be a denotative one, “School up!”, or a connotative one, “Wake up!”. Thus, the imperative functions as a performative statement: it names an event and triggers an attitude required of the viewer.

Through this double reading, the poster does more than announce a performance; it translates an invitation typical of activism and performance media (a call, a mobilization) into the language of advertising (design, title). Hence, the effect: a static support (the poster) references a living practice (performance/meeting), and the title serves as the semantic bridge between the inducement of education and civic awakening.

Structural intermediality

Structural intermediality is highlighted by the images related to the Dan Perjovschi Retrospective, Timișoara, by the fact that Perjovschi takes over the form and spatial logic of another environment (industrial architecture/infrastructure of halls, railway routes), without transforming the work into an object of that environment (it becomes neither a classic mural, nor a permanent decoration, nor an autonomous panel).

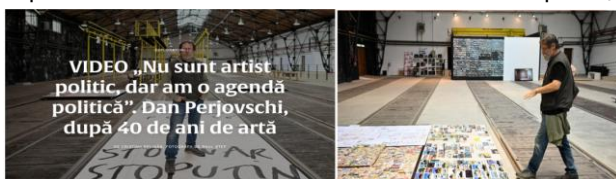


Image 11 Dan Perjovschi Retrospective, Timișoara (Beligăr, 2025)

Note. Image from <https://www.scena9.ro/article/dan-perjovschi-arta-politica-expozitie-retrospectiva-timisoara> licensed under CC0

In these images, the drawing and the text are placed on extended surfaces, such as strips that follow the space's directionality, so that the composition functions more as a scrolling device than as a frontal image. Thus, Perjovschi inscribes the surface and activates it as a message support, adopting the form of the exhibition/installation (scale, route, context) without assuming the conventions of a permanent object. In this sense, the intervention is site-responsive, using the geometry and rhythm of the space as a matrix, and the drawing remains in its rapid, temporary, DIY register.

Operational intermediality

Operational intermediality is seen less as a result (a completed work) and more as a situated process, circumscribed to a concrete spatial framework.



Image 12 Perjovschi supports the efforts of the Give Life organization (IQads, 2025)

Note. Image from <https://www.iqads.ro/articol/71885/live-din-campus-dan-perjovschi-sustine-eforturile-daruieste-viata-de-a-strange> licensed under CC0

In this image, Perjovschi acts here as an operator of space: the drawing is produced in real time, in front of the spectators, in a specific place (site-specific), and the gesture of marking a surface becomes an intervention that simultaneously activates the graphic, installational, and performative registers. In this sense, the drawing does not function autonomously but rather as an operation that mediates the experience of the place, approaching the logic of environmental performance, becoming an ephemeral, contextual act that produces meaning through direct intervention and the way it reorganizes participants' perception.

Digital intermediality

In the interview/podcast, digital intermediality becomes evident in that the artistic practice no longer circulates only as a drawing or an intervention in public space, but is re-mediated in an audiovisual format that functions as an interface between art and visual journalism.



Image 13 *Podcast with Dan Perjovschi* (TVR Cultural, 2025)

Note. Image from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=804jd6TpXKc> licensed under CC0

Through such mediatizations, the drawing and the socio-political critique of the Perjovschi are translated into a narrative accessible to the general public: the artist simultaneously becomes the subject of an interview, commentator, and witness to current events, and his discourse acquires a double temporality: immediate (reaction to the context) and archival (revision, recirculation, sharing). In this way, digital becomes a medium that reconfigures the work as a hybrid practice between art, civic commentary, and visual journalism, amplifying its impact through reproduction, accessibility, and transnational circulation.

Transmediality: Content Migration

Transmediality, as defined by Jenkins (2006), involves the extension of a narrative or idea across multiple media, each contributing a distinct part to the general understanding. Although he does not produce narratives in the classical sense, Perjovschi operates with recurring visual archives, themes such as freedom, migration, the climate crisis, or war return in different contexts, from the walls of a biennial to the pages of *Revista 22*, then in catalogues or online posts. Thus, we can speak of a transmediality of ideas, in which the artistic message circulates through diverse media, maintaining critical coherence.

The transmediality dimension of the artist's works is manifested in the multiple circulation of his visual messages across different media, while maintaining stylistic and thematic coherence. In addition to physical interventions in museums and urban spaces, the artist extends his discourse into the written press (such as his long-term collaboration with *Revista 22*), in the digital space (social networks, online archives, collaborative projects), in independent publications, fanzines, and catalogues, as well as in educational or activist contexts (conferences, public dialogues, workshops).

This capacity to adapt content to multiple platforms and to communicate with diverse audiences makes the artist a relevant exponent of transmediality in contemporary art, where the artistic message migrates, reconfigures, and multiplies without losing its ideological coherence. Perjovschi's drawings and messages circulate not only in museums, but also in the written press (he collaborated with *Revista 22*), on social networks, in catalogues, fanzines, posters, and even in performances and conferences. His transmediality consists in the fact that his ideas and visual language reconfigure and

migrate from one medium to another, maintaining stylistic and ideological coherence.

Transmediality performative and conceptual

Performative and conceptual transmediality is configured in Perjovschi's artwork as an ephemeral device in which the idea, produced by παρονομασία (pun), circulates across media, and the work is defined mainly by action and context rather than by a stable object.



Image 14 Perjovschi, Appeal for the Safeguarding of the Magazine 22 (Tănăsescu, 2021)

Note. Image from <https://culturaladuba.ro/artistul-dan-perjovschi-face-apel-pentru-salvarea-reviste-22-ofera-un-desen-original-celor-care-se-aboneaza/> licensed under CC0

In this intervention, the gesture of writing/drawing on the window activates a performative register (the artist's body, the time of execution, exposure to the spectators on the street), approaching the logic of processual art and performance as an event (Goldberg, 2011). Simultaneously, the window functions as an interface between the institutional and urban space, and meaning is produced relationally, through the encounter between text, reflections, exhibited documents, and the gaze, a way of working compatible with relational aesthetics, where the social framework becomes artistic material (Bourriaud, 2002). The conceptual dimension stems from the fact that the message is transferable and recontextualizable; it is rewritten through the situation and can be reactivated through documentation and recirculation, which shifts the emphasis from the final product to the process and the conditions of reception, in line with participatory and contextualizing practices (Bishop, 2005).

Narrative transmediality

Narrative transmediality works by distributing a discursive universe across multiple media and situations, in which each medium adds pieces of meaning rather than reproducing the same formula.



Image 15 Dan Perjovschi's retrospective (Marinescu, 2025)

Note. Image from <https://curatorial.ro/arta/dan-perjovschi-romania-o-retrospectiva-1985-2025/> licensed under CC0



Image 16 Exploring Romania through the art of Dan Perjovschi (Asociația Culturală Contrasens, 2025)

Note. Image from <https://acontrasens.ro/dan-perjovschi-romania/> licensed under CC0



Image 17 Lia and Dan Perjovschi, laureates of the European Cultural Foundation's "Princess Margriet" award (Văsii, 2013)

Note. Image from <https://curatorial.ro/arta/dan-perjovschi-romania-o-retrospectiva-1985-2025/> licensed under CC0

The minimalist Perjovschi's drawing serves as an allegorical core; the situated text/intervention ("ROMANIA") provides the contextual and political anchor; and the body inscription (the tattoo) translates the narrative into a biographical-affective register. The performative/installational (the globe, the artist's action, and the emphasis in space) extends the interactional theme to a global processual scale. In transmedia terms, the story is constructed through complementary contributions of the media, each offering new information or perspectives and requesting a different position from the audience (Jenkins, 2006). The result is a narrative in which meaning is negotiated among document, gesture, public space, and corporeality, and artistic practice becomes, simultaneously, a critical narrative and a mechanism for producing social knowledge (Groys, 2008).

Conceptual transmediality

Conceptual transmediality is seen in how the same idea circulates across different media, changing form without depending on a unitary narrative.



Image 18 Dan Perjovschi – The Long Wall Project (EMST, 2023)

Note. Image from <https://www.emst.gr/en/exhibitions-en/dan-perjovschi-the-long-wall-report> licensed under CC0

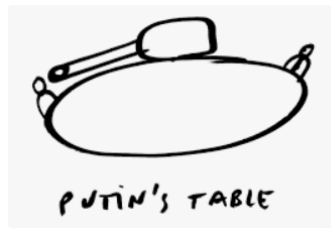


Image 19 Dan Perjovschi: Masa lui Putin (Zgondoiu, 2022)

Note. Image from <https://propagarta.ro/interviuri-acasa-la-in-atelier-la/dan-perjovschi-daca-l-as-intalni-pe-putin-ca-si-la-ceausescu-as-trage-fara-somatie/> licensed under CC0

The mural drawing *The Long Wall Project* combines text, schematic image, political slogan, and graphic symbol, exceeding the traditional boundaries of drawing as an autonomous medium. Messages such as "WAR RY?", "NO TANKS", "ALL MONEY FOR ARTS WILL GO TO TANKS NOW" simultaneously activate the visual and linguistic registers, transforming the wall into a hybrid space between art, press, manifesto, and protest graphics.

In *Putin's table*, the drawing activates an allusion to Brâncuși's *Table of Silence* by reducing it to an archetypal form: the table as a symbol of community and recollection is hijacked by the label *Putin* and becomes the table of authoritarian decision, where silence acquires the meaning of complicity and control exercised from a distance.

The concept remains stable (power–violence–responsibility), but manifests differently depending on the environment: sometimes as a cultural metaphor (the politically re-semantized Brâncuși), sometimes as a civic intervention (the collage superimposed on the mural).

Performative transmediality

From the *performative transmediality* point of view, the experience expands and multiplies through the passage between spaces and through the audience's involvement, which corresponds to the transmedia logic of distributing/expanding actions across distinct channels and contexts (Jenkins, 2006), as well as to production and perception within the event and the encounter (Fischer-Lichte, 2008).



Figure 20 Dan Perjovschi. *Romania – A Retrospective 1985–2025* (Art Collection Telekom, 2025)

Note. Image from <https://www.art-collection-telekom.com/en/news/dan-perjovschi-romania-a-retrospective-1985-2025> licensed under CC0



Figure 21 Live retrospective in Timișoara (Armanca, 2025)

Note. Image from <https://revista22.ro/cultura/dan-perjovschi-redeseneaza-romania-anilor-1985-2025-o-retrospectiva-live-la-timisoara> licensed under CC0

Performative transmediality is representative for these images because the event is simultaneously constructed in several active environments: the urban space in front of the museum (the crowd, the entrance as a threshold) and the interior space (live speech, the presence of the artist, the audience as a “collective body”, the environmental design). The environments are not simple supports, but parts of the performance, because participation begins through co-presence and circulation (outside) and continues through interaction, shared attention, and institutional situation (inside).

Aesthetic transmediality



Image 22 Dan Perjovschi redraws Romania in 1985–2025 (Armanca, 2025)

Note. Image from <https://revista22.ro/cultura/dan-perjovschi-redeseneaza-romania-anilor-1985-2025-o-retrospectiva-live-la-timisoara> licensed under CC0

In this triptych, the *aesthetic transmediality* is evident in the way the same stylistic signature circulates across different media: an archive-type exhibition on the wall, an installation device with tables/prints, and a mural intervention, maintaining visual coherence even as the specific themes may change. In the first image, the multitude of small drawings arranged in a modular pattern produces an atlas-or storyboard effect, where unity is achieved through the repetition of the same rapid graphics and the text-image combination. The second image continues this aesthetic in the installation register: the materials are organized as in a consultation/archive space, and the drawing becomes a manipulable object, procedurally exhibited, but retains the same economy of line and short statement. In the third image, the wall intervention (“Patriotism”) resumes the same features: white outline, minimalism, visual irony, and the association of word and symbol is transposed into the public space, on a large scale.

Hybrid transmediality



Image 23 40 years of drawing and civic activism, one man: Dan Perjovschi (Ghițescu, 2025)

Note. Image from <https://www.rfi.fr/ro/rom%C3%A2nia/20250904-rom%C3%A2nia-paradoxal%C4%83-%C3%Aentre-marker-%C8%99i-z%C3%A2mbet-amar-dan-perjovschi-40-de-ani-de-crea%C8%9Bie> licensed under CC0

Here, *hybrid transmediality* results from the combination of three levels: the aesthetic register (installation, table with materials), the conceptual register (their idea/arrangement as a device of meaning), and the performative register and digital mediation (activation through the artist's presence and phone filming). The work thus circulates between exhibition, action, and online documentation, becoming a small transmedia *ecosystem*.

Postmediality beyond the Technical Specificity of the Medium

According to Krauss (1999) and, more recently, Weibel (2012), postmediality defines a stage of contemporary art in which the identity of the artistic medium becomes irrelevant, and the artist works with structures of meaning and discourse, regardless of the supporting medium. Perjovschi perfectly illustrates this idea; although he works with a marker on the wall, his approach is deeply postmedial, because what matters is not the medium itself, but the critical and discursive intervention produced through it. His means are minimal (marker, walls, windows, display cases), but conceptually charged. The drawings are ephemeral, not objectual; they are sometimes erased after the exhibition (Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles, 2018). The content is both ideological and processual, rather than purely aesthetic. Postmediality in his art consists of abandoning the classical medium-form paradigm and approaching the construction of the concept of art as an ideological instrument, process, and context. He does not work to produce a traditional art object, but to convey a socio-political message.

Conceptual postmediality



Image 24 I'm not a political artist, but I have a political agenda (Bligăr, 2025)

Note. Image from <https://www.scena9.ro/article/dan-perjovschi-arta-politica-expozitie-retrospectiva-timisoara> licensed under CC0



Image 25 Dan Perjovschi on his art practice, documenta 15, and support for Ukraine (Libet, 2023)

Note. Image from <https://artslooker.com/en/dan-perjovschi-on-his-art-practice-documenta-15-and-support-for-ukraine-2/> licensed under CC0

Conceptual postmediality is evident in these three images, where the message (STOP PUTIN) remains recognizable and coherent regardless of the support: a museum facade, a wall or vehicle in public space, or an industrial hall with a large-scale installation. The work's identity is defined not by the medium (mural, banner, installation) but by the central idea, which can be reactivated anywhere, anytime, with the same economy of means (line and text). The medium thus serves only as a tool for amplification and contextualization: the museum offers legitimacy and institutional visibility, public space produces direct contact and urgency, and the site-specific installation transforms the message into a spatial experience. Because these media can be replaced, recombined, or even disappear without the work losing its essence, this artistic practice functions postmedially, as the concept circulates autonomously and the medium remains contingent, adapted to the situation.

Interactive/performative postmediality



Image 26 The figurative versus metaphorical iconic in symbolic postmediality

Note. Image from <https://www.alamy.com/stockphoto/perjovschi.html?sortBy=relevant> licensed under CC0

The doubling of the American flag, as a drawing on the wall and as a sign carried by the spectator, produces a post-media effect: the work no longer functions as an autonomous object, but as a relational situation in which the spectator enters the field of the work. The flag becomes a representation and a presence simultaneously, and meaning is generated through this mirroring: the American spectator does not simply visualize an image but confronts his own identity through a symbol he also finds in the work. Thus, the environment (the wall/drawing) remains contextualized, and the stakes

shift to the performative experience of the encounter between signs, the body, and the institutional context, that is, to the process of reception as a constitutive part of the work.

Technological postmediality



Image 27 40 years of art with Perjovschi

Note. Image from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OoMZqWq2lQo> licensed under CC0

Technological postmediality is reflected in the way Perjovschi's practice is doubled and extended by digital infrastructure: the work (mural drawing, spatial intervention) no longer remains bound to its material support, but is reformatted as an image-video, interview, and online archive (YouTube). Technology eliminates the classical limitations of traditional media (uniqueness, location, duration), allowing the work to coexist simultaneously in physical space (the drawn wall) and in digital space (filming, distribution, commentary, recirculation). In this way, the work takes on a parallel life: it can be seen from a distance, recontextualized through montage and discourse, preserved as a document, and reactivated over time, without depending on the direct presence in the museum. The result is not just promotion but a regime change: the medium becomes flexible and recombable, and the work's identity is maintained through idea and gesture, while technology ensures its multiplicity and public persistence.

Conclusions

A complex analysis of the visual practice of the artist Dan Perjovschi, through the concepts of hybridity, intermediality, transmediality, and postmediality, highlights the fact that hybridity in his art is not an extensive formal effect, but a structural and discursive principle that allows for interference between aesthetic, political, social, and institutional registers.

The artist navigates between opposing cultural and ideological spaces (the post-communist East and the capitalist West), developing a critical, transcultural voice specific to cultural hybridity. His global themes (war, ecology, civil rights) are treated through an aesthetics specific to the Romanian and Eastern European space, generating a form of critical interculturality and an active dialogue between the local and the global.

The artist's works access a type of visual mediation that brings his practice closer

to relational aesthetics and processual or performative art, even if he does not explicitly claim to belong to these currents.

Dan Perjovschi's creations occupy a liminal position between visual artist, graphic journalist, and political critic, which gives them a true character of conceptual hybridity. His essentialized and ironic visual language transforms the artwork into a discursive device, in which image and text generate critical knowledge, and the message gains relevance in the public space. The drawings, although ephemeral, are often archived, emphasizing the conceptual and processual dimension of the work.

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A very brief history about the art of inferior paleolithic

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ABSTRACT: During the period of the spreading of Homo erectus in Africa in all the inhabited regions of Europe, the adaptation to the new environment and climate conditions asked for new tools. New cultures added to the previous "gravel culture" (Proto Paleolithic), their tools improved. Artificially created shelters appeared, under rocks in free air, once fire was discovered man was no longer dependent on nature. Figurative "art" was not a true form of art yet, but it was about the premises of its appearance, the symmetry and harmony of some tools represent a proof of the aesthetic pleasure felt by our ancestors. The examples of intervention on some rock fragments (the statue from Berekhat Ram) proves that natural forms inflamed the imagination of human beings capable of thinking. Regarding ornaments – regular incisions were found on objects

KEYWORDS: homo erectus; sinanthrop; hominid; flint abri;

Introduction

Prehistory is the only evolution phase through which the entire humanity has passed.

Its lower limits is marked by the appearance of man and one's evolutionary jump regarding human condition – anthropogenesis –, and also by the emergence and development of social organization, thinking, language, beliefs and religious practices and also art. To be more specific: sociogeny. Probably, we do not have our origins directly in Homo habilis. But he is the one that created the first settlements and the first tools. Shelters have made the difference between survival up to that point, by natural selection – and the onwards ability to face some adverse conditions. Regarding tools, they appeared as a result of the need to control the environment, they have marked the separation from animality. They are a typical example of knowledge used for obtaining a useful object.

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The superior limit is represented by the so-called "jump into civilisation" – in which, politically speaking – race relationships leave room for superior structures –, but culturally speaking – the first writing systems are invented.

Regarding the lastly mentioned aspect, of defining a period before the written documentation, the term *prehistory* does not apply to those peoples (from Oceanic America, Central and South Africa) that have known the so-called „Neolithic revolution“, but who have lived, up to the appearance of navigators, outside the so-called History. In this respect, a more appropriate name and characterization would be: a Prehistory combined with ethnography (*Janson, 1986, p. 34*). These peoples did not evolve together with "historical" civilisations: they have preserved their traditions, they have remained organized in villages and tribes and they used the stone for tools and weapons.

Generally speaking, in order to classify Prehistory, the criterion which is used is the level of intervention on the materials used for making tools. Thus, the economic level is the one which was the basis of biological evolution, the economic revolution of each historical epoch gave birth to the evolution of culture and civilisation (*Childe, 1966, pp. 54-56*).

Stone Age is the period that did not have a very clear beginning, once the first tracks of conscious hominid activity were found, in manufacturing tools. Their tools are the ones that give us, the nowadays living one, the proofs about the spring of man on Earth and one's adaptation to the changing environment conditions. Therefore, about one's survival.

For Lower Paleolithic, the representative species is *Homo erectus*. He leaves "the African cradle", migrating north, his spreading area was in all the inhabitable regions back then of the Old World, so also in Eurasia, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, but rivers and oceans stopped his advancement to America, Australia, Japan and the Pacific Islands (*Marseille & Laneyrie-Dagen, 1994, p. 14*).

The physical features of the man belonging to the Chellean civilisation announce the ones of the modern man. Probably some of the man of the glaciation Riss will give birth to the Neanderthals, others – to *Homo sapiens* – there are not sure evidence on this phenomenon.

A representative (a version) of *Homo erectus* was "the man from Pekin" (*Sinanthropus Pekinensis*) (600 000 years before) (*Roberts & Westad, 2018, p. 116*), whose partial skeleton was discovered together with tools made of stones from Zhoukoudian (Chou-kou-tien) (near Beijing). The skull of this synanthrope has a flattened braincase calotte, the bones of the forehead are gibbous (there is a sticking-out crest above the eyes), the forehead is clogged and the brain is twice bigger than the ones of *Australopithecus*, having a capacity of 1 075ml (just like the one of monkeys), involving a bigger brain (thus a modification of the dimensions of female's pelvis in order to be able to give birth to children having a bigger head); the cheek bones are protruding, dull chin,

regular teeth (similar to the ones of the modern man), just like the dimension and form of the muscles of arms (the usage of hands made them develop themselves). The tools found near him was a hunter, but the remains of ashes – a proof that he used fire (*Cruceru, 1987, pp. 69-70*). Thus, the tracks of Neanderthaliens existed in all 3 hydrographic basins of China (The Yellow River, Yangtze and The River of Pearls) (*Roberts & Westad, 2018, p. 115*).

The adaptation to the new environment and climate conditions (it was colder) in this period (in Africa: the appearance of fruits that were edible during the entire year; in the North: sufficient vegetal food) will be done by culture: it grows the importance of hunters when vegetal food becomes less and less, afterwards man covered his body with clothes adequate to the body, the usage of fire (for the time being coming from the sources offered by nature: produced by lightening, from volcanic lava, by lighting natural gases) – then maintained and used for food preparation). A great evolutionary step, especially on the liberty of movement of man, it was the conquest of fire (the first traces of fire usage appeared around 400 000 B.C., afterwards, there was a step by step spreading, people learned to use it for illumination, heating, the making of more performant tools – but they also learned to transport it at distance from the source) (*Marseille & Laneyrie-Dagen, 1994, p. 15*). The usage of fire had as consequence the change of diet, which involved the need of diversifying tools.

Thus, according to what we have seen, the first tools made by man were tools and weapons (*Childe, 1966, p. 67*). Step by step, man began to choose the most suitable rocks and he started to process them in a more experimented way.

The tools of riprap culture (from Protopleolithic) are accompanied now by two series of tools, made by hitting a silex block on a stone *anvil* (*Cottrell, 1962, p. 33*).

The first series is the one of the tools made from the technique called « lamellar »: tools « of nucleus » – or using the technique « bifacial » (used on the « nucleus », such as « handmade axes », having the shape of a pear, the basis being globular, kept in a savage state, without traces of hitting – for breaking – and a sharp edge – for carving) (*Cottrell, 1962, p. 33*) (of the Complex Abbevillo-Acheulean) (terms coming from the sites Abeville and St. Acheul, France) (previously, instead of the term Abbevillian, it was used the term Chellean). The Abbevillian culture is considered the first phase of civilisation, more important, from Acheulleene, and it is described in Meridional India, Syria, Palestina, in the entire African continent, in Spain, France, England, but this technique will be restricted to the south, in order to spread north, depending on climate conditions.

The Abbevillian Culture (Chellean) (after the city Chelles, Seine-en-Marne, Northern France) is characterized by the stone axe of large dimensions and carved on both faces. The first tools that we know as having been made by human hand are silex pieces of different dimensions (10-15cm), having the form of elongated almond ("the hand axe"), made by hitting the stone on both faces, having an extremity with a cap, the

other being sinuous (the middle is a little gibbous). Tools made of ivory or bone were not found.

For the **Acheulean Culture** (after the village Saint-Acheul, the suburb Amiens, Northern France), what is characteristic is the small axe, handcrafted with more accuracy, retouching offered it a geometric shape; the edge (which was previously rounded) becomes linear. This industry is a particular case of the Abbevillian culture. The causes are not known, but probably the climate's cooling led to the usage of some tools of approximately the same shapes, still more varied: lanceolate, sometimes too elongated, and also oval, rounded, discoidal, but especially having a bigger accuracy of technique, and also having a second purpose: if the Chelleean axe was destined to hitting, the Acheulean one could also cut. The bifacials are accompanied by chips – fragments detached from the nucleus of the rock – sometimes chips are predominant, in other situations – they are just chips (*Dunan, 1960, p. 8*). Well, these chips are also used: for enchainment or for scouring.

In some regions, the passage from Acheulian to the Middle Paleolithic was progressive: the bifacials disappeared, the carving technique became overgeneralized, splintering started to develop and to generalize. Thus, the Levalloisian industry is associated with the Musterian one (from Middle Paleolithic).

Therefore, the other series of tools, existent in other areas of the world, is the one of « chip » tools (tools of varied shapes, worked from chips away from the nucleus): they are specific to **Clactonian and Levalloisian cultures** (terms coming from the sites Levallois Perret, France, and Clacton on Sea, Essex, England). It is described in Europe and septentrional Asia, at the North of the Alps Mountains, in the Balkans, Caucasus, Hindukush and Himalaya, but during the time of the glaciations, this technique will spread in England, France, Syria, even in Africa (*Childe, 1966, p. 70*). There were found even weapons to be thrown at distance: the wooden spears having the point hardened in fire discovered in Leheringen (Germany) and Clacton-on-Sea (Essex, England).

Settlement and lodging

The Paleolithic, in general, is marked by the slow evolution of the process of anthropogenesis. Man appears from the beginning of the Paleolithic, by the detachment of the first hominids from the animal life.

This first period, the Lower Paleolithic, registers the evolution from the occupation of the territory – to its inhabitation. Hunting has a major importance regarding the expansion of the territory to be explored. New settlements appear, the community enlarges and acquires new needs, such as language – which appears out of the necessity of transmitting knowledge useful for survival.

As far as settlements are concerned, we notice the gradual usage of natural shelters, followed by their set-up and then even the spring of artificially-created shelters.

Human groups that continued to be gregarious were not yet very coherent or very stable, their area of movement was very limited (*Miclea & Florescu, 1980, p. 12*). As far as settlements and inhabitation are concerned, ever since the Early Paleolithic, the ancestors of people also found shelter in caves, but also in open air, under the rocks, on the fill terraces of rivers. Bedstones are proofs of knowledge and mastering of fire by people. For the time being, we are talking about its usage, but the overtones are enormous. First of all, we are talking about the existence of this exclusively human act, which differentiates man from animal, making him capable to offer a practical application to an element that he was capable to extract from the context, being aware of its importance for the progress of the life that he will improve from many points of view: it allowed him to have freedom of movement, but also to obtain extra time, protection against wild beasts, the diversification of food (by boiling, microbes were destroyed, but food that was inedible in a raw state became good food), heat and light (consequently, new natural shelters were occupied), progress in the technology of obtaining some higher quality tools and weapons (javelins' burning). These are only physical benefits. Moreover, fire exerted a great psychological force: its maintenance contributed to the creation of rudimentary organizational structures of the society back then, because, by its centredness, it boosted the cohesion of communities (based on kinship): a bedstone gathered the community around it. Therefore, material benefits are completed by the interest for tradition and then for culture. The importance of the individual grows. The community itself is more and more based on stable family union (mother, father, children), the period of nursing and raising children grows bigger and bigger, being adapted to the need to increase the time for preparing the child's abilities for survival.

Consequently, the discovery and usage of fire (not yet its production!) were important factors (because, up to that moment, man had been completely dependent on nature) in the appearance of the first spaces of inhabitation in free air, under the rocks (abri). But man also lived in caves, during colder periods, in huts which were not deep inside the caves: in these parts, which were more secluded (in lateral spaces or in the deep end of the cave), cultural acts took place. An example is Altamira Cave from the North of Spain where, in the partially broken-down vestibule, there are proofs which show that a tribe of hunters lived there (*Bernardini, 2006, p. 19*); or the Cave Del Castillo, near Santander. In the south of France: in Terra Amata – near Nisa, settlements were composed of huts having a branch structure, the basis being strengthened and marked with stones; probably, it existed a cope made of animal leathers; inside, near a bedstone, there were oval shaped *workshops* where stone was carved in order to make tools. Or the skeleton of huts was made of bones and deer horns, being covered also by animal skins, for example in France, in Lazaret, huts with two rooms and places for sleeping were found. These are settlements with quasipermanent inhabitation. Other examples are the cave from Pontnewydd that shelters the oldest settlement on rocks (225 000 B.C.) from Wales

(Grigorescu, 1989, p. 17), or caves from the Province Capo and the Province Transvaal (Africa), the cave from Um Qatafa (the Close East) (Curcinschi Vorona, 1982, p. 16).

Figurative "Art"

Not in this period did other vestiges appear (except for tools) to complete the ensemble of cultures with information about the recomposition of the life of human groups but, compared to the ones that were part of the *culture of riprap*, the activity of Lower Paleolithic people was more constant and specialized.

An evolution is recorded also regarding tools. The tools of previous epochs (conventionally called Abbevillian, Acheulean, Clactonian, Levalloisian) slowly become more numerous and they are characterized by a more careful carving of the surface of the boulder. They become specialized, being produced through more evolved splintering techniques, through which two categories of tools are obtained: small axes and chips. Moreover, it is the Paleolithic phase during which progress was made towards the appearance of the first forms of directed effort inside collectivities (Miclea & Florescu, 1980, p. 12).

Though we can not detect yet a preoccupation for beauty, it continues to be remarkable the harmonizing between usefulness and ergonomics, the purity and expressiveness of forms are the origins of aesthetic qualities which appeared later on, all the more so as the purpose of each made object was a utilitarian one. It is the merit of these tools which were more and more improved that they stored in them the qualities of form, out of which emerged the form for form, for itself, detached from its utilitarian role, the future work of art corresponded to a spiritual necessity. Therefore, we see that functionality makes room for aesthetic judgement. About art, we will speak when we notice previous preparation of these interventions that have as a temporary result a sensitivity of form or of the contour. For the time being, there is a continuous development of the production technique – just like in the case of a hand axe found in West Tofts, Norfolk (England) (200 000 – 100 000 B.C.) (Bell, 2007, p. 1). Of course, usefulness is the key word, but beauty is an inherent part of the sphere of the usefulness, it itself (the beautiful) needs to satisfy important spiritual needs of man. Anyway, they do not have a lack of value – at least it represents illustrative documents of an epoch, landmarks in the evolution of the culture of humanity, if they are not indeed examples of manifestation for the one interested in the development of human creativity along millennia. Moreover, culture does not only mean values, but also creativity – it is the one that allows qualitative jumps. Thus, only by working his tools and weapons, primitive man discovered analogies and symbolism, the world that he imagined was always enriched in contact with these handmade objects. The repetitive gesture of hands itself will be translated visually through the rhythm of decorations.

From the same period, of the Lower Paleolithic, another example intrigues its

age. 280 000 – 250 000 B.C. was the period of inhabiting the Israeli site Berekhat Ram, where it was discovered a famous fragment of volcanic pozzolano that suggests, synthetically but also convincing, a feminine silhouette. The tracks of impact crystal on its surface are proofs that a seen being was intentionally created. In this case, we no longer speak about a genetically transmitted behaviour coming from the animal world, but the border between nature that helped, through its forms that have stirred imagination and fantasy, and the artistic creation which, in this case, is judged. Animals can not spontaneously produce forms and images (eventually guided, but this type of activity is not specific to the animal world). And, in general, an animal does not develop aesthetic activities.

Regarding ornaments, series of regular incisions were found on forms: for example, in Bilzingsleben, Germany; Stránská-Píská, Czech Republic), but not all researchers accept them as decorative ornaments.

Therefore, in the Lower Paleolithic, we can not yet talk about Art having the present meaning of the word, but the symmetry and harmony of forms of some tools are proofs that aesthetic pleasure existed at our ancestor when producing them.

Conclusions

Ever since Paleolithic times, this human feature of being able to think appears – man starts to mentally use symbols, without making use of the concrete experience of the surrounding world. It is amazing how our ancestors were capable of making a series of actions that can not be done by animals. (...Neither animals, nor modern primitive men, nor children, they were compared with our ancestors and their Art). The mental development of prehistoric men proves that they had the ability to use abstract thinking, imagination, originality, being preoccupied by the connections between shapes and colours, in order to avoid hazard).

There is no borderline between Art and reality and, maybe, not all researchers agree on the creative genius of the hunters-pickers from Paleolithic times. Only practical purposes can not explain their large variety nor their originality and refinement of some of them. Of course, regarding “art for art’s sake”, it is not the case regarding these objects, but about freedom and courage, about the pleasure felt while elaborating them, all these prove that it was an aim the pleasure of seeing them looked at and, also, admired... The same intention oriented him also towards ornamental Art: to decorate these tools, they are themselves the first proofs of human dexterity), to make up jewels (from the same natural materials): necklaces made from shells, animal teeth, bracelets made of ivory. And us, the people from today, need to take into account – while judging a work of art, no matter the time – the moment, context, it is in close connection with the time and place where it comes from. The artistic work reveals itself in front of our nowadays eyes, but its language is the one of the period and the area where it was made, having the common style of those specific creations.

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Neuroplasticity - the engine of creativity

Mirela Ștefănescu^a

ABSTRACT: Is creativity an innate talent or is it a dynamic skill that can be constantly developed by anyone regardless of age? The answer is provided by one of the most fascinating concepts of modern neuroscience: neuroplasticity. Understanding this phenomenon is relevant to knowing how the brain works and how we can take control of the way we think, feel and innovate. Neuroplasticity is not just a recovery mechanism, but actually represents the dynamic engine of human creativity, transforming the human from a simple spectator into the architect of his own brain.

Thus, in this article we will explore the mechanisms of plasticity at the synaptic level, cognitive development and creativity augmentation through the dynamic collaboration of neural networks, and last but not least, we will suggest some practical strategies, based on scientific studies, for active brain training. In this sense, we will analyze the applicability of neuroplasticity in art, science, continuous learning, or solving complex problems.

KEYWORDS: brain, neural networks, neuroplasticity, creativity

Introduction

As a researcher at the Institute for Multidisciplinary Research in Art at the George Enescu National University of Arts, I am interested in the complexity of the creative phenomenon in the context of rapid technological development, the essential role of neuroplasticity and the cognitive mechanisms involved in the creative act, as well as how technology influences brain plasticity. Thus, in the interdisciplinary research we conduct on creative potential, the emphasis is placed on "the dialogue between disciplines, in which science and art do not exclude but complement each other" (Ștefănescu, 2025, 15). In other words, "the fusion of art and technology opens a new dimension of creativity, in which

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human expressiveness merges with the interactivity offered by data and sensors” (Mavhima, 2025, 103), thereby expanding the meaning of neural communication.

To this end, we have initiated and organized a series of scientific conferences at the Institute for Multidisciplinary Research in Art, in partnership with the Grigore T. Popa University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Iași and the Gheorghe Asachi Technical University in Iași, including: “Neuroscience and Creativity – Neural Connections in Artistic Creation” - 2023, “Neuroplasticity, Cognition, Creativity – Interdisciplinary Perspectives” - 2024, “Neuroplasticity in the Digital Age – The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Creativity” - 2025, featuring lectures by specialists in the medical, artistic (visual arts, music, theater, choreography) and engineering, through which we seek to understand the depth of the creative process, what lies behind imagination, emotions, and empathy—key elements in resolving trauma—as well as exploring neuroplasticity as a means of enriching forms of artistic expression and the prospect of finding creative solutions to the complex problems of contemporary society.

In fact, the contributions of the experts from the two conferences mentioned above were published in the volume “The Art and Science of the Brain: New Frontiers in Neural Communication”¹, with the aim of providing the interested public with a current interdisciplinary resource on research conducted at the intersection of neuroscience and creativity, which can contribute to the development of an academic and human culture based on collaboration, empathy, and integrative knowledge.

Although the specialized literature abounds with analyses of creativity as a complex process and of neuroplasticity as a biological fact, this work aims to go beyond a mere description of these concepts, presenting them as living instruments of an internal mechanism that we can control, while equally highlighting the human capacity to utilize one’s own mental flow to actively reprogram one’s neural network.

The system of creative thinking

A major challenge of our time is the relationship between neuroplasticity, creativity, and artificial intelligence. I believe that using generative platforms as tools to accelerate ideas—not as a substitute for mental effort—must be done with great discernment and balance. Of course, the use of artificial intelligence in artistic creation raises philosophical and ethical questions. Is a creation produced by an algorithm considered authentic art? Can AI bring true innovation, or is it merely a replication of what has already been done? These dilemmas are important, but it must be understood that AI, at its core, functions as a tool in the hands of a human creator, and true creativity stems from their interaction with the technology.

Throughout human evolution, the ability to generate new and useful ideas has

¹ Editors: Researcher Mirela Ștefănescu, Researcher Ligia Fărcășel, Dr. Richard Constantinescu

been the driving force behind the progress of civilization. In this regard, we believe it is necessary to address several questions, such as: What is creativity? Is it an innate gift or a skill that can be cultivated through practice by any individual, regardless of age? For a long time, creative potential was considered an innate and unchangeable trait. However, neuroscience research demonstrates that the human brain's architecture is in a state of constant reconfiguration. In this context, we discuss the importance of neuroplasticity—the brain's capacity to remodel neural connections. Understanding this principle is essential for deciphering the mechanisms of neuroplasticity, which acts as a true engine of creativity, enabling individuals to actively shape their intellectual resources and rewrite their cognitive boundaries.

To understand the system of creative thinking, we will adopt a multidisciplinary perspective, in the sense that we will define creativity as an integrative cognitive function rather than an isolated event. Thus, creativity involves a conceptual synthesis through which disparate elements are connected into a completely new logical and functional unity. This ability to think divergently depends directly on the strength and flexibility of neural networks.

The brain is, of course, at the center of these neurological processes. Researchers have “always been fascinated by the human brain, by its ability to process the multitude of information from the surrounding environment, by the variety of decisions and creative ideas, so that technical communication with it has become a subject of engineering study, alongside various approaches in medicine and psychology” (Poboroniuc, 2025, 63). To decipher what lies behind an innovative idea, in the artist's mind during the creative process, or where ingenious solutions come from means to delve behind the scenes of free thought, where science and imagination meet.

Innovation is not an abstract phenomenon; ideas do not appear out of nowhere, but result from the way our nerve cells connect and communicate with one another. The authors of the book *“The Runaway Species: How Human Creativity and How Remakes the World”*, David Eagleman² and Anthony Brandt³ make this point very clear: “Human creativity does not spring from nothing. We learn from our experience and from the raw material around us to reshape the world” (Eagleman and Brandt, 2020, 46).

Research in this field reveals an interesting fact: when we process new information, the connections between neurons multiply and become stronger, constantly adapting to the intensity of our mental effort. For example, when we explore new activities, the brain releases certain substances that have a beneficial effect on the neural system, thereby facilitating the formation of new connections between parts of the brain that previously did not interact. This process enables a vital dialogue between the rigor and discipline of logic, originating in the frontal lobe, and the free flow of memories and associations from

² Neuroscientist

³ Composer

the lateral regions. Thus, through the collaboration between these different “zones,” the ideal ground is created for the birth of original ideas and solutions. In other words, “creativity is a critical component of human cognition and behavior, playing an essential role in fostering innovation, problem-solving, and personal fulfilment” (Ștefănescu, Bălăiță, and Fărcășel, 2025, 218).

Another aspect that deserves highlighting is that creative potential transcends the boundaries of art; the creative act does not belong strictly to the artistic sphere. Creativity is a cross-cutting cognitive function that manifests itself in any field, serving as the driving force that enables adaptation in any context. Nevertheless, the artistic dimension remains an essential vector for reconfiguring the neural network, as art compels us to work with metaphors, symbols, and abstractions, which force the brain to create unexpected connections between ideas that, on the surface, appear unrelated. Moreover, this mental process is enhanced by the emotional charge of art, which acts as a catalyst; intense emotions accelerate the formation of new neural circuits, transforming a simple association of ideas into a profound and memorable experience. “Artistic emotion is a profound human experience that transcends linguistic and cultural barriers. Recent perspectives on aesthetics have reaffirmed that emotion is an essential evolutionary dimension of human learning, penetrating the brain’s basic functions.” (Buzamat, Poboroniuc, Irimia, Ștefănescu, and Mavhima, 2025, 194)

Creativity is linked to a stable structure of neuroplasticity, and understanding how these two components function and interact can enhance innovative thinking and openness to new opportunities. In the book “Power Up Your Brain”, authors Dr. David Pelmutter and Dr. Alberto Villoldo state that “neuroplasticity is the brain’s ability to reconnect and create new neural networks” (David Pelmutter and Alberto Villoldo 2018, 123), thus, through various mechanisms, neuroplasticity plays an essential role in optimizing creativity, and the more the brain is trained, the more capable it is of generating new ideas. Furthermore, combining “continuous learning, exposure to creative activities, physical exercise, meditation, a healthy diet, and quality sleep” (Ștefănescu, Bălăiță, and Fărcășel, 2025, 219), highlighted, moreover, by the research and personal experiences of the authors of the book “Power Up Your Brain”, become sources that “allow you to establish new neural networks that create a sense of joy and a general state of well-being” (David Pelmutter and Alberto Villoldo 2018, 30).

Research has shown that neuroplasticity is the brain’s fundamental ability to structurally and functionally reconfigure itself in response to new experiences and learning. “Thus, the brain is not a fixed structure, but a dynamic one, capable of modification and adaptation due to our experiences, thoughts, and activities.” (Ștefănescu, Bălăiță, and Fărcășel, 2025, 217) Brain plasticity shows us that every profound thought and every act of creation leaves an internal imprint, transforming the brain’s structure from a fixed pattern into a flexible system that is constantly redefining itself. In

the view of researcher Norman Doidge, the brain is not seen as a machine with fixed parts, but as a living organism, capable of continuous growth and adaptation based on mental activities and experiences (Doidge, 2007).

Neuroplasticity is an extremely dynamic field of research. Scientists are exploring a wide range of practical applications that promise to revolutionize the way we acquire new knowledge, form memories, or develop skills. Furthermore, understanding these processes opens new horizons in rehabilitative medicine, offering real hope for recovery from trauma or brain injuries.

An important step in this direction is also represented by the use of Brain-Computer Interface (BCI) technologies, which are used in various research by Professor Marian Silviu Poboroniuc from the Gh. Asachi Technical University of Iași, stating that thus, “the integration of these technologies into neuroscientific research marks a transition from passive observation to active interaction with brain processes, opening new perspectives on how we can influence and shape neuroplasticity” (Poboroniuc, 2025, p. 87).

The neural mechanisms of artistic emotion

Although the discussion of artistic emotions has long been situated within the realm of philosophy and aesthetics, in recent decades neuroscience has begun to offer new perspectives on emotional mechanisms, which are interrelated with neuroplasticity and creativity.

According to neuroaesthetics, a field that “aims to establish a set of guiding principles for understanding how and why people enjoy art” (Stephens, 2023, p. 249), emotions lie at the intersection of neuroscience, psychology, and aesthetics. They are not mere affective responses, but complex processes of empathic and cognitive resonance, triggered by artistic stimuli—viewing a work of art, a choreographed performance, a concert, a play, or a film. Thus, taking Scherer’s theories into account, emotions are determined by cognitive evaluations of stimuli: “In the framework of the component process model, emotion is defined as an episode of interrelated, synchronized changes in the states of all or most of the five organismic subsystems in response to the evaluation of an external or internal stimulus event as relevant to major concerns of the organism” (Scherer, 2005, p. 697).

According to research in the field, artistic emotions are not spontaneous but originate from a complex neurobiological substrate, being generated through a process of encoding and decoding artistic intent. The artist, using a specific language (visual, auditory, kinesthetic), incorporates a certain emotional intent into their work. For example, a painter uses strong chromatic contrasts, textures, and broken lines to express tension, or a warm color palette can evoke joy, while for a choreographer or dancer, body movement, space, or rhythm become tools that suggest grace, harmony, or tension and

drama. In both cases, an interdependence is created—a nonverbal dialogue between artist and viewer—through which emotion flows freely.

Regarding artistic emotions, a major role is played by mirror neurons, which represent a neurobiological foundation of empathy and the understanding of others' actions. According to research and discoveries by Giacomo Rizzolatti and his team, these neurons are activated when we are in the presence of a person or group performing an artistic expression. Thus, mirror neurons allow us to feel and understand the emotions conveyed by the artist, creating a form of subconscious empathy (Rizzolatti & Fabbri-Destro, 2008).

As for the reception of artistic emotions, neuroscientific research shows that there is individual variability due to the way the brain processes sensory and emotional information. Past experiences, education, cultural background, and even genetics act as a filter through which each of us perceives the artistic work. Understanding art forms is the result of a long cognitive process, and humans are capable, over time, of developing new forms of perception. In interpreting the expressive and communicative information of artistic manifestations, the viewer requires "a combination of sensory information, artistic experience, intelligence, and emotional attitude, the intensity of concentration, and even physical state" (Knobler, 1983, p. 26).

In this regard, I believe it is important to highlight the research conducted as part of the "STEM. Dance and Neuroscience" project⁴, which transformed a contemporary dance performance into a captivating dialogue between the body and the brain, between the artist's emotions and those of the audience, forging a strong connection between the artistic stage and the scientific laboratory. This research, which involved a unique public trial conducted in Iași, brought together dancers, engineers, doctors, psychologists, musicians, and visual artists. Using state-of-the-art systems—Nautilus headsets worn by the dancers and Unicorn Hybrid Black headsets for the audience—a map of emotions was created to quantify the brain's response in real time. We can therefore say that artistic emotion is not only felt but also measurable. "This preliminary study aimed to investigate frequency specific brain activity patterns in delta and gamma bands, inter-subject neural synchronization using ISC and PLV metrics, the influence of performer number on audience neural responses, and differences between audience members with and without artistic backgrounds." (Buzamat, Poboroniuc, Irimia, Ștefănescu and Mavhima, 2025, 194)

Conclusions

We have addressed this complex topic, although it is clear that we cannot cover

⁴ Initiated by the George Enescu National University of Arts in Iași, coordinated by the Choreography Department Association - Lecturer Dr. Sandra Mavhima, in partnership with the Gheorghe Asachi Technical University of Iași, the Grigore T. Popa University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Iași, and the National Museum of Romanian Literature in Iași.

it in just a few pages; however, we have summarized the interdisciplinary themes we are exploring (arts, medicine, engineering), linking them to the evolution of contemporary society through scientific conferences, published articles, and the applied research we are conducting.

A major challenge of our time is the relationship between neuroplasticity, creativity, and artificial intelligence. I believe that using generative platforms as tools to accelerate ideas—not as a substitute for mental effort—must be done with great discernment and balance. Of course, the use of artificial intelligence in artistic creation raises philosophical and ethical questions. Is a creation produced by an algorithm considered authentic art? Can AI bring true innovation, or is it merely a replication of what has already been done? These dilemmas are important, but it must be understood that AI, at its core, functions as a tool in the hands of a human creator, and true creativity stems from their interaction with the technology.

Through various tools, neuroplasticity plays a well-established role in enhancing creativity, and the methods are accessible to anyone, but we must be curious, open-minded, and adaptable. In fact, the environment in which we live, our education, and our habits stimulate people's desire to be as creative as possible. It is important to explore, read, learn new things, ask questions, communicate, and be open to the challenges we face in a constantly evolving society; art, culture, reading, travel, and writing activate imaginative networks and enhance creative thinking. In an increasingly technological world, the ability to think freely and find alternative solutions is what truly makes us human.

We can conclude that neuroplasticity is truly the driving force behind creativity, as it is a living process that allows the mind to reconfigure itself beyond its initial limitations; within this universe, the brain continuously builds new pathways of communication, enabling disparate concepts to converge and merge into novel solutions. The brain, therefore, is not a static system; it functions as a dynamic network, where every human action shapes the gray matter, transforming the flow of ideas into lasting traits, with humans serving as their own "builders" of the neural system.

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The Pedagogy of Light in Early Artistic Modernity

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores the concept of "Pedagogy of Light" as a defining force and implicit educational method in early modern art (19th century). The analysis focuses on how artists from movements such as Impressionism and Neo-Impressionism transformed the understanding and use of light, going beyond simple optical representation to elevate it to the status of an instrument of knowledge and an autonomous artistic language. We investigate how the fascination with optical phenomena and color theories led to a new way of "seeing" and "teaching sight" to the public. By studying moving light, atmospheric effects, and the spectral decomposition of color (Divisionism), artists not only innovated aesthetically, but also developed a form of visual pedagogy that defied traditional academic norms. This informal pedagogy, centered on subjective perception and sensory experience, educated the modern viewer to understand the world and art through a dynamic, vibrant lens.

KEYWORDS: Natural light, tone division, impressionism, social pedagogy, early modernity

Introduction

Understood as a historic age and as the spirit of Western society and culture, modernity marks the fracture between the ancient and medieval past and a new phase of renewal of the spirit, which, according to some authors, started with the Renaissance. This historical division of the European West into Antiquity, Middle Ages and Modernity seems to date back to the early Renaissance, when Petrarch, in the 14th century, introduces the notion of "dark ages", to mark the difference, also by means of a metaphor of light, between the bright light of Antiquity, the night of oblivion associated with the Middle Ages, and the exit, in his time, from the shadows toward a bright future. (Călinescu, 2005)

According to Berman (1982), the phase of modernity which started and took shape with the Renaissance inaugurates three chronologically distributed stages. Berman distinguishes between Early Modernity, which began in the 15th century with the

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Renaissance and which lasts until the French Revolution in 1789; Classical Modernity, from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century, in 1900 and Late Modernity, which spreads from the first decade of the 20th century to the '80s of the 20th century. This periodization and characterization of Modernity is also endorsed by Peter Osborne in the article *Modernity is a Qualitative, Not a Chronological, Category: Notes on the Dialectics of differential historical time* (1992).

Apart from chronological boundaries, modernity remains a state of spirit, a quality, a "strategic, stylistic and programmatic idea" (Danto, 2003, p. 5-13), which marks the break with the values of the past, proclaiming new forms and strategies in approaching the surrounding world. In this analysis we will refer to various aspects of Modernity: social and political, cultural and philosophical, the scientific aspect and the issue of secularization. Particular attention will be paid to modernity in art, seeking to clarify how the issue of light relates to all these directions, and how it is influenced by them. In what follows we will deal with aspects of classical, but especially of late modernity, according to the periodization mentioned above.

Aspects of modernity: individualism, the role of technology and the loss of aura

In order to understand the secularization process, one of the essential aspects of Modernity, we must look at it as Heidegger did in 1938 when he defined the modern age as the post-medieval historical period (1998). Understood as an emancipation or as an "escape from religion" (Gauchet, 2006) secularization involves breaking with Christian doctrine, in particular, which was dominant in European conscience, culture and even politics until the 19th century. The rationalist and doubt revolution promoted by Descartes may be seen as the starting point for this process. It will be continued by the separation between Church and State, between religion and politics, which provided "the resort of a glorification of politics" (Gauchet, 2006, p.6).

Another significant aspect of modernity, concerning the issue of the individual but also of secularity, is the emergence of a new type of individualism that aims at a new relationship between the state and the citizen, between the public and the private. In this overview of modern transformations, it is also important to point out that the individual's private rights, or what we will come to know as human rights, became paramount.

Beyond the social, political, or religious aspects of the Western modern world, we must also mention the scientific and technological aspects that have fundamentally changed the course of history, both on an individual and on a collective, generally human level. Understanding the modern world cannot be achieved by disregarding the progress in science, which covers various fields of activity in parallel. We will detail some of the aspects related to the nature of light and the progress concerning the development and spread of electric light in one of the following chapters, but now we will attempt to briefly

mention some of the cultural ideas related to technological progress.

Martin Heidegger stated in the essay *The time of the world image*, in 1938, that "modern science is part of the essential phenomena of the modern age" and "the first in rank among phenomena of equal significance is the technology behind the machine" (Heidegger, 1998, p.33). Heidegger did not understand it "as a mere practical usage of the modern mathematical science of nature," but rather, to him, the machine was "a self-sufficient transformation of practice, so that it required the use of the mathematical science of nature" (Heidegger, 1998, p.33). Furthermore, "the machine remains the most visible descendant so far of the essence of modern technology, which essence is identical to that of modern metaphysics" (Heidegger, 1998, p.33). For the German philosopher, the essence of technology is not developing machines, but establishing a new way of relating to the world, where nature and in general the world itself seem a manipulable and quantifiable object. The establishment of a *representation* relationship plays a fundamental role in setting up this rapport, in other words, a relationship between the subject Descartes identified with thinking and the object understood as something foreign, exterior and inert, thus subject to the subject's shaping power. It could be said, therefore, that with Descartes, modernity enshrines in the history of humanity a new way of understanding the relationship between man and the world, which consists in the desire for domination and possession of nature as of something foreign.

Heidegger also sees as an essential phenomenon of modern times the fact that "art moves towards the field of aesthetics" and "the artwork becomes an object of experience, and it is evaluated accordingly as an expression of human life" (Heidegger, 1998, p.33).. From this moment on art is no longer a spiritual response or vehicle, bearing metaphors and truths transmitted from a superior spiritual reality, but becomes the object of pure aesthetical contemplation. The light that accompanied the artistic message, which we looked at in a metaphoric key, now becomes volatile, taking on an aesthetic, desacralized form.

The first aspect that Heidegger analyses is that of modern science, which is fundamentally different from its ancient or medieval meaning, by introducing some new building elements: research and experiment (Heidegger, 1998, p.34-35). Modern science transforms into research by employing a method that incorporates a new element, distinct from the old science that solely relied on observing and recording facts, specifically through experiments (Heidegger, 1998, p.38). The predilection for method in the scientific examination of nature (etymologically from the Greek *methodos*, a word designating "the firm road as opposed to aimless wandering" (Bejan, 2004, p.69) also entails the modification of the view on truth, understood from now on as certainty. With Immanuel Kant, the method becomes "the form of science, that is, of systematic knowledge based on firm rules" (Bejan, 2004, p.70).

While from a metaphysical point of view, modern research provides the framework

for conceiving man as the center of the world, a concept which will strengthen the modern tendency towards subjectivism and individualism (Heidegger, 1998, p. 45), the electronic civilization places the whole modern era within the framework of a global interdependence (McLuhan, 1975). The evolution in communications, the increased efficiency of transportation, the emergence of cinema and television, the progress in areas such as quantum mechanics or electronics, will be the premises for rethinking society using new benchmarks.

Analyzing the reproducibility of the artwork in the modern age, the symptom of a new cultural age, Walter Benjamin (Benjamin, 2002) notes as early as 1936 that the mechanical reproduction of an artwork, although it has a long history dating to antiquity, when techniques of multiplying artifacts were already known, at the beginning of the 20th century attains a level from which this process will lead to a profound change in the reception of artworks and the status of art as an object. The substitution of unrepeatable events or facts, whether cultural or not, with mass phenomena typical of the new century, leads to the loss of the so-called "aura", that is, to separating the object or event from the tradition which gave them authenticity and uniqueness and to their being given to the masses. The loss of the aura thus occurs in a context in which "the wish of the masses (...) to *bring* things *closer* from a material and human point of view (...)" appears (Benjamin, 2002, p. 111). The desire to possess history, the wish for the proximity of facts, persons and objects from the past is realized in the present through the image and its reproducibility.

The destruction of the aura, of the veil that surrounds an object and renders it unique and authentic, is similar to the disintegration of the range of relationships that constitute tradition, and for an artwork the loss of the aura means, in the first place, the loss of its first purpose, that is, of its ritual function. With the secularization of the cult status of painting, the imagination of the viewer is engulfed by the empirical uniqueness of the artist and his creation, and thus authenticity replaces the ritual function of an artwork. From now on, a new value will be added to it, that of being exhibited. The separation of the artwork from its ritualistic role and the emergence of the doctrine *l'art pour l'art* were marked by the emergence of photography, a technique which enables the reproduction of any kind of image, shape, and color (Benjamin, 2002, p. 112-113).

The role of light in Impressionism, Post-Impressionism and Neo-Impressionism

The emergence of the photographic image will result in a rethinking of the very bases of the pictorial image and of the representation of two-dimensional space. The work of Eduard Manet *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (*The Luncheon on the Grass*) did not spark a scandal solely for topical reasons. Combining the level of concrete reality, that is, the landscape and the men dressed according to contemporary fashion, with the mythical level of the

nude which belonged to the classic sphere of topics, was just one of the aspects that produced an important break from the past. Eliminating the third dimension, by flattening space, was a first step toward affirming the pictorial character of an image.

Whereas the old painting, before the middle of the 19th century and beginning with the Renaissance, aimed at creating an illusory space endowed with depth, to be entered as through a door or window into a parallel reality, in the case of Manet, and even more pointedly of the impressionists and post-impressionists, the painting could only be pervaded with the eyes, which stopped at the canvas. In the case of the painting before Impressionism, we are often inclined to see what is in the painting, rather than the painting itself, but with Manet's painting, and then with Monet's, Renoir's, Cézanne's, this relationship will change, and Greenberg perceives this as a feature of modernity where the medium is being critiqued by itself (Greenberg, 2004).

According to Greenberg, with Manet and with the impressionist trend that succeeds him, "the pictorial issue had ceased to be color versus drawing, and it became a matter of the pure versus the adjusted optical experience (...)" (Greenberg, 2004, p. 16). In the name of optics, not of color, the impressionists began to programmatically undermine the use of shadows and models in painting.

It was no accident that this transformation took place with the advent of photography, since when painting could no longer be what it had been. The documentary or illustrative value of painting will be lost to photographic accuracy, but this will open new prospects for pictorial art. It is also noteworthy that the first impressionist exhibition in 1874 took place in the workshop-cum-gallery of a photographer, Felix Nadar. He will always assist and encourage the new group of artists reunited under the name *Société anonyme des peintres, des sculpteurs et des graveurs*.

Discarding the background and the homogeneity of colors, the impressionists will deliberately try to render the paint and the kneading ink on the surface of the canvas recognizable. The awareness of flatness and of the rectangular shape of the painting will reoccur in Cézanne's works, who sacrifices verisimilitude in order to adjust the drawing to the shape of the canvas. These non-mimetic features, as Meyer Schapiro called them, will give rise to images in which the representative features become secondary. (Greenberg, 2004).

From now on, for impressionist artists the question of optics will be a new attempt to capture the reality of light and make it the main issue of painting, as Pierre Francastel pointed out in an analysis concerning light in impressionist painting. Alongside these changes of a formal nature comes a subjective concept of subject matter and how the surrounding world is represented (Francastel, 1977). Émile Zola, quoted by Victor I. Stoichiță, pointed out in an essay in 1866 that painting was an "open window on creation", and on the windowsill a transparent screen is mounted which modifies reality, giving us an image mediated through a human being, a temper or a personality (Stoichiță, 2007).

Analyzing Zola's idea, Stoichiță goes on to note a break from the ancient concept of painting as a window and the development of the "veil" as a metaphor of the artist's personality. Thus, we notice how thinkers, but also artists like Manet, now become aware that reality is constantly veiled by the one that represents it. The filtered, veiled look, the play between the viewer and what is to be seen in a painting, the artist's directing the sight are features of the new type of image (Stoichiță, 2024).

The impressionists gradually change the view on light, from the light that enhances the color or atmosphere of the image, as in the case of romanticism - Eugène Delacroix, John Constable, William Turner or Caspar David Friedrich, to the light that becomes the motif of the entire painting. In 1867 Alexandre-Edmond Becquerel, the winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics, published his study on light, *La lumière, ses causes et ses effets*, and a year later, the young impressionists began painting in broad daylight, in the open air. The eye became, to scientists and artists simultaneously, the organ which was held to be the most sophisticated tool for recording visual sensations (Brettell, 1999). The interests of the impressionists and their successors were in line with the scientific findings on perception, light and color and on the mechanism of sight, and Jules Laforgue systematically records this in 1883 (Francastel, 1975).

Monet is still one of the first examples discussed when impressionism is concerned. We will focus on him, attempting to analyze concretely how light creates an impressionist image. Monet and Pissaro are perhaps the first artists who will deliberately and programmatically eliminate, as early as the 1860s, the use of black, bitumen or burned Siena, learning from Corot or Boudin (Francastel, 1975).

The technique of impressionist painting actually aimed at resembling the "innocence of the eye", as Werner Hoffman (1977) calls it, which does not rely on previous experience and does not insert colors from memory into the image. The fact that the painters left the workshop for the plein-air gave them the opportunity to note the visual impressions of the moment, which depend on the presence of light and on its quality (Hoffman, 1977). Artists begin to see and work in daylight, and this is an important transformation in the role of light in art in the 19th century. The painter will decompose the colors according to the real, diurnal light as they appear before the eyes, and this "technique turns the material universe of perception into a floating state, and the information about the reality presented consists only in potential forms" (Hoffman, 1977, p. 211). For impressionists, color becomes the bearer of light, and the idea to represent the world through light is rooted in optical perception.

Francastel notices two aspects of Monet's originality. The first is to set the effect by means of reality, an aspect that we are directly interested in in this study. The second is giving up on replicating the vision of the viewer in a painting. The way light is represented will obviously take these two aspects into account (Francastel, 1977).

Whereas the Venetian, Dutch or Flemish painters had throughout the 18th century

systematically studied the variations of light on objects or within a given space, Monet had a more superficial notion of light. But the fact that he translates reality into effect will give him the opportunity to address the plenitude of natural light intuitively. Being without an academic education and independent of any technique learned (Francastel, 1977), Monet will be able to translate the sensations of light in an un-mediated manner. It is the relation between light and color that changes with Monet and with his impressionist colleagues. Light is no longer a passive element, which enhances the color shades or creates illusory volumes, it becomes an active agent whose presence will dominate the entire image. Its effects shall constitute the starting points of some of Monet's serial works.

Haystacks (1890-1891), *Rouen Cathedral* (1892-1894) or *The Houses of Parliament* (1900-1905) are cycles of works based on the same visual and landscape motif, captured at different times of the day, when the quality and quantity of light cause variations in the color shades and in the atmosphere captured. Light becomes the unit which binds these images in the subsidiary. Light also encompasses and at the same time dissolves the image, providing the conceptual element that unifies all the images of the same lens. The whole series was intended to transform the effects of light independent of the shapes and objects existing in the image. Observing light consists in capturing the diversity of its intensity, a variable which shows that in nature there is no absolute color but only universal light (Zaharia, 1999). Monet's late writings confirm that the topics of his paintings are "draped in light" rather than in defined forms (Brettell, 1999).

Monet's *The water lilies*, the series achieved between 1899 and 1923, proves the artist's ability to gradually essentialize natural forms and allow the light effect to take over the entire image. The mirroring effect contributes to the chromatic mirage but also to the spatial ambiguity that is being created. Putting up rectangular and very long canvases in museums such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, on walls surrounding the viewer on all sides, leads to the notion of spatial installation being associated with these paintings. The process of chromatic sublimation (Hoffman, 1977) used by Monet is, in fact, typical of all his colleagues. Camille Pissaro, Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas would be just a few artists who sought to capture light and its effects on the chromatic level through the direct experience of the subject. We briefly mention Degas here, as a special example in comparison with the impressionists' open-air painting. He captures an equally active light as part of indoor scenes. For example, in *Dancer with a bouquet, greeting the audience* (1878), the artist attempts to create the entire image out of sources of light. The rather weak lighting of the auditoriums could have allowed for the solution of a chiaroscuro, but the painter will opt for a powerful lighting by placing the character directly in front of the lamp below the stage. The shadows are no longer black but purple, and the white will dominate the whole composition, typical of gas light which bleaches everything around it (Zaharia, 1999). The technique of the pastel must also be mentioned:

it is used in this work and generally enables impressionists to reproduce the rarefied aspect of air and light.

The Neo-impressionists based their work on the principle of the division of colors. The main theorist of the movement was Paul Signac who will explain in the book *From Eugene Delacroix to Neoimpressionism*, that to divide is to ensure all the benefits of luminosity, from color to harmony: through the optical mixing of pure pigments, by separating the various elements, such as the local color, the lighting color, by balancing these elements and choosing the proportionate side-line according to the size of the painting: "Division is a complex system of harmony, an aesthetic rather than a technique. To divide is to seek the strength and the harmony of color, representing colored light through its pure elements. (...) The separation of the elements and optical mixing ensure purity, that is the luminosity and intensity of the shades of color." (Signac, 1971, p. 86)

The end of the 19th century also opens up the new field of the psychology of visual perception, optics and the analysis of visual relationships between light and color. In fact, older research was resumed, for example research by Michel Eugène Chevreul, from 1839 (*The law of simultaneous contrasts*), and physicians like Hermann von Helmholtz or O. N. Rood conduct new experiments in this respect (Zaharia, 1999).

In the article *Les Impressionnistes en 1886* (included in *Œuvres*, Gallimard, Paris, 1948) Félix Fénéon looks in detail at the work of Georges Seurat *Un dimanche après-midi à l'île de la Grande-Jatte*, showing how the division of colors becomes an expression of extreme luminosity, something the impressionists started, and the neo-impressionists pursued. Replacing the chromatic mix with optical mixing has the advantage of achieving a transparent and vibrant atmosphere (Fénéon, 1948).

Representing a common scene from the Parisian *loisir* at the end of the century, a scene Seurat studied over a longer period, the composition retained the attention of his contemporaries especially by the way he treated light and color. It is Fénéon who, after seeing this painting, will provide the name for the new trend by adding the suffix to neo-impressionism. Seurat opposes to impressionist spontaneity a methodical, rigorous, and minute treatment by means of which he adds small touches of color to obtain optical mixing on the retina of each viewer. Thus, Seurat turns a technique into an interactive image, in which the contribution of the viewer, whether voluntary or not, is essential to the completion of the image proposed by the artist. As for light, it is divided into each shade of color. The prismatic decomposition of light in primary and secondary tones gives the whole composition the appearance of an extremely bright image. Although Seurat does not use white, he is able, by decomposition, to present light in a new form through its constituent elements. Thus, we can state that *the scientific pointillism* promoted and applied by Seurat or Signac will provide a new way for light to manifest itself in painting.

Post-impressionism will initiate a new register as far as the interest in the representation of light is concerned. The representation of light is associated either with

the technique of *synthetism* in the work of Paul Gauguin, or divided into kneading inks conferring it its own volume in the case of Vincent Van Gogh, or linked to drawing and to geometric volumes in the work of Paul Cézanne. The stylistic characteristics of post-impressionism included the belief in the emotional and aesthetic value of color, independent of form and composition and the acceptance of the artificiality of painting, as a subjective image of the artist's vision (Brettell, 1999).

Cézanne was aware that light existed independently of objects and that it modified not only the colors but also the shapes of objects, but it did not destroy them, and painters were not doomed to capture only its fleeting aspects (Francastel, 1977). Unlike Monet, he also differentiates between real light and pictorial light. Thus, the representation of real light cannot be perfectly achieved on the compositional level, because the reason for his painting has always been a debate between technique and natural phenomena (Hoffman, 1977). The artist conceives space in a geometric and calculated manner and attempts to recover all the spontaneity of his age via the classic landscape. In this geometric space light becomes uniform, clear, and precise.

However, through color Cézanne will eliminate the very idea of shadow. Using the warm-cold contrast, he will manage the shadows through cold color tones rather than darker ones. At the same time, he sought to consolidate the perception data by keeping them out of the reach of light, that is, to maintain the forms separate from the atmospheric or light conditions.

The paintings of Van Gogh, which translate light into physical form, are a notable example. By watching the concentric details of stars or lamps we can touch the light source. Van Gogh brings us closer to light precisely by rendering it palpable, concrete. In *Starry Night*, the artist captures the sky that the stars dominate with their power of emanation. This is a real, not an abstract representation nor one separated from its environment. It is a representation that, while continuing to be subjective, draws on the overall concept of light propagation. In Van Gogh's works light flickers, it moves perpetually, halfway between visual perception and conventionalism.

Conclusions

Light turns modern painting into another kind of image. With the filtered look and the flatness of the image we are within the scope of a painting in which the artist attempts to recreate a world. It is not the three-dimensional world and space, but the subjective world that tries to lead us further away from the concrete vision. And all these transformations occur against the background of rethinking light and color in themselves. That is why, although painting is not the subject of this study, we thought it appropriate to show how the representation of light, of the atmosphere created by daylight, was a factor in this essential process for the emergence of modern art.

We thus observe how the generation of Impressionist artists presents us with a

true pedagogy of light, how it teaches us to look through light, through our own eyes that perceive light as a constitutive, fundamental element of understanding the entire world around us. We see not only light but everything it highlights, through its immediate presence and the details it reveals.

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The Portrait. Between Interior and Exterior, between Two - and Threedimensional figures

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ABSTRACT : This article aims to explore and research a wide range of styles, techniques, color schemes, and working methodologies that focus on the field of portraiture, which can be divided into three main visual directions: a modular polyptych, a series of rectangular canvases, and an installation — all brought together under the conceptual umbrella of the portrait genre visual field. The artworks belong to second-year Bachelor's degree students from the Painting specializations of the Faculties of Fine Arts in Timișoara and Iași, and will be exhibited in April in Timișoara in the context of an institutional collaboration between the two research centers: CCAVC (Center of Creation of Contemporary Visual Arts) and PVC (Contemporary Visual Practices).

KEYWORDS : university, collaboration, exhibition, portrait, mixed media, two-dimensional, three-dimensional, painting, photography, drawing, collage.

Introduction

A central part of the academic educational process dedicated to painting is experimentation, which is an essential methodological tool for developing visual thinking, critical spirit and artistic innovation. When it comes to higher education, experimentation isn't just about running basic technical trials. It's a methodical way of approaching the creative process, where analysis, reflection, and interpretation are all key parts of the artistic journey.

Through sustained experimentation, the study of painting may be understood as a form of applied research, wherein practice functions not merely as technical training

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but as a structured mode of inquiry. In this context, the studio is like a laboratory: materials are tested, visual procedures are refined, and chromatic relationships are systematically examined. These processes go beyond questions of technique to engage with broader investigations into aesthetic theory, perceptual dynamics and the construction of visual meaning. A painter's engagement with pigment, surface and composition constitutes a research methodology in which practical manipulation and conceptual reflection operate in a reciprocal relationship.

Within this framework, learning transcends the mere accumulation of skills, taking on the character of an epistemological journey. The expressive potential of form, colour and spatial organisation is revealed by each experiment, whether it is successful or not. The iterative cycle of hypothesis, execution, evaluation and revision mirrors the logic of scholarly research and reinforces the idea that artistic practice is both cognitive and exploratory. As students progress through this process, they not only develop technical proficiency but also critical awareness, learning to contextualize their work within historical traditions and current discourses.

Crucially, this pedagogical model encourages students to question and challenge the conventions of academic painting where appropriate. Rather than rigidly adhering to inherited norms, students are encouraged to explore the boundaries of established compositional systems, stylistic conventions, and representational techniques. This boundary-pushing does not imply rejecting tradition, but presupposes a thorough understanding of it from which meaningful innovation can emerge. In this way, experimentation becomes a methodological tool and a catalyst for originality.

The outcome of this process is the development of an individual artistic language that synthesises disciplined analysis with imaginative freedom. Careful thinking ensures coherence, intentionality and conceptual depth, while creative autonomy allows for expressive risk-taking and personal resonance. The resulting style is neither arbitrary nor purely intuitive: it is the product of reflective practice, critical engagement and sustained enquiry. Thus, when conceived as applied research, the study of painting fosters a mode of artistic development in which knowledge production and creative expression are inseparably intertwined.

Experimentation further facilitates the construction of a sustained and critical dialogue between tradition and contemporaneity, positioning painting as a discursive field in which inherited conventions are neither passively preserved nor uncritically abandoned, but rigorously reexamined. Through experimental methodologies, academic values—such as compositional order, technical discipline, and fidelity to established aesthetic principles—are reinterpreted in light of emergent visual paradigms shaped by technological innovation, globalized cultural exchange, and shifting theoretical frameworks. This process enables the recontextualization of tradition within contemporary epistemologies, ensuring its continued relevance while simultaneously

opening it to transformation.

Such a dialogical dynamic is inherently interdisciplinary. The contemporary study of painting increasingly intersects with fields such as visual studies, media theory, philosophy, and cultural analysis, thereby expanding the conceptual boundaries of what painting can signify and accomplish. Experimentation operates at these intersections, generating hybrid forms and new modes of visual inquiry that challenge medium-specific limitations. In doing so, it not only broadens the technical and conceptual repertoire of the student but also situates painting within a broader network of artistic and intellectual practices.

Within this expanded framework, academic education in painting may be understood as a complex research environment rather than a static system of instruction. The studio becomes a laboratory of artistic formation, where hypotheses concerning form, materiality, temporality, and representation are continuously tested and reformulated. Pedagogy is thus reoriented toward critical reflection, analytical rigor, and sustained inquiry. Students are encouraged to engage with both the historical canon and contemporary discourses, negotiating their position within a continuum that links past achievements to present challenges.

In this context, experimentation functions as a catalytic force that activates processes of learning, reflexivity and self-definition. It stimulates interrogation of visual assumptions, fosters methodological innovation and supports progressive clarification of artistic intention. Through iterative exploration and critical evaluation, students refine their technical capacities and conceptual frameworks. The visual identity of the contemporary artist is shaped by a constant interplay of continuity and change, discipline and invention, theoretical awareness and creative autonomy. This results in a dynamic and evolving visual identity that is always changing.

Methods and methodology

This educational project is designed for second- and third-year undergraduate students on the Bachelor's degree programme. It is structured around three interrelated foundational principles. When implemented systematically within a coherent pedagogical framework, these principles have the potential to generate significant formative and artistic outcomes.

Firstly, the programme emphasises cultivating advanced observational competencies and developing visual thinking. Students are guided to refine their ability to perceive, analyse and interpret visual phenomena with precision and critical awareness. Observation is approached as an active, interpretative process that integrates perceptual acuity with conceptual reflection, rather than as passive recording. Through sustained study of form, space, light and colour, learners develop the ability to construct visual meaning, thereby strengthening their analytical and creative faculties.

Secondly, the curriculum prioritises acquiring and progressively refining technical and technological competencies by engaging with diverse media and materials. By working with different supports, tools and material conditions, students expand their technical repertoire while developing adaptability and problem-solving skills. Integrating experimentation into studio practice ensures that technical mastery evolves in dialogue with conceptual enquiry rather than functioning as an isolated skill set.

Thirdly, the project aims to foster a well-founded sense of artistic, aesthetic and ethical values. As well as developing technical proficiency and perceptual skills, students are encouraged to critically reflect on the cultural, social and moral dimensions of artistic production. This aspect of the programme highlights the artist's responsibility as a creator and cultural agent, fostering discernment, integrity, and sensitivity to the broader implications of visual expression. The educational model thus supports the development of artists who are technically competent, conceptually articulate, ethically aware, and aesthetically reflective.

Together, these three principles form a comprehensive educational structure integrating perceptual development, technical expertise, and value formation within a unified framework.

Alongside verbal competencies in interpersonal communication, contemporary educational theory increasingly recognises the importance of visual literacy as a fundamental cognitive and communicative ability. Visual literacy encompasses the ability to interpret and decode information presented in visual form, as well as the ability to generate, organise and communicate ideas through images and spatial configurations (Debes, 1969; Duncum, 2004). This 'visual alphabet' allows individuals to structure their thought processes visually, engage in imaginative projection and construct meaning through form, colour and spatial relationships. In this sense, visual cognition operates as a complementary system to linguistic reasoning, contributing to complex modes of understanding and expression (Arnheim, 1969).

Human experience is profoundly mediated by visual perception. Cognitive research suggests that individuals continuously reconstruct external reality internally through mental imagery and perceptual schemata (Arnheim, 1969; Gombrich, 1960). The surrounding world is not passively received, but actively organised in the mind as a sequence of images, shaped by prior knowledge, memory and cultural frameworks. Of the sensory modalities, sight is generally considered one of the most immediate and efficient mechanisms for orienting oneself within spatial environments. Through the perception of light and its modulation — manifested as variations in brightness, shadow, colour and contrast — individuals identify forms, differentiate surfaces and comprehend spatial depth. Consequently, the visual field becomes the primary matrix through which shapes, chromatic relations, and spatial hierarchies are perceived and understood.

The structural components of visual language, such as line, shape, colour, texture,

space and composition, constitute a system analogous to linguistic grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). These elements function as distinct yet interconnected units with identifiable formal and expressive properties. When organised according to coherent compositional principles, they generate images capable of conveying meaning, emotion and conceptual content. Thus, the means of visual expression constitute a structured 'alphabet' that is governed by established principles of organisation, balance, rhythm, contrast and harmony. Each element has its own semiotic identity, while also contributing to the broader system of representation.

When it comes to education, developing visual literacy means learning to navigate and manipulate the visual alphabet deliberately and with critical awareness. Students learn to decode existing visual messages and construct representations that articulate complex ideas and values. Visual communication is therefore not subordinate to verbal discourse, but constitutes an autonomous and equally sophisticated mode of knowledge production and cultural expression.

The term "technique" is understood to denote an organised system of deliberately conceived procedures through which artistic intention is materialised in a concrete form. Rather than functioning merely as manual skill or mechanical execution, technique constitutes a structured methodology that mediates between concept and realization. The selection of materials, the manipulation of tools, and the orchestration of processes collectively shape the formal and expressive qualities of the artwork. In this sense, technique operates as both an operational framework and a cognitive strategy, guiding the transformation of abstract ideas into perceptible visual configurations.

It is an irrefutable fact of which there is ample evidence to support the contention that the pursuit of technical innovation has played a decisive role in the evolution of artistic practice. The ongoing pursuit of novel procedures, materials, and modes of expression has not only expanded the formal vocabulary of art but has also redefined its conceptual horizons. The advent of oil painting in the Renaissance, the evolution of printmaking techniques, and the exploration of industrial materials in modern and contemporary art serve to illustrate how technological advancements give rise to novel aesthetic prospects and reconfigure artistic frameworks. Consequently, innovation in technique is not merely an ancillary aspect of artistic production; rather, it functions as a dynamic force that catalyses stylistic transformation and theoretical reorientation.

This standpoint is in alignment with the assertion put forward by Nathan Knobler, which posits that artistic evolution is inextricably linked to experimentation within the studio environment. In *Visual Dialogue*, Knobler (1992) emphasises that the exploration of technique fosters a dialogical process between artist, material, and idea, enabling innovation to emerge from sustained practical inquiry. Consequently, studio research becomes a site where technical investigation and conceptual reflection converge, reinforcing the understanding of technique as a catalyst for both creative discovery and

the historical progression of art.

The art of all times has gravitated towards the representation of the human body. Focusing attention on the human figure has been one of the most frequently used sources of inspiration, and portraiture and expression, in particular, are also our choice for the representations explored in this project.

The studio research made together with our students has led us to spectacular experiments. These works are part of a large, modular project that began several years ago. Within this project, an installation-type exhibition belonging to 2nd and 3rd year students entitled *Faces–Faces* was organized and opened at the *Pod Pogor* Gallery in Iași in 2012. In 2020, we also organized the online exhibition *Portrait in a Square*, which included a selection of students' artworks created within the course *Materials, Processes and Procedures for Painting*. In 2022, as part of an Erasmus+ mobility, the group exhibition *Around the Square* was organized at *James Madison University* in Harrisonburg, Virginia, with the participation of students and professors from several specializations, like: Graphics, Painting, Pedagogy of Visual and Decorative Arts, Textile Arts, and Mural Art.

exhibitions are part of the projects belonging to *The Center for Research in Painting – Contemporary Visual Practices* of Painting Specialization, Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, *George Enescu* National University of Arts in Iași. The center aims to promote freedom of expression, creativity, and imagination for each student in solving portrait compositions.

This project is just a pretext for experiment with various techniques, in order to develop artistic creative skills and this approach involves the use of both two-dimensional and three-dimensional supports, beginning with drawing techniques and continuing with the diversity and complexity of chromatic techniques, up to the experimentation of mixed and unconventional techniques (hologram – portrait in a cube). The experiments carried out start from the anatomical aspect of the portrait and continue with its multiple interpretations, focusing especially on the idea of expression, as well as on the playful aspect of this artistic genre, which encourages creative freedom and implicitly fosters the development of imagination. Real form dissolves and nuances spaces in a context where value and chromatic contrasts play a symbolic role in portrait compositions.

Guideline and directions

Concurrently, the pedagogical process engages the psychological dimension of artistic inquiry through the systematic exploration of human emotion as expressed in facial representation. The study and illustration of a wide spectrum of facial expressions—ranging from subtle affective nuances to intense emotional states—constitutes a central component of this investigation. These explorations are mediated through diverse technical approaches and material practices, including oil, acrylic, collage, wax, and mixed-media procedures. Each of these contributes distinct tactile, chromatic, and

expressive qualities. The depiction's communicative potential is further amplified by variations in colour range, texture, and surface treatment, allowing students to examine how formal decisions influence emotional resonance and interpretative depth.

Historically, the depiction of the human face has occupied a privileged position within the domain of artistic representation, extending from antiquity to the present day. The human face has long been regarded as a locus of interiority and a privileged site for the manifestation of character, emotion, and spiritual presence. Within both artistic and philosophical traditions, it has been conceptualised as a portal to self-knowledge and truth, with the capacity to unveil the psychological and moral dimensions of human existence. The sustained artistic interest in physiognomy and expressive gesture reflects a broader epistemological assumption that the visible surface of the face can serve as an index of invisible inner states.

This conception is articulated with particular clarity by Camelian Demetrescu (1966), who emphasises the existential dimension of artistic creation. Demetrescu (n.d.) contends that the process of drawing or painting, however technically proficient it may appear, invariably involves the artist engaging in a deep and intimate introspective dialogue. Each mark made on the surface of the canvas becomes part of a broader meditation on doubt, freedom, and the search for spiritual certainty. As he observes, uncertainty, while it may destabilise, preserves freedom of thought by resisting the ossification of prejudice; concomitantly, the aspiration toward spiritual certainty constitutes the very telos of artistic endeavour. The sublime, as understood in aesthetic theory, emerges from a dialectic tension between doubt and unease (Demetrescu, 1966).

Within this interpretative framework, the study of facial expression transcends anatomical accuracy and technical virtuosity. The work thus becomes an exercise in existential reflection, wherein the representation of the face serves as a medium for interrogating identity, interiority, and the conditions of artistic truth. It is posited that, through the interplay of material experimentation and psychological inquiry, students are invited to approach portraiture not merely as depiction, but as a process of self-examination and aesthetic discovery.

Dot

In visual communication, the point exceeds the abstract framework and takes shape. The point is a geometric element that has no dimensions. Among all the elements and principles recognized in visual communication, the point is considered the simplest element of visual language. It is a reference which the other elements of visual language are built from; therefore, it's fundamental. When the point is drawn on a white sheet of paper, it becomes matter and establishes a relationship with the surrounding space (the relationship between fullness and emptiness). Thus, it can be analyzed through identification, definition and positioning within the visual field. The relationship between

points can extend both on a value and a chromatic level, leading to an image made of juxtaposed dots of different types, as shown in figures no. 1 and 2 and 3.

Dots that are not spontaneous may be described in academic terminology as deliberate, premeditated, or systematically constructed marks. In contradistinction to gestural or impulsive points that emerge from instinctive movement, such dots are intentionally placed according to compositional logic, structural rhythm, or conceptual intent.

In the context of visual analysis, they can be characterised as follows:

1. Intentional marks emphasise conscious placement.
2. The presence of controlled graphic units serves to emphasise the technical discipline employed.
3. The presence of structurally organised points is indicative of an integration within a compositional system.
4. The presence of premeditated visual elements is indicative of prior conceptual planning.
5. Programmatic or systematic dot applications are indicative of repetition that is governed by a rule or method.

From a theoretical perspective, non-spontaneous dots function less as expressive traces of gesture and more as modular elements within a visual syntax. The arrangement of these elements often reflects order, calculation, and compositional strategy, contributing to rhythm, texture, density, and spatial articulation. In this sense, they function not as incidental by-products of movement but as deliberate elements of a structured visual language.



Fig. 1 Alin Rudei, 2nd year, bachelor degree, Painting Specialization, Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, George Enescu National University of Arts, Iași. Example of controlled dot.

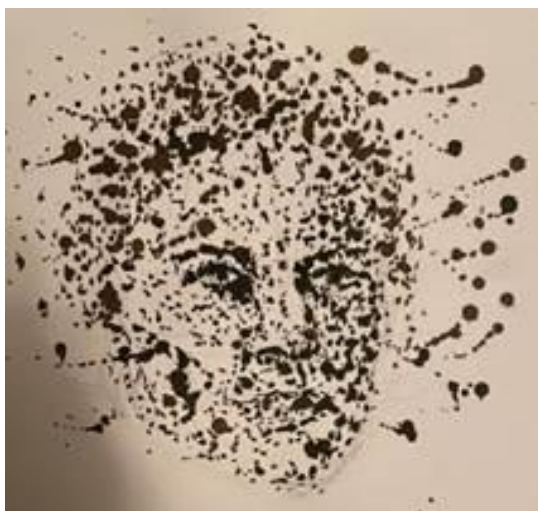


Fig. 2 Alin Rudei, 2nd year, bachelor degree, Painting Specialization, Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, George Enescu National University of Arts, Iași. Example of gestural dot.



Fig.3. Andreea Iakab, 2nd year, bachelor degree, Painting Specialization, Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, West University of Timișoara. Example of dots as intentional marks.

Line

Line is considered a fundamental component of visual language, serving as a primary means through which form, movement, and spatial organisation are articulated. Conceptually, a line may be understood as originating from a single point and extending toward another, thereby establishing direction, continuity, and relational structure within the pictorial field. The line's capacity to organise visual perception and generate compositional coherence is attributable to its variations in thickness, rhythm, curvature, and intensity.

In theoretical discourse, the line has been defined not merely as a static contour,

but as the dynamic manifestation of movement. As Paul Klee (1961) famously described, the line is "a point taken for a walk," thereby underscoring its kinetic and generative character. From this perspective, the line can be said to embody the transformation of the point into a trajectory, thus functioning as a foundational element in drawing and visual construction. The function of the image is to mediate between abstraction and representation, to structure figures, to delineate forms, and to guide the viewer's perceptual engagement with the image (see Figures 4, 5, and 6).



Fig. 4 Larisa Ilucă, 2nd year, bachelor degree, Painting Specialization, Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, George Enescu National University of Arts, Iași. Example of rectangular line.



Fig. 5 Larisa Ilucă, 2nd year, bachelor degree, Painting Specialization, Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, George Enescu National University of Arts, Iași. Example of curved line.



Fig.6. Andreea Iakab, 2nd year, bachelor degree, Painting Specialization, Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, West University of Timișoara. Example of horizontal line on shape.

Form and colour patch

In his theoretical examination, Gheorghe Achiței (1988) defines form as "a set of elements capable of visually delimiting and signaling any presence in space", thereby emphasizing its role in organizing and articulating visual perception. Form can be understood synonymously with terms such as figure or, in reference to the human body, silhouette, as it conveys both the outward appearance and the tangible presence of an object or entity within space. Conceptually, form emerges through the enclosure of a line, with a closed contour delineating boundaries and transforming abstract linear trajectories into visually and spatially recognizable structures. In this sense, the creation of form represents the materialisation of spatial presence through the disciplined interplay of line, contour, and perceptual definition.



Fig. 7 Ștefania Ciobanu, 2nd year, bachelor degree, Painting Specialization, Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, George Enescu National University of Arts, Iași. Example of rigorous color patch.



Fig. 8 Ștefania Ciobanu, 2nd year, bachelor degree, Painting Specialization, Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, George Enescu National University of Arts, Iași. Example of overlapped translucent color patches.



Fig.9. Andreea Iakab, 2nd year, bachelor degree, Painting Specialization, Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, West University of Timișoara. Example of collage with different materials: paper, leather to create texture in a thermodynamic contrast.

Conclusions

The experimental approach fosters a critical dialogue between tradition and contemporaneity, enabling the reexamination and reinterpretation of established academic principles in light of emergent visual paradigms and interdisciplinary

intersections. Within this framework, academic painting education transcends conventional instruction, functioning as both a rigorous research environment and a laboratory for artistic formation. Here, experimentation operates as a driving force that catalyzes learning, stimulates reflective practice, and supports the ongoing construction and refinement of the contemporary artist's visual identity. This model positions artistic inquiry as an integrative process in which technical mastery, conceptual exploration, and critical engagement converge to produce innovative and contextually informed creative outcomes.

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PART III: EDUCATION

Psychological vulnerability in higher arts education: A preventive 3P model for sustainable artistic development

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ABSTRACT: Artistic training in higher education involves intense emotional and identity investment that may expose students to structural vulnerability. Anxiety, burnout, and creative blocks are frequently reported among young artists, while institutional responses remain largely reactive. This article argues for a preventive approach based on an integrated pedagogical framework that views vulnerability as inherent to artistic formation rather than as an individual deficit. It proposes a 3P preventive model structured around three interdependent dimensions: Person, Pedagogical Process, and Artistic Pathway, shifting the focus from individual resilience to educational conditions that support sustainable development.

KEYWORDS: artistic higher education; psychological vulnerability; preventive pedagogy; safe environment; sustainable artistic development.

Introduction

University art education operates within a distinct framework compared to other academic fields, as the student is simultaneously performer, instrument, and source of artistic expression. In the visual arts, music, theatre, and choreography, education extends beyond the transmission of technical skills to include profound expressive and identity-

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related dimensions. Learning entails personal exposure, emotional engagement, and the use of one's own subjectivity as artistic material. This specificity amplifies the psychological vulnerability of student artists, consistently documented in the scholarly literature (McNiff, 2018; Hallam & Gaunt, 2012).

In higher arts education in Romania, as in other European contexts, a paradox persists: aesthetic and performative excellence is demanded, yet insufficient attention is paid to the psychological structure of the creator—the primary ground on which artistic practice unfolds. Without pedagogical reflection on the vulnerability inherent in the creative process, students' emotional difficulties are frequently individualized and treated as personal problems rather than as effects of a demanding educational environment.

Contemporary research supports the idea of heightened psychological sensitivity among artists and offers a conceptual framework for understanding the creative profile. Fragility is not conceptualized as pathology but as a constellation of traits associated with creativity: high emotional sensitivity, affective permeability, intensity of experience, increased reactivity to feedback, and an identity closely linked to the artistic product. The psychology of creativity describes this structure through the trait of openness to experience. Feist's (1998) meta-analysis shows that artists exhibit high levels of openness, associated with intense imagination, receptivity to subtle stimuli, and deep introspection.

In artistic fields, these characteristics constitute essential resources for creation while also relating to increased vulnerability to anxiety, hypersensitivity to criticism, rumination, and excessive self-criticism. Higher levels of neuroticism observed among artists do not indicate pathology but reflect heightened emotional reactivity (Kaufman, 2014). In moderate forms, this reactivity supports sensitivity to feedback, depth of experience, and the capacity to transform affective tension into expressive material. Together, these traits help explain both artistic depth and the psychological fragility associated with the creative process, shaped further by educational and socio-professional contexts.

The Psychological Structure of Artistic Formation

Research on performance anxiety (Osborne & Franklin, 2002; Kenny, 2011), maladaptive perfectionism (Stoeber & Eismann, 2007), and intense emotional exposure indicates that artistic training constitutes a distinct psychological context with specific educational demands (Ascenso et al., 2017). Maladaptive perfectionism, frequently observed among artists, is associated with fear of failure, anticipated shame, and the tendency to base personal worth exclusively on performance (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). These mechanisms are intensified by the public nature of evaluation, aesthetic pressure, and the demand for originality. Meta-analyses confirm that arts students display heightened evaluative sensitivity and more intense affective responses in performative contexts compared with non-arts academic populations (Fernholz et al., 2019).

Social comparison is inherent to arts education, unfolding within an ecosystem of visibility: exhibitions, auditions, public examinations, and recitals. The studio, stage, and rehearsal room function as liminal spaces marked by experimentation and identity risk—conditions essential for creation yet difficult to sustain without an adequate pedagogical framework (Turner, 1988). Without explicit pedagogical integration, vulnerability as a creative resource may interfere with or block creativity, while emotional overload, performance anxiety, and identity fragility emerge as predictable educational risks.

University arts education, largely centered on technical competence and performance, rarely offers explicit guidance on managing sensitivity, establishing emotional boundaries, and developing affective self-regulation. The implicit idea that suffering may constitute a condition of artistic authenticity thus persists (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013). In the absence of a pedagogical approach to vulnerability, the creative process risks becoming a space of intense emotional exposure without sufficient support or structures of safety, affecting psychological balance, vocational continuity, and the long-term sustainability of artistic development.

Vulnerability in artistic formation should be understood not as a deviation from normative development but as a structural feature of the creative process shaped by pedagogical, institutional, and socio-professional contexts. Understanding the psychological profile of the student artist therefore remains insufficient without examining the educational and cultural environments that can contain or amplify this sensitivity. The following section examines the pedagogical, institutional, and generational factors influencing the transformation of vulnerability from a creative resource into a potential educational risk.

Factors that amplify artistic vulnerability

The quality of the pedagogical relationship and feedback style are central in shaping artistic vulnerability. Educational feedback significantly influences motivation, academic self-esteem, and persistence, particularly where performance is highly personalized (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In artistic fields, where creative output is closely linked to personal identity, performative evaluation is often internalized as an assessment of personal worth (O'Neill, 2002; Dobson, 2010). Without supportive practices, predominantly evaluative or comparative feedback may intensify self-criticism, performance anxiety, and identity fragility.

Self-determination theory emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as essential for sustaining intrinsic engagement in learning (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When pedagogical environments become overly controlling or exclusively performance-oriented, the vulnerability inherent in the creative process may be experienced as a threat rather than a developmental opportunity, leading to creative risk avoidance and reduced authentic engagement. Similarly, growth mindset research shows that an exclusive focus

on performance and talent may transform creative exposure into an identity-validating or invalidating experience, whereas process-oriented climates support resilience and artistic experimentation (Dweck, 2006).

At the institutional level, arts education is often shaped by performative traditions, high standards of excellence, and intense public evaluation. Artistic identity develops within a field of social recognition and symbolic competition, amplifying identity pressure on students (Barnett, 2007). Institutions that prioritize performance and competitive selection without psycho-pedagogical support risk transforming creative vulnerability into an educational risk. The absence of explicit frameworks for socio-emotional development frequently leads to the individualization of difficulties and their interpretation as personal failure rather than as part of the formative process. Research on well-being in arts education highlights the need to integrate psychological and identity dimensions into curricula and institutional practices to prevent vulnerability from contributing to dropout or burnout (Bennett, 2008).

The contemporary art market is marked by structural instability, income unpredictability, and intense competition. Research on creative labour links professional precarity to heightened anxiety, identity insecurity, and depressive risk, particularly in the absence of strong self-regulation and emotional adaptation skills (Banks & Hesmondhalgh, 2009). Higher arts education therefore has the responsibility to prepare students not only for technical excellence but also for the psychological realities of artistic careers, including uncertainty management and the sustainability of vocational pathways (Throsby & Zednik, 2011).

Generational shifts add a further dimension. Contemporary students display heightened sensitivity to social evaluation, a strong need for meaning and authenticity, and lower tolerance for environments perceived as invalidating or excessively competitive (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). At the same time, Generation Z values constructive feedback, authentic pedagogical relationships, and psychological safety. Without adaptation of educational practices, a gap may emerge between traditional institutional cultures and student expectations, intensifying experiences of insecurity and vulnerability. Pedagogical environments that integrate dialogue, reflection, and relational support can transform vulnerability into a catalyst for creativity and identity development.

Taken together, these factors show that university arts education unfolds at the intersection of psychological, pedagogical, institutional, socio-professional, and generational dynamics that may amplify student vulnerability. When contained within reflective and supportive educational frameworks, vulnerability can instead become a central resource for sustainable artistic and personal development.

The function of pedagogical containing and supporting

In contemporary pedagogical literature, the idea of containing students' emotional

experiences is rarely formulated explicitly in the psychoanalytic terms proposed by Bion (2023). However, a range of convergent concepts—emotional containment, holding environment, relational safety, and psychological safety—describe the capacity of teachers and institutions to provide stable, predictable, and supportive frameworks in which students can tolerate the uncertainty, exposure, and risk inherent in artistic formation (Edmondson, 1999; Youell, 2016).

Research on learning in contexts marked by uncertainty and performative pressure highlights the importance of educational environments capable of containing the epistemic and identity-related anxiety associated with professional development, thereby facilitating the integration of intense affective experiences and sustaining engagement in learning (Barnett, 2007). Despite terminological differences, these perspectives converge in describing the role of the educational environment in transforming vulnerability into a tolerable and formative experience rather than a source of withdrawal or disorganization. Winnicottian theory provides a particularly relevant framework through the concept of the holding environment—a sufficiently safe and containing space that enables the emergence of the authentic self and creativity (Winnicott, 1960; Winnicott, 1984). In the absence of such a framework, vulnerability cannot be transformed into a symbolic resource, and students may develop defensive adaptation strategies associated with a false self oriented toward conformity and survival rather than authentic expression.

Within contemporary pedagogy, this supportive function is further conceptualized through the notion of psychological safety, defined as the perception of an educational climate in which errors, experimentation, and vulnerability are constructively integrated into learning. Empirical studies indicate that psychological safety is a strong predictor of creativity, intrinsic motivation, perseverance, and artistic performance (Byron et. al., 2010; Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2011).

Preventive Approaches and the Need for an Integrated Model

Recent literature on university arts education highlights the need for preventive strategies that address not only technical training but also the psychological sustainability of artistic development. Prevention is increasingly understood as a function of the educational framework rather than solely as clinical intervention, involving the adaptation of pedagogical practices, access to counseling, and the early recognition of emotional overload (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Neihart, 1999). Contemporary perspectives emphasize valuing the creative process alongside the final product, thereby reducing rigid performative pressure and supporting self-regulation, competence, and identity continuity in emerging artists (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Pekrun, 2006). Within this framework, prevention becomes a constitutive dimension of university artistic training.

Despite this growing body of research, existing approaches to psychological wellbeing in arts education remain largely fragmented across pedagogical, institutional,

and professional domains. Some studies highlight the role of intrinsic motivation and educational climate in reducing stress (Evans & Bonneville-Roussy, 2016), while others emphasize institutional responsibility for supporting wellbeing through systemic strategies (Mikszta et al., 2019; Clark et al., 2014). Research on job insecurity and cultural discourses of artistic passion points to identity vulnerabilities and risks of self-sacrifice (Banks & Hesmondhalgh, 2009; Hennekam & Bennett, 2016), whereas collaborative educational environments are described as protective factors (Gaunt & Westerlund, 2013).

Although these contributions are significant, psychological vulnerability in artistic training is rarely conceptualized as a systemic phenomenon emerging from the interaction between personal development, pedagogical processes, and the sustainability of vocational pathways. Preventive strategies are often implemented in isolation—at curricular, institutional, or individual levels—without an integrative framework linking these dimensions. This fragmentation limits the coherence and effectiveness of preventive interventions in higher arts education. In response to this gap, the present study proposes the 3P Model as an integrative framework articulating the relationship between the person, the pedagogical process, and the vocational-artistic path, positioning prevention as a systemic function of university artistic training.

The 3P model: theoretical contribution and applicability

The 3P Model proposed in this article is an integrative conceptual framework for understanding and preventing maladaptive vulnerability in university arts education. It does not measure individual variables directly but articulates the relationship between personal development, pedagogical processes, and the vocational-artistic pathway. Rather than a therapeutic intervention, the model functions as a pedagogical-preventive framework that supports educational conditions fostering sustainable identity and vocational development.

The 3P Model (*as shown Figure 1*) is proposed as both an explanatory and heuristic framework for analysing and designing preventive strategies in higher arts education.

Drawing on research in creativity, psychological safety, and vocational development, it integrates these dimensions into a unified preventive perspective. Structured around three interdependent axes—Person, Process, and Vocational-Artistic Path—the model explains how the psychological vulnerability of the student artist can be supported and transformed into a creative resource within development-oriented educational environments.

The **Person** dimension addresses the student's psychological structure, including emotional sensitivity, emerging artistic identity, and self-regulation. In contexts of evaluative exposure and insecurity, the absence of a containing educational framework may encourage defensive adaptations oriented toward conformity rather than authentic

expression.

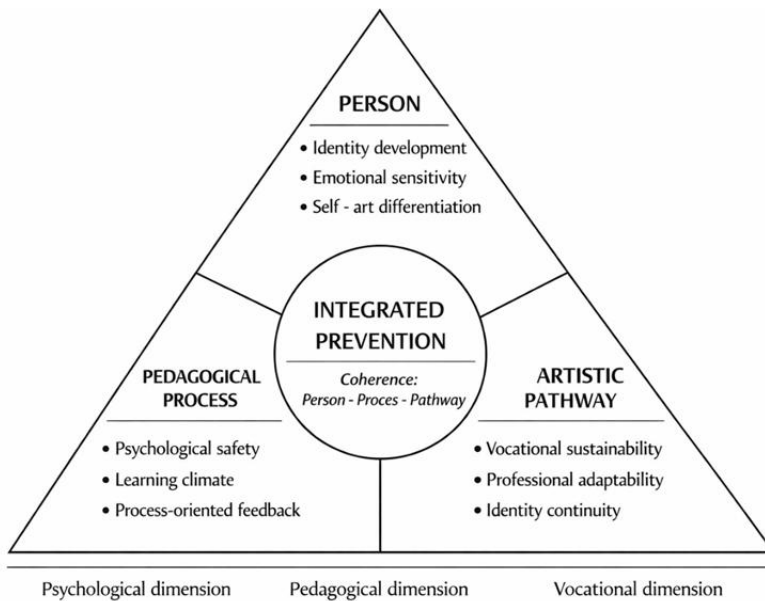


Figure 1.

Integrated prevention model: coherence between person, pedagogical process and artistic pathway

Note: The figure was created with the assistance of AI based on the author's instructions.

The **Process** dimension refers to the formative experience itself: pedagogical relationships, educational climate, and assessment practices. The creative process is understood as a space of exploration and expressive risk that becomes formative only within sufficiently safe and predictable environments capable of transforming vulnerability into a resource.

The **Vocational-Artistic Path** dimension extends the analysis beyond immediate performance to the sustainability of professional development. It includes the capacity to maintain creativity in unstable contexts, tolerate uncertainty, and preserve the psychological resources required for artistic work, becoming an indicator of training quality.

The 3P Model functions as a dynamic system in which person, process, and pathway interact continuously. Prevention emerges from the coherence of these levels and is redefined not as corrective intervention but as a structural principle of contemporary arts education.

The model makes several theoretical contributions:

proposes an integrative framework linking student vulnerability with pedagogical

and institutional structures;

reconceptualizes prevention as relational and systemic rather than individual;

bridges artistic education, psychology, and creative labour realities;

extends psychological safety literature through a relational perspective informed by educational holding;

reframes the university environment as a psychological infrastructure for creativity;

shifts focus from isolated performance to vocational sustainability;

conceptualizes vulnerability as a constitutive dimension of artistic formation requiring pedagogical and institutional support.

The 3P Model provides a framework for designing preventive strategies at curricular, pedagogical, and institutional levels, orienting interventions toward coherence between personal development, educational processes, and vocational sustainability. Through this multilevel perspective, prevention becomes embedded in the architecture of the learning environment rather than limited to individual interventions.

Operationalization and Limits of the 3P Model

To clarify how the model becomes functional within artistic education, the 3P Model is operationalized across its three constitutive dimensions. At the level of **Person**, the model recognizes the student artist as a subject in identity formation, characterized by emotional sensitivity and personal exposure inherent in the creative process. Operationalization involves maintaining a clear distinction between personal worth and evaluation of artistic output, as well as using pedagogical language that avoids conflating identity with performance. Vulnerability is thus approached as a formative resource requiring educational containment and relational support in order to sustain authentic expressiveness and reduce defensive adaptation.

The **Process** dimension is operationalized through teaching and assessment structured within a climate of psychological safety that supports exploration and creative risk-taking. Pedagogical practices include predictable, process-oriented feedback, gradual exposure to evaluative situations, and structured reflection on artistic experience. The teacher functions as mediator of the educational climate and facilitator of a pedagogical holding environment capable of transforming vulnerability into a coherent expressive resource.

The **Vocational-Artistic Path** dimension orients training toward the sustainability of professional development rather than immediate performance alone. This involves integrating curricular references to continuity of creativity, management of professional uncertainty, and preservation of long-term psychological resources. The university is thus conceived as a formative infrastructure supporting transition into professional life and preventing early depletion of creative resources.

The 3P Model requires empirical validation through applied and longitudinal

research across diverse artistic education contexts. Its applicability may vary according to cultural and institutional specificities and openness to curricular and pedagogical change. The model does not replace clinical interventions or specialized mental-health services but operates at the level of educational prevention and systemic coherence. Its integrative character implies a degree of conceptual generality, requiring further development of assessment tools and applied protocols to enhance operational precision. Moreover, the model does not exhaust the impact of structural economic conditions of the artistic labour market, which may shape professional trajectories beyond university training.

Conclusions and Future Research Directions

University arts education involves high levels of emotional exposure and identity investment, making psychological vulnerability a constitutive dimension of the formative process. The present study highlights the need for integrated preventive strategies capable of moving beyond fragmented approaches focused solely on individual self-regulation or isolated pedagogical interventions. The proposed 3P Model offers an integrative conceptual framework linking psychological, pedagogical, and vocational dimensions of artistic formation and conceptualizes prevention as the result of coherence between person, process, and vocational-artistic pathway. From this perspective, the university environment can be understood as a psychological infrastructure of creation, with an active role in supporting identity development and long-term vocational sustainability.

Adopting such a perspective implies a shift from educational cultures centred on selection through resistance toward development-oriented models in which artistic performance becomes inseparable from the protection of the psychological resources involved in creation. Rather than proposing a therapeutic approach to arts education, the 3P Model reconfigures institutional responsibility for creating formative environments capable of transforming vulnerability into creative resource and vocational continuity.

Future research should aim to empirically validate the 3P Model across diverse contexts of higher arts education through longitudinal and mixed-method designs capable of capturing the interaction between personal development, pedagogical processes, and vocational trajectories. Comparative studies across artistic disciplines and institutional cultures may further refine the model's applicability, while the development of operational indicators and assessment tools aligned with its three dimensions would support its use in curriculum design and program evaluation. Extending investigation beyond the university setting to early career stages in the creative sector could also clarify how formative environments influence professional sustainability, wellbeing, and resilience in artistic careers.

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Mastering the Creative Archive: Reference Management Software in Artistic Academic Research

Dalia Rusu-Persic^a

ABSTRACT: Academic research in the field of arts and artistic education possesses a distinct epistemological framework, often blending traditional qualitative methodologies with practice-based research, self-classification, and multimedia archiving. Within this complex landscape, the rigorous management of bibliographic resources and visual/auditory sources represents both a technical challenge and a creative necessity. This paper explores the integration of Reference Management Software (RMS)—specifically Zotero, Mendeley, and EndNote—into artistic academic research. It examines how these tools transcend their conventional role as mere citation generators, becoming dynamic digital ecosystems that facilitate the mapping of artistic influences, the organization of source materials, and the streamlining of the writing process for academic publications. By analysing the specific needs of artist-scholars, this study proposes a tailored framework for bibliographic management that respects the fluid, non-linear nature of artistic inquiry while maintaining the rigorous academic standards required by contemporary higher education.

KEYWORDS: Reference Management Software, Artistic Research, Arts Education, Zotero, Academic Writing, Practice based Research, Digital Humanities.

Introduction

The landscape of higher arts education and doctoral research in creative disciplines has undergone a profound transformation over the last few decades. The institutionalization of artistic research—often conceptualized as practice-led research, practice-based research, or research through the arts - has forced a reconciliation between the subjective,

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intuitive processes of creative production and the objective, rigorous demands of academic scholarship. In this hybrid environment, the artist-scholar must navigate two worlds simultaneously: the studio, atelier, or rehearsal space, and the library or digital archive.

One of the most persistent hurdles for researchers in artistic education is the systematization of literature reviews and the meticulous documentation of sources. Unlike standard STEM or purely social science disciplines, where data is primarily textual or numerical, artistic research relies heavily on an expanded definition of "the document." A source can be a peer-reviewed journal article, but it is equally likely to be an exhibition catalogue, a musical score, a vinyl record sleeve, a live performance recording, a theatrical prompt book, or a digital ephemeral artwork.

Managing these heterogeneous resources requires tools that are agile, customizable, and capable of handling multimedia metadata. This is where Reference Management Software (RMS) enters the academic equation. Tools such as Zotero, Mendeley, and EndNote are frequently introduced to students and faculty as administrative utilities designed strictly to format bibliographies (e.g., APA, Chicago, Harvard). However, this view fundamentally misunderstands their potential within artistic education.

When deployed strategically, an RMS serves as a cognitive extension of the researcher - a digital archive where theoretical frameworks from philosophy, aesthetics, and sociology intersect with visual and auditory inspirations. This article argues that the adoption of reference management applications is not merely a technical box to be checked for compliance with academic editorial standards, but a transformative pedagogical and methodological practice that enhances the depth, traceability, and execution of artistic research.

The Epistemological Challenge of Reference Management in the Arts

To understand why citation applications are vital for the contemporary artist-researcher, one must first dismantle the unique epistemological challenges inherent to arts education and academic writing about art.

The Multimodal Nature of Sources

Traditional citation styles and academic databases were built by and for logocentric disciplines—fields where information is transmitted through written words. In contrast, artistic research is inherently multimodal. An art educator investigating the impact of visual culture on adolescent identity might compile a dataset consisting of Instagram screenshots, museum curatorial statements, TikTok videos, and post-structuralist philosophy textbooks.

Without an automated, centralized system, keeping track of these disparate assets

results in cognitive fragmentation. Researchers often find themselves with dozens of open browser tabs, disorganized desktop folders filled with generic filenames like document(1).pdf, and lost links to vital digital exhibitions. Reference management software mitigates this chaos by allowing the ingestion and metadata categorization of non-textual objects, ensuring that a YouTube video of a performance piece is treated with the same archival respect and academic traceability as a chapter from a Routledge handbook.

The Non-Linear Creative Process

The creative process rarely follows a straight line from hypothesis to conclusion. It is iterative, messy, and characterized by serendipitous discoveries. An artist-scholar might begin researching 19th-century photographic techniques, pivot into a study of contemporary digital surveillance, and finally produce a series of textile installations.

Standard folders on a computer hard drive enforce a rigid, hierarchical structure: an item can only exist in one folder at a time. RMS platforms break this physical limitation using tags, collections, and smart folders. A single resource, for example, Walter Benjamin's essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*—can simultaneously live in a collection labeled "Theoretical Frameworks," another labeled "Photography History," and another linked directly to a specific studio project. This fluidity directly mirrors the associative, rhizomatic thinking that defines artistic creation (Benjamin, 1935).

Bridging the Gap Between Intuition and Rigor

There is a historical, albeit problematic, tension within arts academies between "making" and "writing." Students often view the thesis or the academic article as an alien imposition that stifles their creative voice. This psychological friction is amplified when the mechanics of academic writing - such as cross-referencing, managing hundreds of footnotes, and manually building an alphabetized bibliography - become overwhelming.

When the technical burden of citation formatting is automated, the researcher's cognitive load is freed up to focus on synthesis, critical analysis, and the artistic work itself. Instead of spending hours checking whether a comma is in the right place according to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, the author can focus on articulating the delicate relationship between their studio practice and the theoretical lineage they are claiming.

Theoretical Framework: The Digital Archive as a Creative Catalyst

The use of reference management applications can be theorized through the lens of Extended Mind Theory (Clark & Chalmers, 1998), which posits that the human mind leverages external objects, tools, and environments to perform complex cognitive operations. An RMS is not just a passive storage bin; it is an active partner in the research

process.

Furthermore, applying Jacques Derrida’s concept of Archive Fever (Mal d’Archive) to artistic education highlights the power dynamics of the research repository. Historically, institutional archives dictated what was considered "legitimate" knowledge. By mastering personal reference management tools, artist-scholars construct counter-archives. They curate private digital ecosystems where marginalized art forms, independent papers, community theatre projects, and canonical texts exist on an equal footing, heavily annotated with the researcher’s own evolving insights.

In the context of the artistic publications, research must show a clear pedagogical or historical trajectory. An RMS allows the researcher to trace the evolution of an artistic concept over time. Through the systematic use of PDF annotations, color-coded highlights, and standalone research notes attached directly to the bibliographic entry, the software transforms from an administrative tool into a living journal of the researcher’s intellectual evolution.

Comparative Taxonomy of Core Applications for the Arts

While there are numerous citation tools available, three dominate the academic market: Zotero, Mendeley, and EndNote. Each possesses distinct architecture, philosophies, and feature sets that appeal differently depending on the specific profile of the artistic researcher.

Feature / Criteria	Zotero	Mendeley	EndNote
Cost & Access	Open-source, Free (Paid extra cloud storage)	Freemium (Owned by Elsevier corporate group)	Commercial (High license cost, often institutional)
Multimedia Handling	Excellent (Web snapshots, artwork items, custom fields)	Moderate (Highly structured for standard PDFs)	Good (Highly robust but rigid database architecture)
Tagging & Taxonomy	Exceptional (Nested tags, colour labels on active lists)	Basic tagging mechanics	Advanced smart groups and Boolean logical indexing

Community Ecosystem	High (Extensive user plugin ecosystem: ZotMoov, Better BibTeX)	Proprietary ecosystem focused on Elsevier networks	Corporate/Institutional premium support standard
Interface Architecture	Minimalist, classical desktop three-panel layout	Modern, web-centric layout design	Data-dense, spreadsheet-like detail display windows

For the artist-scholar, Zotero frequently emerges as the superior choice due to its open-source nature and robust web-scraping translator architecture. When browsing an online digital art gallery, a museum collection (such as the Tate or MoMA), or a film archive, Zotero's browser extension can extract complex metadata fields that proprietary systems overlook. Mendeley, while powerful for standard scientific PDF indexing, enforces an Elsevier-centric paradigm that can feel restrictive for interdisciplinary humanities and experimental arts research. EndNote remains highly capable for large-scale institutional collaborative tracking but presents a steep learning curve and financial barriers for independent artists and educators.

Methodological Framework & Empirical Case Studies in Arts Academies

To demonstrate the utility of automated reference architecture, this study outlines two distinct experimental case studies conducted within high-level artistic academic environments. These examples showcase how RMS tracking mitigates research friction.

The following case studies illustrate the practical application, operational hurdles, and behavioral patterns observed during the research.

Case Study 1: The Orchestral Musician (Cohort A - Music Performance)

- Profile: A 4th-year undergraduate student specializing in Orchestral Conducting, focusing their graduation project on the performance practice and interpretive nuances of Gustav Mahler's Symphonies (specifically Symphonies No. 5 and No. 9).
- The Challenge: The student needed to cite critical historical sheet music editions (e.g., International Gustav Mahler Society publications), specific archival audio recordings led by different conductors (e.g., Bernstein vs. Karajan), and video recordings of live masterclasses.
- Tool Utilized: Zotero with standard browser plug-ins.
- Observations & Findings: While Zotero performed adequately when capturing

modern journal articles about Mahler's life, it severely disrupted the student's workflow regarding music-specific media. When attempting to cite a specific score, the software lacked intuitive fields for distinguishing between the composer, the editor of the critical edition, and the publisher of the musical material. Furthermore, when importing audio recordings from streaming platforms or library databases, the browser extension mixed up conductors, soloists, and orchestras into a generic "Author" field.

- Outcome: To avoid misattributing a performance or failing to credit the specific music edition, the student stopped using the citation application for metadata collection and manually built their entire discography and score index in a separate text document.

Case Study 2: The Theatre Scholar (Cohort C - Theatrology)

- Profile: A 2nd-year Master's student in Theatrology (Theatre Theory and History) writing a thesis on the contemporary relevance of Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre and the *Verfremdungseffekt* (estrangement effect) in modern political staging.

- The Challenge: Accurately citing rare theatrical programs from past Berliner Ensemble productions, unpublished director promptbooks, translated performance scripts, and live theatrical performances attended by the researcher.

- Tool Utilized: EndNote.

- Observations & Findings: Having received introductory library training, the student attempted to use EndNote to manage a heavy load of German theoretical texts and theatrical records. However, the student encountered critical limitations when handling non-published performance ephemera. EndNote's pre-existing templates for "Performance" or "Manuscript" lacked fields for essential theatrical variables, such as the stage director, the translator of Brecht's original German text, the premier date versus the specific performance date attended, or the theater venue location.

- Outcome: The student managed to maintain an accurate database for textbooks and essays, but the software forced them to format all theater programs and live production citations by hand, resulting in hours of manual editing to comply with the rigid requirements of the Chicago Manual of Style (Notes and Bibliography system).

Comparative Summary of Findings

To visualize the distinct behavioral patterns and technological frictions discovered across these performing arts disciplines, the following table synthesizes the empirical data gathered during the case studies:

Art / Cohort Specialization	Preferred Tool Type	Primary Source Type	Critical Software failure point
Orchestra / Music Performance	Zotero / Manual Entry	Critical score editions, Audio/Video recordings, Discographies group)	Inability to separate creative roles (Composer vs. Conductor vs. Performer) and inadequate field structures for musical scores.
Theatrology / Theatre Studies	EndNote / Manual Formatting	Scripts, Director promptbooks, Live performances, Theatre programs	Rigid, text-centric templates that omit critical live performance metadata (Venue, Director, Translation data).

Discussion and Recommendations

Empirical evidence indicates that while citation applications succeed in mitigating mechanical errors for standard books and journals, they present structural blind spots within music performance and theatre research paradigms. To bridge this gap, software developers and arts institutions should consider the following interventions:

1. Future iterations of citation software must allow users to dynamically assign roles (e.g., Composer, Conductor, Director, Set Designer, Translator) rather than forcing all contributors into standard "Author" or "Editor" fields.
2. Introduction of robust metadata fields dedicated to the performing arts, capturing live performance dates, venues, staging companies, and specific performance versions.
3. Higher arts education institutions should provide specialized reference management workshops that explicitly address how to manually customize database fields for non-textual media, ensuring students do not abandon these tools entirely.

Conclusions

As academic infrastructure moves further into the digital sphere, reference management applications are beginning to incorporate artificial intelligence and semantic search capabilities. For artistic research, this presents unique philosophical opportunities and ethical challenges. Modern updates allow systems to suggest related research papers based on the semantic profile of the researcher's existing collections. For an artist-scholar, this can lead to unexpected cross-disciplinary connections—linking a painterly technique to an obscure

mathematical topology or a biological system.

However, reliance on algorithmic suggestions also risks creating intellectual echo chambers. If the software only suggests materials heavily cited within mainstream western academic databases, the radical, marginalized, or non-textual sources that populate artistic practice may be pushed aside. Therefore, the contemporary artist researcher must maintain conscious control over their digital ecosystem, balancing automated discovery tools with intentional browsing across museum basements, physical archives, and independent artist networks.

The integration of Reference Management Software within artistic higher education is far more than a simple matter of technical efficiency. It represents a vital epistemological step toward legitimizing and structuring the unique field of artistic research. By transforming platforms like Zotero and Mendeley from mere citation machines into dynamic, rhizomatic digital archives, artist-scholars can effectively bridge the historical gap between intuitive studio practice and rigorous academic writing. Ultimately, mastering the personal digital archive is a form of contemporary craftsmanship— an essential skill for the modern artist-scholar navigating the complex informational currents of 21st-century academia.

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The role of personal development in the professionalization of the teaching career: perceptions of future teachers

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ABSTRACT : Personal development is an essential dimension of the professionalization of the teaching career, being increasingly highlighted in international educational documents and policies, such as LifeComp, UNESCO or OECD TALIS. These emphasize the importance of socio-emotional skills, self-regulation and self-knowledge in ensuring the efficiency of the teaching act and the quality of educational relationships. The present study investigates the perceptions of students enrolled in the psycho-pedagogical training program (DPPD) regarding the role of personal development in teaching activity, as well as the training needs in this area. The research was conducted on a sample of 422 participants and used a structured questionnaire, which assessed several dimensions: beliefs regarding the role of personal development, training needs, and anticipatory usefulness of a dedicated discipline and self-assessment of personal resources.

The results highlight a high level of consensus among participants on the importance of personal development for the efficiency of teaching activity, as well as the existence of significant training needs in the field of socio-emotional skills. At the same time, a discrepancy is noted between the perceived level of importance of these skills and the self-assessment of the ability to manage them. The study supports the need for the systematic integration of personal development into the initial training of teachers and highlights the relevance of introducing dedicated curricular approaches, such as the discipline "Management of personal development in an educational context".

KEY WORDS : personal development; teacher training; socio-emotional skills; self-regulation; future teachers

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Introduction

The personal development of teachers has become, in recent decades, a major area of interest in educational research, amid the increasing emphasis on the socio-emotional dimensions of the teaching-learning process. While traditionally teacher training has focused predominantly on cognitive and methodological skills, current trends highlight the need to integrate personal and relational skills into the professional profile of teachers (European Commission, 2020). International educational policy documents support this direction. The European LifeComp framework defines personal, social and learning-to-learn skills as essential for adapting to constantly changing educational and professional contexts (European Commission, 2020). Similarly, reports prepared by UNESCO and OECD emphasize the importance of socio-emotional skills, self-regulation and reflective capacity in the professional development of teachers and in creating a positive educational climate (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2021).

Personal development is a concept that designates a psychological reality and a field of psychological knowledge and intervention that has experienced remarkable evolution in recent decades, establishing itself as a permanent social and educational policy, which educational forums implement through specific projects to promote professional and social success and that of young people (Mitrofan and Nuță, 2011). Without having a singular, unanimously accepted definition, personal development designates a psychic dynamic that includes the idea of growth, becoming, empowerment, training.

The personal development of teachers has become, in recent decades, a major area of interest in educational research, amid the increasing emphasis on the socio-emotional dimensions of the teaching-learning process. While traditionally teacher training has focused predominantly on cognitive and methodological skills, current trends highlight the need to integrate personal and relational skills into the professional profile of teachers (European Commission, 2020). International educational policy documents support this direction. The European LifeComp framework defines personal, social and learning-to-learn skills as essential for adapting to constantly changing educational and professional contexts (European Commission, 2020). Similarly, reports prepared by UNESCO and OECD emphasize the importance of socio-emotional skills, self-regulation and reflective capacity in the professional development of teachers and in creating a positive educational climate (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2021).

Two major forces in psychology in the 20th century founded the concept of personal development: humanistic psychology through C.G. Jung (precursor), C.R. Rogers, A.B. Maslow, V. Pavelcu, I. Holban, N. Mărgineanu and transpersonal psychology through S. Grof, R. Assagioli, J. Lili, I. Mânzat. As summarized by Caluschi (2015), personal development is a complex process called individuation by Jung or the process of becoming the self, in the understanding of Mânzat (2000), or the process of self-

fulfillment in the conception of Fromm, Erikson, Assagioli, etc.

Mitrofan (2008) states that the goal of personal development is: harmonization and unification of the Self, optimization and creative self-transformation, psycho-spiritual maturation of the person in his evolutionary dynamics. The indicators of its achievement are: expanded self-awareness, enhancement of one's own evolutionary capacities, resizing, integration and responsible and efficient redirection of one's own life scenario and of relational and collective evolutionary dynamics. Two more forces affirmed in psychology in the 20th century substantiated the conception of personal development: humanistic psychology through C.G. Jung (precursor), C.R. Rogers, A. Maslow, V. Pavelcu, I. Holban, N. Mărgineanu and transpersonal psychology through S. Grof, R. Assagioli, J. Lili, I. Mânzat. As Caluschi (2015) summarizes, personal development is a complex process called individuation by Jung or the process of becoming the self, in the understanding of Mânzat (2000), or the process of self-fulfillment in the conception of Fromm, Erikson, Assagioli, etc.

Personal development is accompanied by the management of the internal psychological meanings of this phenomenon for each individual, but, in general, it involves the acquisition of psychological properties and qualities, in a dynamic, creative and integrative process, which leads to self-regulation and personal restructuring (Pylypenko et al., 2022). Personal self-development is a conscious, autonomous approach, an activity that is oriented in the positive direction, suitable for the person, generating personal growth and self-efficacy. The teacher and psychologist who initiate personal development come to support the process of evolution of the human personality, focusing on the creation, maintenance and cultivation of healthy relational patterns with oneself, with others and with the world.

The personal development process can generate the following changes: the individual becomes less defensive, more realistic, socially mature, with positive self-esteem and creative behavior, capable of more efficient resolution of internal and interpersonal problems. In view of these acquisitions, motivation for positive change, self-expression through feeling and understanding of problems, development of congruence, self-disclosure and self-acceptance, openness to oneself and to the world are acted upon (Rogers, 2014). The feeling of self-efficacy and positive beliefs about oneself will direct people towards activating their own abilities necessary to achieve objectives and accomplish the proposed tasks. Self-efficacy (Cazacu and Boteanu, 2016) influences the creation of positive scenarios about the performance of activities, causal attributions – people with a high level of self-efficacy attribute failures to reduced efforts, while people with low self-efficacy claim that their failures are due to a lack of skills; Those who believe they are in control in threatening situations do not have thoughts that could disrupt their activities too much, while those who believe they are unable to control stressful situations are characterized by an increased level of anxiety, perceiving many aspects of the

environment as threatening and dangerous. The higher the level of self-efficacy, the greater the number of possible career orientation directions.

Sometimes defined as self-development, personal development refers to the study and practice of improving one's own life, career, education, relationships, health, productivity and spirituality, through one's own effort (Lozano et al, 2021). It is about the permanent effort of each person to become better, to surpass oneself, to improve oneself more and more. It is a continuous process of self-improvement, which lasts a lifetime. Thus, among the most general areas of personal development we can list: time management; setting goals; identifying values and beliefs; changing habits; motivation; improving self-knowledge; developing talents, etc. It is important to remember that this concept of personal development is not limited only to the individual level, but also includes activities for the development of others, as a teacher, guide, counselor, manager, coach or mentor. The goal of personal development programs is to increase the quality of life by optimizing different personal aspects. The following are aimed at: increasing the level of self-knowledge; crystallization of self-identity; development of one's own potential and skills; fulfillment of personal aspirations; optimization of social and professional integration; definition of values, priorities and lifestyle; acquisition of a broader vision of life, etc.

The means, techniques, methods used in personal development programs are of different types, taken from various orientations, bringing together both psychophysical and cognitive or behavioral techniques. Personal development programs are addressed to all people who want to optimize the quality of their personal life or are unfulfilled/dissatisfied with themselves or with a series of aspects of their own existence. In personal development programs, the relationship established between the psychologist and his client – individual or group – is one of collaboration, the psychologist playing the role of educator, facilitator, coach.

The literature highlights that the effectiveness of teaching is significantly influenced by factors such as self-awareness, emotion management, and the quality of interpersonal relationships. Models of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995; Mayer et al., 2008) show that the skills of identifying and regulating emotions contribute to decision-making, conflict management, and building functional educational relationships. Self-determination theory also emphasizes the role of fundamental psychological needs – autonomy, competence, and relatedness – in motivating and engaging in professional activity (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

In an educational context, these dimensions are reflected in the teacher's ability to manage complex situations, to respond appropriately to student diversity and to support their socio-emotional development. Research shows that teachers who demonstrate a high level of socio-emotional competence contribute to increasing student engagement, reducing problem behaviours and improving academic performance (Jennings &

Greenberg, 2009). Understanding educators' emotional schemas is necessary to adequately understand and address educators' social and emotional competence development, psychological well-being and emotion socialization style with the aim of promoting student social and emotional competence (Jenning et al, 2024). However, the systematic integration of personal development into initial teacher training remains limited in many training programmes. Although the importance of these competences is recognised at a theoretical and normative level, there is a gap between the requirements of the professional profile of the teaching staff and the contents actually included in psycho-pedagogical training curricula. This discrepancy is often reflected in the level of preparation of future teachers in terms of managing emotions, communication, and self-reflection.

Based on these considerations, the present study aims to investigate the perceptions of students in the psychopedagogical training program (DPPD) on the role of personal development in teaching activity, as well as the training needs in this area. The research also aims to highlight how participants evaluate their own personal resources and to identify possible discrepancies between the importance attributed to personal development and the perceived level of individual competences. In this context, the study is guided by the following research questions: *To what extent do students in the psychopedagogical training program perceive personal development as relevant for teaching activity?; What are the training needs of students in the field of personal development and socio-emotional competences?; To what extent are there discrepancies between the importance attributed to personal development and the self-assessment of individual competences?*

The results obtained are relevant for the substantiation of some curricular development directions in the initial teacher training, including for the integration of subjects dedicated to personal development in the educational context.

Methodology

Participants

The study was conducted on a sample of 422 participants enrolled in the psychopedagogical training program (DPPD), coming from higher education institutions with different profiles (social sciences, exact sciences and technical). The sample included both students at different stages of initial training and students involved in postgraduate training programs (110 bachelor's, 148 master's, 164 postgraduate). Of these, 320 have definitely opted for a teaching career, 10 do not want a teaching career, but value their skills at work, and 92 cannot be sure. The participants come from various fields of undergraduate studies, which reflects the diversity of professional profiles specific to psychopedagogical training programs. This diversity allows for a relevant perspective on perceptions of personal development in relation to the teaching role. The results obtained

are relevant for the substantiation of curricular development directions in initial teacher training, including for the integration of disciplines dedicated to personal development in an educational context.

Instruments

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, developed for the purpose of this study, aiming to explore participants' perceptions of the role of personal development in teaching, as well as to identify training needs in this area.

The instrument included 24 items formulated as statements regarding different dimensions of personal development in an educational context, to which participants responded using a five-point Likert scale (1 = total disagreement; 5 = total agreement). The items were organized around six conceptual dimensions: *beliefs regarding the role of teacher personal development, training needs, anticipatory usefulness of a dedicated subject, self-assessment of personal resources, the teacher's role in student development, and the integration of personal development into the teaching role.*

To control the consistency of the responses, the questionnaire included both positively formulated items and inversely formulated items. The content validity of the instrument was ensured by referring to the specialized literature and relevant conceptual frameworks in the field of personal development and teacher training, the items being formulated in accordance with the theoretical dimensions analyzed.

Data collection was carried out online, by distributing the questionnaire to participants enrolled in the psychopedagogical training program. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and the use of the data exclusively for academic purposes. The questionnaire was completed individually, without any time limit, and the responses were recorded anonymously. The collected data were exported and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. For each item and for each investigated dimension, mean values were calculated, in order to highlight the general trends of the responses and the level of agreement of the participants.

Ethical considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous, with no data collected that would allow the identification of participants. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and the use of data exclusively for scientific purposes. By completing the questionnaire, participants expressed their informed consent to participate in the study. The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of educational research and with the regulations on the protection of personal data.

Results

Data analysis revealed a high level of consensus among participants regarding the importance of personal development in teaching. The mean values obtained for most items are in the upper range of the scale, suggesting strong agreement with the statements regarding the role of personal and socio-emotional competencies in the teaching profession.

Beliefs regarding the role of personal development: data show that participants attribute an essential role to inner balance, emotional self-regulation and stress management in ensuring the efficiency of teaching activity.

Table 1 *Beliefs regarding the role of personal development*

Item	M
Inner balance influences the quality of the educational act.	4.46
Emotional self-regulation is essential for teaching activity.	4.63
Stress management influences the educational climate.	4.58
Personal development has little influence (reversed item).	2.24

The values indicate high agreement; the reversed item confirms the consistency of the responses.

Training needs in personal development: participants express a high level of agreement regarding the need to integrate personal development into psychopedagogical training programs.

Table 2 *Perceived training needs*

Item	M
Self-knowledge should be deepened	4.48
Stress management strategies	4.58
Developing socio-emotional skills	4.41
Curriculum integration	4.16

Anticipatory usefulness of a dedicated subject: the results indicate a positive perception of the usefulness of introducing a subject dedicated to personal development in teacher training.

Table 3 *Perceived usefulness of a personal development course*

Item	M
Useful for teaching preparation	4.32
Developing socio-emotional skills	4.32
Educational relations	4.38
Managing difficult situations	4.40

Self-assessment of personal resources: compared to the other dimensions, self-assessment of personal resources records slightly lower values, especially regarding managing emotions in tense situations.

Table 4 *Self-assessment of personal resources*

Item	M
Self-knowledge	4.12
Managing emotions	3.88
Personal reflection	4.31
Emotional control difficulties (reversed item)	2.69

The role of the teacher in student development: in the responses provided, there was a very high level of agreement regarding the teacher's responsibility in supporting the personal development of students.

Table 5 *Teacher's role in students' personal development*

Item	M
Support for self-knowledge	4.55
Socio-emotional skills	4.54
Organizing activities	4.50
Influence on motivation	4.62

Integrating personal development into the teaching role: the results confirm the perception of personal development as an integral part of the professional role of the teacher.

Table 6 *Integration of personal development in teaching role*

Item	M
Continuous development	4.45
Self-knowledge and educational relationship	4.41
Managing emotions	4.55
Efficiency of the teaching process	4.59

To summarize, the results highlight three main directions: a) participants attribute high importance to personal development in teaching; b) there are significant training needs in the field of socio-emotional skills; c) a discrepancy is observed between the perceived level of importance of these skills and the self-assessment of their ability to manage them.

Discussion

The results of the study highlight a high level of consensus among participants regarding the importance of personal development in the exercise of the teaching role. The high mean values recorded for the dimensions related to *emotional self-regulation, stress management and educational relationships* confirm that *future teachers* recognize the essential role of socio-emotional skills in the effectiveness of teaching activity. These results are in line with the specialized literature, which emphasizes that the personal skills of the teacher influence both the educational climate and the performance of students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The high level of training needs scores also indicates that participants not only recognize the importance of personal development, but also perceive gaps in their own training. This finding is relevant in the context where initial teacher education programs continue to place greater emphasis on cognitive and methodological competences, to the detriment of intra- and interpersonal dimensions. In this sense, the results support the need for an integrated approach to professional development, in line with recommendations formulated at European and international level (*European Commission, 2020; OECD, 2019*).

A particularly relevant result of the study is the discrepancy identified between the high level of importance attributed to personal development and the lower level of self-assessment of personal skills, especially in terms of managing emotions in stressful situations. This difference suggests the existence of a gap between the cognitive (awareness of importance) and practical (ability to apply) dimensions, an aspect also reported in other research in the field of teacher education. From the perspective of self-determination theory, this discrepancy may reflect an insufficiently satisfied need for competence, which may influence the level of confidence and perceived effectiveness in the professional role (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

At the same time, the results regarding the anticipatory usefulness of a subject dedicated to personal development highlight the openness of the participants towards the introduction of such contents in the psycho-pedagogical training curriculum. The high values associated with this dimension indicate that such a subject is perceived as relevant both for the development of socio-emotional skills and for the management of complex educational situations.

From this perspective, the introduction of the subject "*Management of personal*

development in an educational context" in the compulsory curriculum may represent an adequate response to the identified needs. Its structure, focused on self-knowledge, reflection and application in real educational situations, allows not only the development of individual skills, but also their transfer into practice. In addition, the approach based on reflection and experiential learning is consistent with contemporary models of teacher training, which value the development of professional identity and reflective skills.

At the same time, the results regarding the anticipatory usefulness of a subject dedicated to personal development highlight the openness of the participants towards the introduction of such contents in the psycho-pedagogical training curriculum. The high values associated with this dimension indicate that such a subject is perceived as relevant both for the development of socio-emotional skills and for the management of complex educational situations.

The results of the study have relevant implications for the curricular design in the field of initial teacher training. The systematic integration of personal development into training programs can contribute to the formation of more adaptable teachers, more aware of their own resources and better able to manage the complexity of the educational environment.

A possible limitation of the study is the self-reported nature of the data, which may influence the accuracy of the participants' assessments. Also, the analysis was conducted at a descriptive level, without exploring the relationships between variables. Future research may include in-depth analyses and comparative designs.

Conclusions

The study highlights the central role of personal development in the professionalization of the teaching career and confirms the existence of significant training needs in this area. The results indicate a high level of awareness of the importance of socio-emotional skills, but also the existence of a gap between this awareness and the perceived level of individual skills. These findings support the need to integrate personal development into the initial training of teachers, by introducing dedicated curricular approaches. In this sense, the discipline "*Management of personal development in an educational context*" can represent a relevant tool for developing the skills necessary for the effective exercise of the teaching role. The results of the study provide empirical support for rethinking the contents of initial teacher training, towards a more balanced approach between the cognitive and socio-emotional dimensions of teaching professionalization.

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Different children: between giftedness and special educational needs – an integrative outlook^b

Tatiana Bularga^a

ABSTRACT: Within the comprehensive framework of the concept of exceptional children—a term that encompasses a wide spectrum of learners, including both gifted and talented individuals as well as those with special educational needs - there emerges the necessity for a coherent theoretical and empirical foundation. The present study, currently situated at the stage of terminological clarification and the establishment of an experimental sample, focuses on identifying and analysing children with special educational needs from Romanian schools who simultaneously exhibit evident aptitudes or talents across various domains.

In addition to the conceptual analysis, the study also examines statistical data regarding children with special educational needs and the manifestation of diverse abilities, confirming that many of them possess the potential for successful social integration, personal development, and meaningful contribution to collective progress. The research adopts a qualitative–conceptual methodological approach, combining theoretical analysis with the preliminary designed empirical investigation tools intended for future application within inclusive educational settings. The main purpose of the investigation is to refine the conceptual understanding of giftedness, exploring its multiple dimensions and the interrelation between gifted potential and special educational needs.

Preliminary results and discussions highlight the integrative perspective that both giftedness and special needs can coexist in the same learner, requiring flexible, individualized, and inclusive educational strategies. This approach supports the development of an educational framework that views giftedness as a universal form of human potential, manifesting in diverse ways depending on contextual, cognitive, and emotional factors.

KEYWORDS: exceptional children; children with special educational needs; educational integration; forms of giftedness; performance;

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Introduction

Some children have special educational needs that affect their learning and social integration. These children should not be considered „different“ in a negative sense but rather as possessors of unique potential, often demonstrating abilities or talents that are overlooked in traditional educational settings. Recognizing and supporting this potential contributes not only to individual development but also to promoting equity and inclusion in the society.

The recognition of children with *special educational needs* (SEN) has increasingly become a focal point in international education policy, particularly through landmark frameworks such as UNESCO's *Salamanca Statement* (1994) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). These instruments affirm that all children, irrespective of their abilities or challenges, have an unequivocal right to access and participate fully in mainstream education. They further emphasize that educational systems themselves bear the responsibility to accommodate learner diversity, rather than adjusting expectations solely to perceived limitations of individual children.

Despite the widespread adoption of SEN as a standard term, significant debates persist regarding its precise conceptual boundaries, particularly in relation to terms such as *handicap*, *impairment*, and *disability*. Such terminological nuances carry profound implications for educational practice, as narrow or inconsistent definitions may obscure the recognition of abilities and talents in children with atypical developmental profiles. Attending to the full potential of these learners is therefore essential, not only to support their individual growth but also to promote equitable and inclusive educational environments.

Empirical and theoretical studies underscore the dual nature of SEN: while some children require targeted support to engage effectively in learning, many also demonstrate distinctive cognitive, artistic, or social talents that are frequently overlooked within conventional classroom settings. By bridging the intersection between specialized support and the recognition of exceptional abilities, this study seeks to offer a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of children with special educational needs, highlighting both their educational needs and their often-unacknowledged potential. Such an approach aligns with contemporary perspectives on inclusive education, wherein the focus shifts from deficit-oriented classification to systemic adaptation that facilitates participation, learning, and the flourishing of all students.

Building on this conceptual and empirical foundation, the present study aims to address three interrelated objectives. First, it seeks to **define and delimit the terminology associated with children with special educational needs**, clarifying conceptual distinctions and addressing ongoing debates regarding terms such as *handicap*, *impairment*, and *disability*. Second, the study aims to **analyse the accessibility and provision of educational resources** for children with disabilities or atypical

development, highlighting systemic responses to diverse learner needs. Third, it intends to ***demonstrate, through statistical and empirical evidence, that many children with SEN exhibit outstanding abilities and may be classified as gifted or talented learners***, thereby bridging the gap between support for learning needs and recognition of exceptional potential.

Children with Special Educational Needs: Policy-Based Conceptualizations

Inclusive education and support for children with special educational needs are grounded in a clear legal and conceptual framework, as established by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006). Disability is understood not merely as a medical condition but as the result of the interaction between the child and environmental barriers. Implementing reasonable accommodations ensures equitable access to education, while General Comment No. 4 (2016) emphasizes that effective inclusion requires not only physical integration but also adaptation of curricula, learning environments, and teaching strategies, alongside the development of Individualized Education Plans tailored to each child's specific needs.

The principle of *education for everyone* stated in the Salamanca Statement (1994), established inclusive education as an educational standard rather than an optional approach. European practice operationalizes this principle by defining Special Educational Needs as requirements for additional support arising from learning difficulties, disabilities, or social circumstances, emphasizing support needs rather than deficits. Within the conceptual framework of the document, the term denotes a flexible and inclusive set of educational needs that extend beyond the standard support typically provided within mainstream educational systems, without being restricted solely to medically or psychologically defined disabilities.

The document emphasizes that education systems must recognize and respond to the diversity of learners' needs, including those of students with special educational needs, which may arise from disabilities, learning difficulties, or other individual characteristics requiring differentiated pedagogical approaches. The Salamanca Statement situates the concept of special educational needs within an inclusive educational paradigm, shifting the focus from the identification of individual deficits to the adaptation of educational systems to learner diversity.

This conceptualization has provided a terminological and normative foundation for numerous subsequent educational policies and has been instrumental in the global development of inclusive education. The term *Special Educational Needs (SEN)* has become a globally recognized standard in education, largely due to the influence of UNESCO and its integration into international and European educational policies. Documents such as the *Salamanca Statement* and the frameworks promoted by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education have contributed to

establishing SEN as a unifying concept, facilitating the development of inclusive practices, the harmonization of policies, and the implementation of curricula that respond to diverse learner needs. Despite this standardization, terminological debates continue, particularly concerning distinctions among handicap, impairment, disability, special needs, and inclusion, reflecting medical, social, and pedagogical perspectives. Whereas medical models emphasize diagnostic classification and individual deficits, social approaches focus on societal barriers and the responsibility of systems to adapt, and pedagogical frameworks highlight the individualized educational support necessary to ensure meaningful participation. The international trend increasingly favors a contextual and inclusive interpretation, in which SEN refers not merely to a child's characteristics, but to the dynamic interaction between learners' needs and the educational environment. This conceptualization highlights the shift from labeling students to transforming and adapting educational systems, thereby reinforcing the principle that inclusion constitutes a systemic responsibility. Consequently, clarifying and harmonizing these terms is essential for effective policymaking, coherent educational planning, and the advancement of equitable and inclusive learning opportunities across diverse contexts.

Practical implementation of this concept depends on the alignment of national legislation with the CRPD, guidance from European agencies, and policy frameworks linking education to broader social inclusion objectives. Such terms as „learners with support needs,” Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and reasonable accommodations ensures coherence between legal mandates, educational practice, and a rights-based approach that recognizes the potential and dignity of every child.

Child Capacities: Conceptual Outlook

When we examine how particular students demonstrate their capacities within specific areas, we observe significant variation, not only between students but also across different types of activities. This diversity suggests that individuals are born not only having different degrees of potential, but also with distinct tendencies or predispositions to excel, each with their own intensity and dynamics of the development in a particular field. These differences in special abilities require educators particularly those working directly in classrooms to apply differentiated teaching strategies and tailor the individualized tasks especially for students who exhibit medium to high levels of ability.

This becomes particularly relevant in educational process that strives to offer equal opportunities to all students. Nevertheless, there are children whose abilities exceed the normative expectations for their age and peer group. Although such students form a minority, they represent a part of the school with exceptional talent in specific domains students who are supported by offering appropriate conditions are capable of achieving outstanding performance.

Often teachers at general educational schools might find it challenging to provide

a suitable support for the development of gifted learners or those with special educational needs. In such cases it is essential that these students be included in specialized educational programs tailored to their specific needs. This situation is particularly common when guiding talented or gifted learners toward institutions focused on artistic disciplines such as music, visual arts, dance, or drama.

The researcher uses the term „exceptional children” to refer to learners who demonstrate pronounced abilities in a particular field. Adopting this term is consistent with established educational frameworks that classify both gifted learners and those with special educational needs under a broader umbrella concept of *exceptionality*.

This choice of the concept is supported by several authoritative sources. For example, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) defines „exceptional children” as learners who differ from the norm—either above or below—in ways that require individualized educational approach. Similarly, the U.S. Department of Education and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004), classify gifted students and students with disabilities as groups requiring individualized adaptations, demonstrating that both categories can be regarded as forms of exceptionality. Internationally, UNESCO’s Inclusive Education frameworks (2017) also acknowledge that learners with outstanding talents as well as those facing learning challenges, fall outside typical developmental pathways and therefore need tailored educational approaches.

By using a single, comprehensive term, we create a coherent conceptual space in which to analyse the educational needs of these learners without repeatedly differentiating between subcategories. This approach reflects the perspective promoted in official guidelines, which emphasize the importance of approaching diverse learners through flexible, adaptive, and responsive educational environments. Moreover, it facilitates a more integrated discussion of pedagogical strategies, individualized support, and specialized programming suitable for students whose learning path diverge significantly from the majority of students.

Consequently, the term ***exceptional children*** allows one to refer collectively to learners with outstanding abilities based on widely recognized and authoritative educational frameworks.

Pedagogy has long been concerned with two key aspects of this issue: the determination of the reliable criteria for identifying gifted children and developing effective strategies and methodologies for supporting their growth. Partial answers to the first aspect can be found in both contemporary literature. It is important to clarify that both concept of giftedness and the criteria for identifying gifted individuals differ significantly from one researcher to another. These variations are interconnected to the evolving values and needs of the society. Without attempting an exhaustive analysis of the numerous definitions of giftedness that exist nowadays the author w focuses on highlighting the overarching meaning of this complex and dynamic phenomenon.

It is widely accepted that gifted individuals possess abilities that surpass their peers and exceed the typical expectations for their age. These advanced capacities allow them to achieve notable success in one or more areas often demonstrating exceptional performance. From author's perspective, Sidney Marland's definition of giftedness and gifted children is a particularly valuable because it emphasizes the diverse aspects of mentioned phenomenon and also the multiple domains in which it can be manifested. Marland states: "*by means of outstanding abilities or the potential for such abilities exceptional children are capable of high performance in areas such as intellectual, creative, academic, leadership, or visual and art and music and who require the personalized approach or educational support not ordinarily provided by the general school*" (Marland, 1972, p. 33).

This definition aligns with theoretical perspectives that supports the idea of the existence of *specific types of giftedness*, also referred to as *multiple intelligence* expressed in various fields, such as music, visual arts, dance, mathematics, languages, etc.. In this context, *Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence* (1983) deserves paying special attention. Gardner distinguishes seven distinct forms of intelligence which may also be regarded as distinct types of giftedness:

1. Linguistic intelligence
2. Logical-mathematical intelligence
3. Spatial intelligence (the ability to manipulate spatial configurations)
4. Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence
5. Musical intelligence
6. Interpersonal intelligence (orientation toward understanding and interacting with others)
7. Intrapersonal intelligence (self-awareness and understanding of one's own inner world)

One of the early U.S. projects that focused on identifying and fostering exceptional potential initiated in the 1950' s highlighted a wide range of giftedness domains including intellectual, scientific, leadership, creative, artistic, linguistic , dramatic, musical, mechanical, and physical abilities. This was among the first attempts to create a multi-domain model of giftedness, establishing what one might call a *first dimension of gradation* within the gifted people: the existence of multiple types of giftedness.

A second important dimension of mentioned gradation, from the researcher's viewpoint concerns the *degrees of giftedness*, often referred to as "*subcategories of giftedness*." Educational psychologist François Gagné (1968, 1988) proposed a hierarchy of giftedness levels, which includes:

- Mild giftedness
- Moderate giftedness
- High giftedness

- Profound (or exceptional) giftedness

The first criterion used by Gagné to distinguish between these subcategories was *IQ score*. Thus, he acknowledged the need for complementary indicators. The researcher supports the general acceptance of such a tiered model, but they also advocate for using additional variables specific traits, capacities, or testable criteria depending on the domain of giftedness being assessed. A detailed and domain-specific evaluation allows to deeply understand the child's unique level of the potential and to support the development of tailored educational strategies.

In order to define a clear framework for research, it is important to distinguish between key terms that often overlap in meaning, such as giftedness, high ability, and talent. The term giftedness generally serves as the foundational concept from which the notion of high giftedness (or exceptional giftedness) evolves. The prefix „supra”, denoting „above” or “beyond” a quantitative distinction, emphasizing a level of ability significantly above the norm (gifted vs. highly gifted).

In psychological terms, high giftedness typically refers to the intellectual domain, and is most often associated with superior intelligence, measured by an IQ significantly above the chronological age level. Romanian psychologist M. Jigău asserts that the term *high giftedness* should be reserved for “*exceptional intellectual capacities that enable high-level performance in any domain*” (Jigău, 2000, p. 55).

In everyday speech however, the term *talent* often interchange *giftedness* which can lead to conceptual confusion. At this point, François Gagné draws an important distinction: he views giftedness as a form of *natural ability or competence* whereas talent is regarded as the *actualized performance* the visible outcome of that competence. Both are considered above average, but they represent different stages in the development of potential.

Within the specialized literature there are experts who limits the use of the term *talent* to *specialized fields* such as music, theatre dance, mathematics, chemistry, etc. However, the current research is based on recent perspectives that support a broader usage of the concept of talent, extending it beyond traditional domains to include any field where high performance can emerge.

The author also supports Gagné's viewpoint that talent should be understood as *high achievement in any field*, which occurs *as a result of giftedness* that is through the development and expression of exceptional ability, competence, or a constellation of outstanding traits and capacities within a domain.

Assumption Validation via Statistical Data Synthesis

As part of the prognostic stage of our research, we conducted a synthetic study examining the number and distribution of children with various types of special educational needs. Relying on the data from two regions in Romania, the analysis

provides an overview of the diagnostic profiles, developmental characteristics, and emerging capacities of these children across different educational levels. This statistical overview serves as a foundation for the thesis of our paper: that children with diverse inclusion needs often display remarkable and specific potential—particularly in artistic, expressive, and practical domains being supported through adjusted and inclusive educational conditions. For ethical reasons, the specific regions and institutions that contributed to the formation of the sample are not going to be indicated in this article.

Inclusive education has significant development in recent years, and statistical data on children with special educational needs (SEN) provide a reliable overview of the diversity of learning and of the responses offered by educational institutions. Information collected from national monitoring systems and educational support services show not only the prevalence of various SEN categories, but also their aptitudes outline making it possible to understand students' developmental potential in a detailed way.

In one numerous educational institution at preschool, primary, lower-secondary, and upper-secondary levels, 69 of the 910 enrolled children (7.6%) are identified as having SEN. Their distribution across levels reveals important characteristics. At the preschool stage where children with SEN represent around 4% of the total number of children, autism spectrum disorders and intellectual delays are most frequently recorded. Despite challenges that refer communication skills and socio-emotional development, many children of preschool age demonstrate notable expressive abilities—particularly in visual arts, practical activities, and play-based motor tasks. Multisensory stimulation as a strategy of tactile, visual, and auditory exploration language development, social interaction, and autonomy becomes essential at this age.

In primary education, the number of pupils with SEN increases to approximately 28%. The most common diagnoses include autism spectrum disorders, Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and to a lesser extent, hearing impairments. Although these diseases influence attention, learning pace, and school adaptation, a significant number of pupils show the remarkable results in mathematics, music, or visual arts. This pattern confirms the value of differentiated instructions which enables children to develop their strongest competencies even in the presence of learning difficulties.

At the lower-secondary level, the complexity of cases increases. Diagnoses range from neurodevelopmental disorders such as Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or mild intellectual disability to congenital malformations and other associated disorders. These can affect mobility, independence, or social integration yet pupils continue to demonstrate diverse abilities - linguistic, artistic, practical or visual. In this developmental stage, teachers and counsellors play a crucial role in maintaining school motivation and adjusting the curriculum. Individualized plans, mentoring and consistent collaboration with families support the creation of coherent educational path.

In upper-secondary and vocational education, the diagnostic profile remains

consistent with autism spectrum disorders, intellectual disability, and congenital conditions among the most common. Students increasingly display well-defined abilities, particularly in mathematics, literature, and personal development, suggesting that long-term educational interventions - adapted teaching strategies, continuous guidance, and emotional support - have cumulative positive effects.

Broadening the perspective to a regional level, available data indicate the presence of over 2,400 children identified with SEN. Approximately 15% are diagnosed with Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, 20% with autism spectrum disorders, and 63% with other types of disabilities including intellectual, motor, and sensory impairments. This distribution reflects the need for curricular adjustment, differentiated instructions, tasks and pedagogical approaches that strengthen autonomy and practical skills. A small group of children receive home-based education for medical reasons and their educational progress depends greatly on individualized teaching and steady contact with educators.

Another regional dataset, reflecting a comparably large number of students reporting nearly 1,500 pupils with SEN integrated into general education and a similar number enrolled in special education settings. Intellectual disabilities represent the largest category of the diagnoses followed by autism spectrum disorders, Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, motor impairments, sensory impairments, and specific learning disorders. Each diagnostic group is associated with particular strengths: pupils with intellectual disabilities often excel in practical and artistic activities; those with visual impairments develop strong auditory memory and verbal skills; pupils with hearing impairments frequently show advanced visual-spatial abilities; students with motor impairments tend to demonstrate strong cognitive potential; and those with autism often present exceptional visual memory, attention to detail, or interest in structured, logical tasks. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is commonly associated creativity, energy, and divergent thinking, while specific learning disorders frequently correlate with artistic or technical talent.

These data reveal that the development of aptitudes among pupils with SEN is shaped by several key factors: adapted teaching strategies, sensory-rich and expressive learning environments, consistent long-term interventions, interdisciplinary collaboration among educators and specialists and a supportive school environment. Inclusive education extends beyond placement; it rests on a genuine appreciation of diversity and on the belief that each pupil combines challenges with unique strengths. Institutions that succeed in cultivating this potential contribute to authentic models of inclusion and educational equity/

Within the stages of thesis formulation, conceptual delimitation, data selection, and the analysis of the results of the research, the findings confirm the stated thesis: children identified with various forms of special educational needs possess significant

developmental potential and exhibit exceptional abilities in diverse domains. Rather than being perceived as a source of difficulty or burden these children should be recognized as the possessors of unique strengths that can enrich both educational system and society as a whole. The consistent manifestation of pronounced aptitudes—particularly in artistic, expressive and practical fields—across diagnostic categories and educational levels further reinforces the idea that inclusive education is not merely remedial, but transformative. It enables the identification, cultivation, and integration of individual potential into meaningful learning trajectories, positioning these children not at the margins, but as valuable contributors to the social and cultural capital of the community.

Conclusions

There is a noticeable change in education from adjusting children to general standards to genuine inclusion, which aims at recognizing the diversity as an educational resource. From this perspective, the notion of the “exceptional child” functions as an umbrella concept, reducing stigmatization and promoting a learner-centred approach grounded in flexible and personalized educational strategies.

Within this integrative framework, several categories of children can be distinguished:

- *Gifted children*, with high IQs and superior cognitive abilities;
- *Children with specific talents* particularly in artistic, athletic, or social domains;
- *Children with special educational needs (SEN)*, who might possess latent or atypically expressed potential;
- *Underachieving children*, who despite low academic results demonstrate notable interests, creativity, or abilities.

All these groups require differentiated educational interventions. Such interventions include precise individual profile, identification and targeted support for potential development, with particular attention to fostering creative and artistic abilities. Exceptional children should be viewed as an extended educational category, encompassing both evident high achievement and hidden or atypically expressed potential.

To fully harness these potentials, an inclusive pedagogical approach is essential. This approach should be based on comprehensive assessment, personalized strategies, and continuous support enabling each child to achieve their highest level of development in multiple domains. In the context of artistic education such practices are crucial for igniting creativity, self-expression and unique talents demonstrating that effective educational interventions can transform potential into observable achievement.

These conclusions emphasize the importance of *terminological clarity and precise practical application* of the theoretical terms showing that a clear understanding of concepts such as “exceptional child,” giftedness and special educational needs is vital for

implementing effective educational strategies especially in domains where creativity and individual expression are central.

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PART IV: DRAMA

The Commedia dell'arte "phenomenon": Costumes, masks, and stock characters. The social status of actors and theatrical guilds

Cosmin-Mihai Iațeșen^a

ABSTRACT: Although the Dark Ages caused numerous controversies in the fields of science and art, the achievements of this period were truly reflected later on in the cultural progress of the Renaissance. The preference for Christian themes seemed to be implied, with morality being promoted in society due to the defensive role imposed by religion. Regardless of the artistic expression used, the shape of the mask is determined by the function for which it was designed. By amplifying the particularities of expression, the proportions of anatomical details, and the construction of typical, exponential characters of society, moralizing states or attitudes are generated, with a significant impact on the development of European theater. Characterized by improvisation, typical characters, elaborate masks and costumes, Commedia Dell'Arte follows a single direction in character development, leaning towards a series of adjacent aesthetic categories, such as comedy, buffoonery, or ridicule, in which the grotesque and immorality play a constant role (Siriteanu, C., G., 2010, p. 132). The characters are based on human types: the miser, the lover, the servant, the charlatan, the frivolous, the corrupt, the impostor, the prankster, or the pervert, giving rise to characters that remain representative to this day. Zanni, Pantalone, Il Dottore, Il Capitano, etc.

In this way, expressive artistic creations and the richest artistic possibilities cultivated through freedom of expression were exploited. Commedia became a phenomenon throughout the ages. The exaggerated, brightly colored costumes complement the masks with distorted features and embody characters based on identifiable ritual factors. They have evolved through interpretation, being essential elements of the Commedia dell'Arte. These elements of scenography reflect social

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traits and status. They contribute to the immediate recognition of characters and amplify the comic aspect of the performances. Among the techniques used to make masks are the technical means and processes of obtaining the shape, which are specific to sculpture - modeling volumes in clay (or plastic), casting the negative and obtaining the positive - through molding or compression. Commedia dell'Arte had a lasting influence on European theater, inspiring playwrights such as Molière and Carlo Goldoni. Its elements were integrated into opera, ballet, and other forms of theater. Its characters and comic style remain relevant today as they appear in numerous modern performances and adaptations, with contemporary echoes in entertainment and street art.

KEY WORDS : Theater, Commedia dell'Arte, Scenography, masks, typologies, characters

Introduction

Although much has been said about the "Dark Ages," I believe that many of the scientific and artistic achievements of that period were truly reflected later on in the cultural progress of the Renaissance, across many artistic fields. Thomas Aquinas asserts that art is an intellectual virtue, one that is practical rather than speculative in nature. (D'Aquino, Toma, *Summa Theologiae, Prima Secundae*, p.57). In a society where the artist had a clearly defined role—namely, to promote the religious principles that consistently shaped the public sphere—the mystical and moral elements guided both the conception and execution of art (Zahar, 1973, p. 58). Both the social and economic contexts, as well as the cultural one, were influenced by significant military and religious upheavals—the Christian Crusades, punctuated by invasions, the formation of new kingdoms, and the rise of empires. In a world where art and architecture were characterized by Christian themes, morality was promoted in society due to the defensive role imposed by religion. The principles of Scholasticism, faith, and reason guided the education provided at the first universities to be established. The increasingly laborious study of nature, the analysis of plant morphology, and the observation of the anatomy and behavior of animals and humans led to the accumulation of vast knowledge regarding the centralization of humanity's information about ourselves and the environment in which we live. Teratomorphic imagery - the fabulous and fantastical bestiary of the Western and Eastern Middle Ages - developed largely due to the significant influence of exotic elements brought by Eastern and Islamic art. „Its exotic and fabulous nature stems from the world of phantoms and the supernatural, of the unknown or the mysterious, which instills fear” (De Solier, R. 1978, p.17). Applying the principle of distortion and the multiplication of form in the process of metamorphosis, medieval visual artists used the mediums of drawing, painting, and sculpture to depict a multitude of composite elements, which they often rendered as hybridizations of natural forms. Metamorphoses of beings from different realms - avian, ichthyomorphic, reptilian, feline, with anthropomorphic or dendromorphic anatomical features - amplify the mystery and the supernatural and

fantastical elements that permeate the unknown universe of the human subconscious or conscious mind. In the field of artistic inspiration regarding form, the figurative - tangible reality has been carefully analyzed through the observations presented by Victor Simion in his comprehensive study, **Image and Legend: Animal Motifs in Romanian Medieval Art**, a rich body of documentation spanning time, serving both scholarship and the visual arts.

Over the course of human history, people have sometimes wanted to change their appearance, to become someone else. At other times, they have wanted to lose their identity, to hide their face, to escape their pursuers for various reasons, depending on the place, circumstances, or situation. Masks and cross-dressing are ways that can facilitate a change in appearance, along with makeup. Makeup and masks represent forms of metamorphosis, of transforming one's physical appearance - and sometimes even one's inner self, one's identity - without this being permanent or painful. The mask essentially represents the translation of the spirit into matter, the externalization of the inner self, and the representation of character through facial features. The pinnacle of diverse forms of expression was reached in puppet theater, thanks to the manifestation of *animism*¹

A particularly important factor in the transformation of one's appearance, this dual-purpose item can boost self-confidence while also serving as a sensory experience, with colors and makeup styles used to evoke specific feelings and qualities in both the observer and the person wearing the makeup. Since the time of those who gave theater its mature form, placing it at the center of human interest—the ancient Greeks—certain masking techniques have been preserved and refined within the context of the Dionysian festivals along two essential lines: the tragic and the comic. The hymns dedicated to Dionysus, the Greek deity who protected vineyards, orchards, and fields, served as the crucible in which the true cult of what would come to be known as ancient theater developed, in the strictest sense of the term, through the presence of the chorus, costumes, and the wearing of masks. The masks specific to ancient Greek theater expressed a hero's pain, suffering, and inner turmoil, or suggested an expression of cheerfulness, joy, and satisfaction, thereby evoking in the audience feelings of tragedy or comedy. As for the evolved forms of the ancient masks from the folk carnival of the Italian Peninsula, the flourishing period of the Renaissance finds its echoes in theater—the Commedia dell'Arte and its adaptations to the visual arts specific to outdoor entertainment (Paiu, C, 2000, p. 24).

These specific metamorphoses of cultural archetypes have two applications, illustrating: on the one hand, the concrete circumstances of the time and aesthetic categories, and on the other hand, popular sentiments, attitudes, and reactions. In this

¹ Animism – a primitive form of religion in which people believed in spirits and the existence of spirits within objects (plants, waters, etc.); the spiritualization and personification of natural forces and phenomena; a philosophical theory according to which the soul is the primordial cause of vital and intellectual activities, which also attributes a soul to inanimate objects.

context, we could undertake a brief comparative analysis, grouping the correlated aspects within a spatiotemporal framework based on the observations structured thus far and referring to them as archetypal *metamorphoses* (Iașeșen, M.-C., p.158). Typical masks from the Venice Carnival or those specific to the Rio Carnival represent the evolution of archetypal metamorphoses into art performed in public spaces, within the context of theatrical processions staged right on the street. The masks used in Bunraku puppet theater (related to Noh theater in Japan) constitute the archetypal metamorphoses that keep the fire of creation alive to this day, fueled by a strictly observed tradition. Compared to the Venetian mask, the traditional Romanian mask still vividly captures - through the artistic rendering of a specific subject - the qualities or flaws that define a particular character. In highbrow theater, Ion Luca Caragiale's characters can be easily caricatured with the help of masks - as seen in the play *D'ale Carnavalului*. The similarity between novel technical and artistic means of expression and common forms of expression is instructive for the evolution of masks in theater.

Argument

The improvised performance - Commedia dell'Arte, as a theatrical, political, and social form - evolved as a result of the rise of the bourgeoisie and the divisions between social classes, sparking a true revolution in theater. By portraying characters from different social backgrounds - merchants, peasants, and the bourgeoisie - against the backdrop of new relationships that had emerged between classes and social strata, Commedia dell'Arte fostered among the masses the development of certain attitudes and sentiments (ideas and messages conveyed to the audience), sometimes suppressed by the church, among which the following can be identified: a love of national freedom, individuality, and patriotism amplified by certain fears regarding the Spanish conquerors. Among the most enjoyable theatrical productions are those inspired by rustic farces. One of the earliest records of improvised performances featuring masked or cross-dressing actors dates back to 1565. Over time, the text of the commedia dell'arte underwent many interpretations, often resorting to vulgarity, scheming, and intrigue, with comic or tragic situations being borrowed from or inspired by highbrow comedy. „The action was realistic, rooted in urban life, featuring heartfelt love stories set against a complex backdrop of the era's customs and social types” (Berlogea, I. 1981, p.188). Commedia dell'Arte emerged as a counter-movement against the vulgarization of the concept of theater.

Chronology – Periodization

The history of the Venice Carnival dates back to 1162, and the first historical document attesting to the use of masks dates as far back as 1268. The mask was, in fact, an accessory that offered privacy, protection, and the opportunity to shed all inhibitions,

regardless of social status, through cross-dressing. The defining feature of this theatrical genre is the freedom of creative expression, which led to the rediscovery and revival of comic forms of expression through the performance of Attilian farces. Benedetto Croce, in his study **On the Commedia dell'Arte**, emphasizes the schematic nature of the genre, its buffoonish impulse, and the erotic attraction between the male and female actors. Each character has their own identity, and the novelty and unpredictability are the main strengths of this type of script. Built around a single concept—that of the "masked character"—it is always structured around the fact that the actors perform in masks. In the psychological composition of the script and the staging of the text, both from a directorial and a set design perspective, a single direction is always pursued in the character's development, one inclined toward a series of adjacent aesthetic categories, such as the comic, the buffoonish, or the ridiculous, in which the grotesque and immorality play a constant role.

Commedia dell'Arte is a form of theater that emerged in Italy in the 16th century. It is based on improvisation, with Commedia dell'Arte actors drawing inspiration from the gossip of the towns they visited. We know of the existence of a so-called script called a *canovaccio*, but it was nothing more than a broad outline of the narrative thread. The performances were comedic in nature, full of life and movement. The characters were based on human archetypes: *the miser, the lover, the servant*, etc., so *Commedia dell'Arte* gave rise to characters that remain iconic to this day. *Zanni, Pantalone, and Il Dottore* are just a few of the archetypal characters born from this form of theater. In addition to the well-defined character traits for each character, they also wore a specific mask.

Therefore, in the *Commedia dell'Arte*, stock characters were created whose names, actions, and appearances lend a well-defined identity to a specific behavioral category. The character traits I will mention below convincingly determine the physical appearance of each character's portrait in the visual representation of the masks, for each type individually.

Costumes, masks, traditional characters

The characters in the Commedia dell'arte were comic archetypes, each with a well-defined role and specific traits. We follow the tradition of relying on established authors and will define the character of each figure in the Commedia dell'Arte based on documented historical records. Among them were the comic masks, symbolizing: **Arlecchino** (the jester - a good-for-nothing, naive, cheerful); **Pulcinella** - lazy, a rogue, a glutton; **Pantalone** (the miser); **Signor Dottore** (the doctor), **Il Capitano** (the captain - arrogant, brutal); **Brighella** - scheming, clever, cunning, mischievous; **Colombina Franceschina**, and **Carlina** (from the group of maids), **Lelio** and **Florinda**, **Flavio** and **Rosaura** (the couples in love). Except for the lovers, all the other characters wear masks designed to give a realistic portrayal of the archetypes they embody. Although facial

expressions are impossible to convey, the exaggerated, caricatured features of a particular character type can demonstrate the intent of social satire.

Some of the characteristics we will examine in this type of visual art include: an emphasis on the realistic depiction of the archetype to illustrate the concrete circumstances of the time; the caricatured exaggeration of a character's traits (the spectacular aspect); the emphasis on social satire, with the aim of conveying popular sentiments and attitudes toward these types.

I considered that the observations and visual descriptions of the character should be structured on three levels: the first of these is internal, pertaining to the psychological and temperamental aspects of the character type; the second is an intermediate level, serving as an intermediary between the performer and the character on one hand and the audience on the other—the corresponding mask, with the features and particularities of the visual expression chosen according to the character in question (derived from the first level of analysis)—and the third, external level, which can connect with space and time by harmonizing the specific setting, represented by the costume with its elements and accessories. All three levels of analysis can contribute to an adequate clarification of the distinctive stylistics of this artistic genre in the medieval context.

Arlecchino – from Bergamo, in northern Italy, is a complex, elusive character with a wide range of traits, making him difficult to define in a simple characterization. At first, he seems greedy and very naive or incompetent, but he is always up to mischief and will later surprise us with one of the virtues of the spirit: wit. Although he appears lazy, if we look at his actions, we will find that Arlecchino is actually quick-witted and very energetic, cheerful, agile, or nimble, more of a live wire, and eternally in love. **Arlecchino** was actually a cunning and agile servant, always on the lookout for a prank or a way to satisfy his hunger. Arlecchino is one of the most popular characters in the *Commedia dell'Arte*. He plays the role of the faithful servant, but also that of the clown. His mere presence on stage would trigger laughter. At first glance, he may seem simple-minded, interested only in food, but he hides a sharp intelligence. He is very unpredictable, managing to find the most diverse solutions to his own problems or those of his master. His costume is very colorful and full of patches. His mask has a flat nose and features the contours of a devil or a cat. (Ducharte, 1966, p.123).

Arlecchino wore a black mask with a small nose and pronounced wrinkles, expressing cunning and a playful spirit. Arlecchino's mask features the following facial characteristics: arched eyebrows that convey cheerfulness, extending from a narrow forehead with arched brows, small round eyes, a round face, a short, bulbous nose with prominent nostrils. The anatomical features described and combined confirm an expression of joy. **Arlecchino (Harlequin)**: He wore a suit covered in colorful patches, symbolizing his cunning and energetic nature. „The transition from the mask of Zanni to that of Arlecchino can be regarded as a defining moment in the history of the *Commedia*

dell'Arte, as well as in terms of the genre's aesthetic evolution". (Pandolfi, 1971, p.32).

The costume for the character Arlecchino is made of diamond-shaped pieces of fabric in various colors: green, yellow, red, and brown. The pieces that make up his outfit consist of a long, narrow jacket adorned with lace and long, tight pants, cinched with a slightly wider black belt that is allowed to slide down over the hips, first a beret and then a felt hat with a narrow brim.

Pantalone - the old, miserly merchant, who is often tricked by his servants and young lovers. A well-known character, Pantalone is the wealthy old merchant. In some situations, he may be portrayed as poor, but his greed is never absent. The character's original name was Magnifico. It is the name Pantalone that has become famous. However, the exact origin of the name is unknown. Some speculate that it comes from the Venetian saint San Pantalone, while others believe it derives from the term piantaleoni, a name given to merchants who set up stalls in other regions to strengthen Venice's power through trade. His mask emphasizes his nose, which is hooked, and his eyebrows.

II Pantalone – known as Pantalone Di Bisognosi, he represents the Venetian character: an old, miserly merchant, eager for romantic adventures, full of himself, who easily provokes the audience's laughter because he becomes comical in that, despite his advanced age, he falls in love with teenage girls. This is one of the reasons why he is ridiculed and deceived.

Pantalone: His origins are linked to the tradition of elderly characters in comedy. "Pantalone is a Venetian merchant, descended from Euclion in Plautus' **Aulularia**. His name is said to be linked to a real-life character, borrowed for the comedy from Giulio Pasquati of the Gelosi troupe, who was actually named Pantalone, with the addition of De'Bisognosi (Of the Needy) later on." (Mărculescu, O., 1984, p. 18). Eternally in love, he becomes a romantic rival to his son and gets entangled in the schemes woven by the clever and cunning servants, thereby revealing moral elements of the time. He wore a mask with sharp features and a long nose, reflecting his stinginess and old age. Regarding Pantalone's mask, J. Rudlin informs us that it had the following distinctive features: a wrinkled face with an aquiline nose, deep-set eyes, bushy eyebrows, and sometimes a mustache or a pointed beard (beak), all of which gave him a very dynamic profile. He sometimes wears glasses, occasionally round ones, and a sparse mustache. His costume consisted of: „long, tight trousers or red riding breeches, with long red stockings and a short, tight jacket, a long, loose, black cloak with simple straight sleeves, red woolen caps, and yellow Turkish slippers. Pantalone was dressed in red and black, with loose trousers and a waistcoat, suggesting his status as a wealthy and miserly merchant"(Ducharte, 1966, p.185).

Dottore – a master of words, as his name suggests—a doctor of law or medicine, a comically pedantic man and a glutton. A native of Bologna, a city long satirized in his day due to the notorious arrogance typical of its inhabitants, he proves to be a pedantic,

sententious, and bitter man. The conservatism of his character leads to a hostile attitude toward young people's love and their desire to marry. The Doctor is a comic character, a native of scholarly Bologna; he is a doctor in name only. In addition to being a physician, he could have been a notary or a lawyer. He is depicted in a black suit and a beret or a doctor's hat. His mask covers only half his face and highlights his bulbous nose. Il Dottore wore a mask with a broad forehead and a round nose, suggesting his academic pretensions and superficiality.

Dottore's mask, unlike those of Pantalone or Il Capitano, covers only the nose and forehead. Its distinctive features include a bulbous nose and a rounded forehead, with arched eyebrows that convey an expression of astonishment. The actors' cheekbones are not covered by the mask, but are painted red, symbolizing the doctor's passion for drink. Il Dottore was the type of pompous and ignorant scholar who flaunts his knowledge without truly understanding the situations.

Dottore's costume consists of a black cape that falls below his ankles. He wears a black cap on his head and black shoes on his feet. His imposing stature, cold and haughty gaze, glasses always perched on his nose, and a book under his arm make this character a true megalomaniac. Il Dottore (The Doctor) wears a long, black robe, a symbol of his erudition and intellectual arrogance. (Ducharte, 1966, p. 196).

Il Capitano - who had a string of grandiose, mocking names: Matamoros or Spavento, Firibiribombo, great-grandson of the "glorious Latin" - is portrayed by J. Rudlin as an arrogant, ridiculous, pretentious, and cowardly character. There is hardly a moment when he does not mention that he has won a battle or conquered a woman, and he is bold in words (a braggart or a boastful man) but cowardly in deeds, shying away from any insignificant battle. This character is in fact „*a caricature of the false Spanish-born hero, whose airs of triumph and irresistible conquest were hard for the Italians of the time to bear*” (Zamfirescu, 1958, p. 245).

The mask of the character Capitano featured exaggerated features, with a long, hooked nose, symbolizing his bravado and cowardice. The first masks depicting Il Capitano were skin-colored and had a large, menacing nose. He was also depicted with a hideous, bristly mustache. Capitano was the boastful and cowardly soldier who brags about his heroic deeds but runs away at the first sign of danger.

The warrior's characteristic toughness was emphasized through his facial features, with furrowed brows and flared nostrils. The mask was further complemented by a military-style helmet and a hat adorned with 1–3 peacock feathers. Regarding the captain's costume, it is noted that he wore a colorful cloak or a large velvet coat, blue or green with yellow stripes. He wore massive boots and a military coat with a heroic flair. (Ducharte, 1966, p. 225).

Brighella – a fellow townsman of Arlecchino, a character whose name derives from the Italian “briga” = quarrel, he was cunning and scheming, a crafty and opportunistic

servant, malicious and villainous, a thief and an insolent man, a drunkard and a murderer, "a crafty servant, a skilled schemer, or a faithful servant who always watches over his master's interests" (Mărculescu, O., 1984, p.15). His loyalty, whether he was the servant of a respectable nobleman or an executioner, was easily bought, but his tendency toward sentimentality makes him the trusted advisor of lovers. Appearing later than that of Arlecchino (the foolish servant, a nuisance, and a troublemaker), the typical mask of Brighella (the cunning and resourceful servant), the "second Zanni," resembles those of the servants, distinguished by his quick wit and cleverness in absurd situations. His name derives from "briga" (confusion), just as that of Truffaldino, for example, comes from "truffa" (deception)[2]. (Pandolfi, V., pp. 35–36).

Brighella's costume resembles that of a butler, a parody of it. Zanni's peasant blouse transforms into a white livery that reaches mid-thigh, cinched at the waist with a wide leather belt. "Horizontal green stripes adorn the chest and sleeves of the garment, making it resemble a butler's uniform through the vivid contrast of the hues and ornamentation." (Pandolfi, V., p. 36). The bell-shaped cut of the green-and-white trousers hinders movement due to the stiffness at the bottom. The costume generally consisted of "a white tunic, a black sash, wide white or brown trousers, and was later modified to follow the fashion of court liveries; he wears a beret, a white coat and trousers, a cape, all trimmed with green braid, a black belt and mask, and a beard. He speaks in a somewhat more refined manner than Arlecchino and is very skilled in the use of musical instruments" (Mărculescu, O., p.15).

The Pulcinella mask originated in southern Italy, in the Campania region. The character's physical appearance is often likened to that of a rooster. It is believed that the name was given because of his bird-like nose and derives either from the Latin pullus gallinaceus or from an abbreviation of the word pullicino, meaning young chick. Because of his nose, squeaky voice, and clown-like behavior, he is considered a charlatan, a lazybones, a magician, or an acrobat.

Pulcinella was the kind of person in society who was always cowardly, indiscreet, and impertinent - a fool, a glutton, a thief, skilled in the art of currying favor with the powerful and making himself indispensable. By definition lazy and gullible, this character captivates the audience with his unexpected mood swings: ready to curse and rant for no reason, yet at the same time capable of passionate love, of causing trouble, and of acts of generosity. His ideal in life was to do nothing, yet he was willing to do anything to satisfy his eternal hunger: to lie, to steal, and even to be beaten. His moral is simple: to live life philosophizing and, if necessary, to sing from time to time. (Pandolfi, 1971, p.37). Pulcinella embodies the Neapolitan plebeians, the simplest man who occupies the bottom place on the social scale, the man who, although aware of his problems, always manages to come out of them with a smile. In addition to being a faithful servant, he adapts to all trades: baker, innkeeper, farmer, thief, seller of miraculous concoctions.

Supporting characters

Couples of lovers - There is no mention of a specific costume, but the clothing items can be chosen according to the fashion of the time.

The lovers are young, beautiful characters, without masks, who experience love stories filled with obstacles and misunderstandings. There are productions that also make use of masks for these characters. Jewelry will not be missing from the wardrobes of these unmasked female characters, who are always in love. The contrasting makeup, rendered in vivid colors and spread across the entire surface of the portrait, makes the makeup resemble a mask. (Pandolfi, 1971, p.48-49).

Isabela – beautiful, attractive, cultured, well-educated, always fashionable, independent, and determined. She occasionally wears a mask that covers only her eyes. Her costume is made of fine silk with embroidery. This young woman's makeup is very striking, highlighting her femininity.

Colombina - meaning "little dove" is the most typical of the female characters: „a clever and cunning soubrette who appears innocent but is actually mischievous, deeply devoted to her mistress yet betrays her out of a love of gossip. She is a sort of female version of Arlecchino, usually his wife. This female character is strong and alluring, petite and charming, exuding an otherworldly air". (Mărculescu, O. 1984, p.17). Colombina is the character who represents the clever and seductive maid, capable of manipulating everyone around her. The mask is worn occasionally, in the form of spectacles (a Venetian mask), which frame her eyes with a distinctive elegance, further enhanced by her elaborate hairstyle. Colombina's costume consists of an apron covering her dress, a simple bonnet, and a knee-length shirt made of fabric scraps in various colors. As a pair, Colombina's costume must match that of Arlecchino, since she is also known as Arlecchina. Appearing independently from the other characters, Colombina is dressed in black and white or in the French style of a maid.

In her festive attire, "Colombina wears a red costume with blue stripes, sleeves trimmed with white, a white apron, white stockings, and black shoes, as well as a white cap, to which she playfully attaches a red bow. In the 17th century, Colombina was played by Domenico Biancolelli's daughter, Caterina." (Mărculescu, O., 1984, p. 17).

A more nuanced description portrays Colombina as the gossipy, scheming maid, but always for a good cause. The character she embodies is that of an intelligent woman who knows she lives in a man's world, governed by laws made by and for men, yet one she controls through her cunning. Her role was not very well defined, occupying a marginal place in the plot, but her malice and her habit of mocking the sighs of those who fell in love with her were indispensable elements for ensuring the success of the performance.

Zanni or Zani, Zuan, Zuane, Zuani - *the dialectical transformation in Northern Italy*

of *Giovanni, Joane, or Giani* (Pandolfi, 1971, p.25). - a grotesque character with a long, pointed, upturned nose, with only a portion of his jaw, wide-eyed, with a heavy gait, slow-witted yet tactful, feeling fallen and abandoned. He is probably not the first character that comes to mind, as his character can be likened to that of Arlecchino, Brighella, or Pulcinella. His name is the diminutive of *Giovanni*. Usually, Zanni is the jester or clown.

Zanni is hunched over, almost grotesque, with a strangely shaped skull—volumetrically speaking, the result of a metamorphosis between bird and man.

Based on my own experiences with the artistic rendering of Commedia dell'Arte masks 'Arte masks, I can affirm that, starting from the standard forms derived from the Renaissance lead mold, contemporary artists will always have multiple options for interpreting human typologies, and the technical possibilities seem inexhaustible thanks to the enormous technological progress offered by the properties of materials, which will also provide a degree of comfort for the actors.

Some of the techniques used to create masks involve methods and processes specific to sculpture - such as modeling volumes in clay (or plastic), casting the negative, and creating the positive - either through molding or compression. Suction or vacuuming using more or less improvised systems increases volume and work speed, but thereby reduces the diversity of the models produced by limiting them to mass production. Coloring is still achieved today using water-based mineral oxides. From a technical standpoint, the renewal of traditional processes has represented an evolution toward refinement and spectacle, in line with the expressiveness provided by materials such as: silicone, epoxy resins, the wide range of cellulose or eco-friendly nitrocellulose lacquers, and paints made from oxides derived from a wide variety of raw materials (natural or artificial). Leather, honey, and cardboard offer skin protection for those who wear them. Strong colors are used, or certain facial features are highlighted or softened. The most commonly used colors are: red, gold, black, white, ochre, and yellow.

Independent of the artistic medium used, in nearly all representations across various civilizations, the form of the mask is determined by the function for which it was intended. Masks themselves represent archetypes within the realm where masking is part of ancient practices. Contemporary animation theater draws upon the mask in the diversity of its forms of expression. By amplifying expressive features, the proportions of certain anatomical details, and the construction of typical, representative characters of society, moralizing states or attitudes are generated.

The Social Status of Actors and Theater Guilds

During the Commedia dell'arte period, actors had an ambiguous social status. Although they were popular and appreciated by the public, they were often viewed with suspicion and contempt by religious and political authorities. Many actors came from modest backgrounds and depended on the patronage of noble patrons or princes to

carry out their work.

Theatrical Guilds

To safeguard their rights and protect their interests, Commedia dell'arte actors organized themselves into theatrical guilds. These functioned as professional guilds, providing financial and legal support to their members. Among the best-known troupes were: Gelosi, Uniti Confidenti, Desiosi, Pedrolino's company, Vittoria's company (Piissimi), Vicenza Armani's company, Alberto Naselli's company (Zan Ganassa), and Diana's company (Ponti), (Pandolfi, V. 1971, p.50), most of them ceased operations relatively quickly, with the author Vito Pandolfi referring to them as temporary ensembles.

The Gelosi troupe was one of the most famous troupes, founded in 1569, which played a major role in popularizing the Commedia dell'arte in Europe; it was active for the longest period of time, nearly half a century.

The Confidenti troupe was another famous troupe, renowned for its sophisticated performances and international tours.

These troupes were often itinerant, traveling from city to city and from court to court, performing in public squares, at noble courts, and in makeshift theaters.

We find influences on dramatic creation in the works of William Shakespeare (A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Merchant of Venice), Molière (The Impostures of Scapin), Carlo Goldoni (Servant of Two Masters), Pierre Beaumarchais (The Marriage of Figaro), Carlo Gozzi (The Love of the Three Oranges, Turandot), etc. At the same time, in cinema, Charlie Chaplin, who drew inspiration from the art of commedia dell'arte, borrowed the cane.

Conclusions

The Legacy of the Commedia dell'arte as International Cultural Heritage Commedia dell'arte had a lasting influence on European theater, inspiring playwrights such as Molière and Carlo Goldoni. Very soon, public taste came to prevail, and Commedia dell'arte ended up adapting to it, albeit gradually. It moved from the streets to the courts, where it reached its full development, despite and in defiance of the prevailing trend at those courts, which sought to preserve the plebeian character of the Masks. Its elements were integrated into opera, ballet, and other forms of entertainment, and its characters and comic style remain relevant today, appearing in numerous modern performances and adaptations.

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Masks created at the Set Design Workshop of the "George Enescu" National University of Art– Faculty of Theater, by Lecturer Cosmin-Mihai IATEȘEN, Ph.D., in collaboration with students and Associate Professor Costache Gavril Sireteanu, Ph.D. as described in **Anthology - Commedia dell'Arte**



Arlecchino - 2 versions



Pantalone



The Doctor



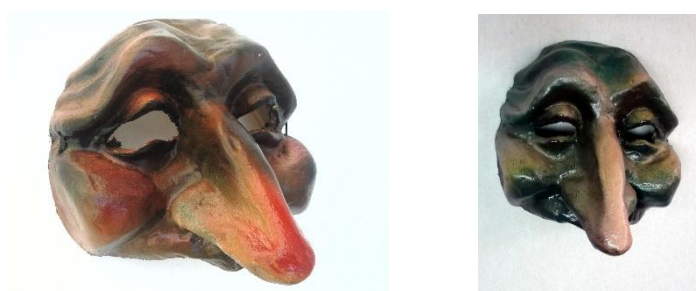
Capitano - Version II – a reinterpretation



Capitano - variant I



Brighella – scenes from the documentary



Pucinella - a reinterpretation



Îndrăgostita



Întrăgostitul



Colombina – Version 1



Colombina – Version 2



Zanni



Zanni – scenes from the documentary



Pulcinella – scenes from the documentary



Arlecchino – scenes from the documentary



Pantalone – scenes from the documentary



Il Dottore – scenes from the documentary



Il Dottore (The Doctor) – scenes from the documentary



COMPANIA DEI GELOSI (Silvio D'Amico, *STORIA DEL TEATRO DRAMMATICO*, vol. II, 1958, fig. nr. 43).

Compania Dei Gelosi_Silvio D'Amico, History of Dramatic Theater, Vol. 2, 1958



The Effect of Globalization on Theatre

Chris Simion-Mercurian^a

ABSTRACT : The article examines the impact of globalization on theatre, highlighting the distinction between globalization, understood as a process of cultural and economic interconnectedness, and globalism, viewed as an ideology that promotes global uniformity. In the field of theatre, globalization has supported the circulation of ideas and artistic mobility, but it has also generated a certain standardization, increasing the appetite for easy entertainment and contributing to the erosion of local identities. Audiences have become less willing to engage with complex performances, preferring shorter and lighter productions, which has influenced the artistic directions of theatres, including those in Romania. Romanian independent theatre has faced—and continues to face—major challenges: lack of financial stability, unpredictable audiences, and the inability to sustain large-scale projects. Globalization has shaped a fluctuating cultural market in which some independent artists can follow their vision without compromise, while others are pushed toward commercial art in order to survive. Despite these effects of globalization, theatre remains a space of resistance, community, and reflection, especially in times of crisis, and examples such as Ariane Mnouchkine show that true artistic meaning can emerge only from a profound purpose.

KEYWORDS : globalism; globalization; independent theatre; entertainment; resistance;

Introduction

Discussion on the current human society must center on globalism and globalisation. Before analysing the impact of globalisation on theatre, is necessary to make a clear distinction between the terms globalisation and globalism, often used confusingly in

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specialty literature. "Globalisation is a political, technological, and cultural phenomenon, as it is an economical one. It can be defined as the intensification of social relations on a global level, which connects remote locations in a way that local events are shaped by distant phenomena and vice versa." (Giddens, 2000, p. 64) Thus, it represents a dynamic process of integration and interconnection across the economic, social, political, and cultural spheres on a global scale. It is characterized by the increasing flow of goods, services, information, technologies, and ideas, as well as by the strengthening of interdependent relationships among states, institutions, and communities. On the other hand, globalism designates an ideology that promotes globalisation as normative model, supporting global interconnectedness as the ideal solution for progress and development. (Steger, 2002, p. 16)

If globalisation describes "what is happening" in the world, globalism expresses "how" the world "should be", harnessing supranational governance, economic integration and the dissemination of values considered universal. This distinction is essential for the analysis of theatre evolution, and, in consequence, of Romanian independent theatre. On one hand, globalisation created the premises of the free circulation of ideas, dramatic texts and artists, facilitating access to diverse aesthetic models and to a wide open cultural market. On the other hand, globalism generated normative pressure, often imposing cultural and artistic standards alligned to the dominant tendencies of Western centres. In this context, Romanian theatre, whether independent or subsidized, was constantly torn between the opportunities offered by international connection and the risk of uniformization, between creative freedom and the constraints imposed by global market logic.

Discussion

Cultural globalisation affects theatre through the rationale imposed at the level of meetings between products, artists and concepts. Examples of this are edifying, if we refer only to the influence of international festivals, transnational funding or digital platforms. Globalisation has impacted theatre, causing profound, yet not exactly beneficial, transformations, in Romania, and in extenso, on a global level. Considering the contemporary social existence and the world of European theatre, the European values crisis, we can recognise the context that fostered it. On one hand, globalisation has favored access to universal, at the expense of national character, local and regional identity. Consumerism, as an effect of globalisation, proliferated a type of theatre without substance, an entertainment-theatre. Therefore, the subjection of the entire cultural world to the laws of globalization gives rise, through the templateization and accessibility, to superficial consumption needs, a kind of favoring of anti-culture.

Globalisation has generated the abandonment of cultural ideals and perspectives based on ideologies. The general public is content with mediocre entertainment, wrapped in the coat of an elitist product. Globalisation has also created the framework of wide changes in the perception and expectations of the public, has decisively contributed to a certain lack of rigor of the spectators and to the replacement of the artistic goal with a commercial one. The depletion of the critical spirit has also meant a decrease in quality. Spectators have „soaked” and no longer have the willingness to attend longer shows with serious themes. At the meeting I had at Théâtre Rive Gauche in Paris¹, Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt² told me that, in his opinion, France was the first to respond to this globalisation. At the ticket office, the spectators asked if the show made one laugh or cry. “If it is a theatre of ideas, it is of no interest to us.” At shows that lasted longer than two hours, tickets were the hardest to sell. This determined him, as director and manager, to create shows depending on the audience’s needs, otherwise he couldn’t manage to attract spectators and to collect revenue for the payment of expenses.

Returning to the Romanian private theatre, we can affirm with conviction that here too the public is an unknown, a trap for any private theatre, and attracting spectators and selling tickets is one of the greatest challenges. It takes years of constant cultural practice so that, at the moment you decide, for example, a change of artistic direction, you’re able to maintain an audience and make it loyal in this new form. For this, For this you do not always have time or sustainability and financing methods available.

On another note, there are examples of independent theatre companies with constant state support, as I previously mentioned the case of Schaubühne and Thomas Ostermeier:

“I do not know how Schaubühne would have succeeded completely independent from the state, I do not think it would have lasted.” (Ostermeier, 2020) In his

¹ Théâtre Rive Gauche (The Theatre on the left Bank) opened in 1994 in a former cabaret club converted for a while in a cinema. In 2010, 50 private theatre in Paris, among which also Théâtre Rive Gauche, formed Association pour le Soutien du Théâtre Privé (ASTP) and Syndicat National des Directeurs et Tourneurs du Théâtre Privé (SNDTP) and decided to launch a new group: Theatres Parisiens Associés. In January 2012, Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt became director of Théâtre Rive Gauche, in association with producer and comedy actor Bruno Metzger, and in 2013 they were joined by actor and director Steve Suissa; <https://lagaiterivegauche.com/le-theatre/>; date of access: 20.03.2025

² Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt is a Franco-belgian actor, theatre director, playwright, prose writer and film director, the director of Théâtre Rive Gauche in Paris. His plays have been represented in over 50 countries allover the world. In Romania his books are translated by Humanitas publishing house, and in 2023 the author also became a founder of „Grivița 53” theatre in Bucharest.

reflections on the creative process, Thomas Ostermeier argues that a theatrical production should not be shaped by budgetary constraints but by the demands of the artistic vision. He maintains that financial compromises inevitably risk diminishing the expressive potential of a performance and emphasizes that funding should serve to support the artistic concept rather than determine it. For this reason, Ostermeier values the framework provided by publicly funded theatre, where the possibility of securing resources according to the needs of a production allows for a degree of artistic freedom that, in his view, cannot be achieved within the private theatre sector.

Theatre cannot miraculously change the world, it cannot modify politics or ideologies of any kind. Whether it is state or private, theatre will generate changes in the minds of those who frequent it over time. Theatre means, first of all, observation, point of view, clear manifesto, live emotion. Globalisation does not take into account what people experience today individually, the way they are, what they want and the prospects of living in a unifying society. In this sense, theatre even succeeds to even oppose globalism and globalisation through specific instruments.

In his reflections on the social function of theatre, Thomas Ostermeier adopts a lucid and deliberately non-idealized position, challenging the belief that theatrical art is, in itself, capable of bringing about major political or social transformations. He argues that although theatrical performances can stimulate debate, encourage critical reflection, and contribute to the development of civic awareness, they cannot substitute for direct political action, nor can they serve as the driving force behind decisive historical change. From this perspective, Ostermeier calls for a more realistic reassessment of the artist's role in contemporary society, maintaining that theatre today occupies a relatively marginal position in relation to the mechanisms that effectively shape political and social reality. He further contends that genuine civic engagement requires direct participation and concrete action, a conviction rooted in his own biography, which includes involvement in the anti-fascist movement and radical left-wing activism during his youth. In his view, theatre can accompany, interpret, and critically comment on reality, but it cannot replace effective political intervention. Consequently, he argues that theatre practitioners should adopt a more modest understanding of the social impact of their artistic work. (Ostermeier, 2020)

In the context of accelerated globalisation, independent theatre has the opportunity to be an art theatre, a theatre of attitude, one that creates uncomfortable experiences, like a voice that screams, like a manifesto. Independent theatre can sow in the public consciousness a spirit of responsibility, it can have an educational role, not just a cultural one. Unfortunately, the spaces of independent theatre- living rooms, basements, attics and so on- are, rather, locations that conceal outlets, not ones that express artistic beliefs. The majority of the productions created in these spaces do not replace art theatre, attitude theatre and weren't necessarily born out

of an artistic obsession, a burning desire, out of an ideologic necessity. I do not know any exclusively independent artist that conducts all kinds of experiments and receives moral and financial validation. Independent artists, at least in Romania, end up practicing their art with desperation and threatened by the prospect of default, maybe even tomorrow. The majority just try to exist somehow. Globalisation brought them too few advantages and a lot of disadvantages.

In a free, capitalist market, where competition makes the law, where the inflation of artists is one of the results that redefine art as an industry, where the spectators' discernment does not necessarily coincide with artistic rigour, there are and were creators whose beliefs were above trends. Being good means nothing. You also need to have courage. Even if the courage to follow your own path, when you are on your own, can mean suicide.

Are all these effects of globalisation? We think so. On one hand, the emptying of the essence and soul of the theatre, the solidarity-free theatre, built on fast forward, based on recipes for success, aligns this art to the idea of shopping, of consumerism. The theatrical world has become a market in which only how much you sell matters, and not what traces you leave in the audience. Franchising, serial production, replaying the same performances by a director in different theatres, so the so called recipes, put theatrical art on the industry's conveyor. Imitation and plagiarism are popular, at the expense of the original creation. The path of an artist who has the courage to make his own independent company is totally different from that of a director who walks from theatre to theatre, mounts with different actors and welds temporary teams. Your own troupe turns an „accident“ into an authentic endeavor. Ariane Mnouchkine turned her theatre in the space she lived in, ate together with her team- this endeavour created a symbiosis between creators, they met not only on the stage, but also in daily life, they lived together, discovered each other, and from this energy the artistic product was born. “Theatre is not a shop, nor an office, or factory. It is a workshop of encounters, of sharing. A temple of meditation, of knowledge and sensibility. A house where we must feel well, with fresh water if you are thirsty, and something to eat if you are hungry. Meyerhold said that a theatre must be a true ‘palace of wonders’.” (Mnouchkine, 2023)

In her reflections on the relationship between theatre and the spectator, Ariane Mnouchkine shifts the focus from the exclusively artistic dimension of performance to the human experience of the encounter between the stage and the audience. She argues that attending a theatrical performance requires both effort and commitment on the part of the spectator, who should therefore be welcomed with respect, gratitude, and genuine care. From this perspective, theatre does not begin when the curtain rises but from the moment the audience enters the theatrical space, where every detail of the reception becomes an integral part of the aesthetic

experience. Her criticism of impersonal and institutionalized theatre architecture reflects a broader rejection of the notion of theatre as merely a venue for cultural consumption, stripped of warmth and human connection. For Mnouchkine, a performance should foster, from the very outset, the feeling of a temporary community in which the spectator is not an anonymous recipient but an essential participant in the artistic event. At the same time, she continually reminds her actors that, for some members of the audience, a given performance may represent their very first encounter with theatre, while for others it may be their last. Such awareness transforms every performance into an act of both artistic and ethical responsibility, compelling theatre practitioners to approach each presentation with the same intensity and seriousness, regardless of how many times the production has already been performed.

Beyond the practical aspects of theatrical production, Mnouchkine's reflections articulate a profoundly humanistic conception of theatre. She shifts the centre of gravity from the artistic product itself to the relationships established among people. In her view, theatre is not defined solely by the quality of performance or the complexity of its scenic language, but also by its ability to create a space of hospitality, dialogue, and shared experience. The spectator is no longer perceived as a passive consumer of culture but as an indispensable partner in the theatrical event, deserving the same degree of attention and care devoted to the creative process itself. From this perspective, every performance becomes unique not only because of what unfolds on stage, but also because of the singularity of those who experience it.

Within the context of contemporary society, marked by the acceleration of cultural consumption and the predominance of technologically mediated interactions, perspectives such as Mnouchkine's acquire renewed significance. They reaffirm the value of theatrical experience as a direct, unrepeatable, and profoundly human encounter, resisting the tendency to reduce culture to a standardized product designed for rapid consumption. In this sense, the attention devoted to the spectator transcends the logic of audience development or retention strategies and becomes an expression of an ethics of hospitality and artistic responsibility, through which theatre once again reasserts its distinctive role in a world increasingly dominated by digital communication and the technological reproduction of cultural experiences.

Conclusions

In light of the famous theatre director and animator Ariane Mnouchkine's statements, it can be affirmed that arts and culture experience the dynamic of major global changes in a special way, while theatre, as an art of presence and of direct relationship with the audience, reflects the transformations generated by globalization.

Independent art needs a purpose. Artists who managed to define this purpose open wide the perspective of fulfillment for each of the actors of the independent phenomenon. A purpose or lack thereof can be observed if we look at a successful model. How many independent theatre performances answer Ariane Mnouchkine's question "Where there is very little air left to breathe, is theatre very important?" For independent theatre to add value to the context in which it manifests, it must act as an instrument of evolution. And, as Tairov, Brecht, Grotowski, Mnouchkine, Boal, and many others have shown over the years, theatre's essential role is best observed in crisis situations. In those moments, theatre becomes more than an aesthetic act: it is a form of symbolic survival, an instrument of resistance and a space of community.

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