A Universal Language: Social Education in Orff Schulwerk, the Kodály Concept, and El Sistema

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Abstract

Orff Schulwerk, the Kodály concept, and El Sistema are three of the most popular approaches to music education used in Western classrooms today. This thesis argues that the philosophies and practical recommendations of these three approaches facilitate social education in addition to musical learning. Building upon the writings of both philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau and evolutionary archeologist Steven Mithen, I explore the inherent social qualities that music-making possesses as a result of its proposed common origin with spoken language. Next, I introduce each approach on its own, highlighting the ways in which they center social interaction and attempt to connect with a greater community or culture. After reviewing the approaches individually, I compare and contrast their respective engagements with active participation, repertoire, instrumentation, and performance. Through this synthesis, I clarify exactly why and how music education can contribute to the social education of its students. I conclude by offering suggestions as to how these approaches might learn from each other in order to increase their social efficacy in the modern world.

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Introduction

“Music serves children in many ways,” observes Patricia Shehan Campbell. In her popular book on children’s music-making, *Songs in Their Heads*, she makes the significance of music in a child’s life abundantly clear. “They receive it from many sources,” she writes, and they learn to sing it, play it, and dance to it. They interpret it for its messages to them and absorb and rework it in new configurations as their very own music. They “have music” and “do music” for its visceral appeal, for its calming or stimulating properties, and for the association it has with nearly anyone or anything they can name. Music seeps into their play, their social activities, their work, and their worship and is with them as they do what they do and as they think aloud or in silence about the various experiences they know.2

Music is expressive and all-encompassing, playing just as vital a role in children’s social lives as in their musical practices. It is on this fundamental belief that I build my own work. In the fall of 2020, I wrote my senior thesis in linguistics3 on the socializing potential of children’s clapping games, using the concept of language socialization4 as a model for my own theory of music socialization. While my research in that paper focused on a specific form of music-making, I concluded that music socialization—the active, simultaneous processes of socialization through music and socialization to use music—can be located in and applied to any number of children’s musical spaces.

I expand on that work in this thesis, in which I argue that the philosophies and practical recommendations of three popular Western music teaching approaches facilitate social education in addition to musical learning. Orff Schulwerk, the Kodály concept, and El Sistema are certainly not the only approaches to music education used in classrooms today, nor are they necessarily the

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most effective or successful. In focusing my research on these three approaches, I notably overlook Dalcroze Eurythmics, the Suzuki Method, Gordon Music Learning Theory, Conversational Solfège, and other established music teaching methods, as well as countless Eastern learning traditions such as the guru–shishya practice in India and gamelan music in Indonesia. I do not mean to suggest that these approaches are inferior; indeed, they share qualities with, and in several cases even inspired, the approaches on which I center my writing. I selected Orff Schulwerk, the Kodály concept, and El Sistema for their relatively unique emphases on different social practices—the Schulwerk on group improvisation, Kodály on folk music, and El Sistema on community-level social transformation—and for their widespread presence across the United States and Europe, allowing for convenient comparison between the three. I am hopeful that my investigation of these particular teaching approaches and their social merits can inform similar explorations of the approaches that I do not cover here.

I begin my study by reviewing two perspectives on music as social practice that I believe will help contextualize my analysis. Jean-Jacques Rousseau delivers a philosophical take on the divergence of language and music, while Steven Mithen offers another possible narrative based on his own evolutionary research. Next, I introduce Orff Schulwerk, the Kodály concept, and El Sistema in detail, bringing their respective histories into discussion with their contemporary implementations. I do not shy away from controversy but rather present myth and reality alongside each other, as both play a role in how each approach develops in the classroom. I follow these sections with a thorough synthesis of the three approaches, focusing my analysis on social practice as it manifests in active participation, repertoire, instrumentation, and performance. Finally, calling back to the narratives that I highlighted in my second section, I conclude with a few predictions as to the trajectories of these teaching approaches and their
imprints in an increasingly technological, socially-aware future. I suggest ways that they might learn from each other in order to increase their efficacy in that modern world.

**Music as Social Practice**

Music in all its forms is a social endeavor, both in terms of the relationships it fosters between performers and the connections it forges between individuals and the world around them. Formal ensembles are perhaps the most obvious site for musical interaction: a string quartet must breathe together, a drum line must find its groove, and a choir must listen to itself just as much as it sings. In order for any of these groups to succeed, their members must attune themselves to each other, building relationships both before and during the performance of a piece. Music encourages interaction in other settings as well. Friends in a casual jam session reflect on and react to the musical offerings of their peers in real time, responding with music of their own. A solo performer in rehearsal deciphers the intentions of the composer and anticipates the feedback of their audience. Even the customers in line at the local Starbucks cannot help but experience the social power of music as that week’s Top 40 hits soothe the awkward silence between them. In all of these cases and more, it is virtually impossible for a person to engage with music without also engaging with other people in some manner. As eighteenth-century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau writes in his essay “On the Origin of Languages,” “birds whistle; man alone sings. And one cannot hear either singing or a symphony without immediately acknowledging the presence of another intelligent being.”

Musical interaction and group music-making, ubiquitous and multifaceted as they are, have been approached by scholars in a number of fields, from philosophy and anthropology to

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biology and neuroscience. While my own position is that of a music educator and musicologist, these other positions are valuable in contextualizing my claims. I will briefly review two perspectives: the philosophical, spearheaded by Rousseau, and the scientific, guided by evolutionary archeologist Steven Mithen. I have selected these two authors for their significant concurrent interests in music and the social world. Despite their obvious fundamental differences, these narratives intersect in several key places, highlighting the ways in which music shapes the social experience. Particularly striking in similarity are the links they draw between music and spoken language; these links, and especially their origin stories, are thus the focus of my review.

Rousseau, who was himself a composer of several operas and other musical works, did not hesitate to discuss music in his prose writing. His essay “On the Origin of Languages” spends several chapters on music and its relationship—both modern and ancient—to language. He believed that long before civilization had been established, “there was no music but melody and no other melody than the varied sounds of speech.” By separating “music” from “melody,” he reminds us that music as defined by the modern listener is simply one manifestation of what we might call musicality, a natural, prosodical combination of rhythm and pitch. He is eager to clarify, however, that “it should be said that both [music and speech] had the same source, not that they were initially the same thing.” Building upon the previous quotation, he specifies that music and speech as we know them did not just intersect, but rather developed out of a common expressive medium.

This imagined circumstance is comparable to Mithen’s vision, which rests on the notion of an early communicative medium that was simultaneously musical and linguistic. Explicitly

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6 Ibid., 51.
7 Ibid.
citing Rousseau’s writing as a catalyst for his work,⁸ Mithen argues that the capacity for rhythm and pitch shift was vital to the survival of early hominids, who likely took advantage of those skills in order to raise infants, woo potential mates, organize hunting trips, and bond with other members of their communities. Modern humans use singing and dancing to “form social bonds, develop a group identity, and learn to trust other members of a group”;⁹ Mithen theorizes that our ancestors were no different. Musicality was so significant in this evolutionary period that many researchers—in line with Rousseau’s suggestion—have discussed the possibility of a sort of proto-musical-language that preceded the distinction between language and music. Mithen has proposed the existence of an expressive medium he calls Hmmm, which, as he imagines it, was:

- holistic—because it relied on whole phrases rather than words, rather like music;
- manipulative—because it was focused on manipulating behavior of others rather than the transmission of information;
- multi-modal—because it used the body as well as the voice;
- musical—because it used the variations in pitch, rhythm, and timbre for emotion expression, care of infants, sexual display, and group bonding; and
- mimetic—because it involved a high degree of mime and mimicry of the natural world.¹⁰

In short, early hominids were just as musical—if not more so—than modern humans, so it should come as no surprise that the desire to produce music has remained central to the human experience.

According to Mithen, as these hominids evolved further, eventually becoming *Homo sapiens*, their hybrid communication system diverged into the separate linguistic and musical

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⁹ Ibid., 9.
¹⁰ Ibid., 10.
systems that we know today. This divergence occurred, says Mithen, through a process called segmentation, in which “humans began to break up holistic phrases into separate units, each of which had its own referential meaning and could then be recombined with the units from other utterances to create an infinite array of new utterances.”¹¹ Segmentation most likely happened gradually, not immediately replacing but rather supplementing the existing expressive possibilities that Hmmmmm offered. Mithen believes that the first segments may have emerged due to existing onomatopoeia, vocal imitation, and sound synthesis in Hmmmmm that tied them directly to the objects or events to which they referred. Other segments followed as people realized the infinite creative capabilities of compositional language structure. It is possible that the musicality of Hmmmmm accelerated this process by ensuring that “holistic utterances were of sufficient length, so that the process of segmentation would have some raw material to work with”¹² and by emphasizing particular segments with pitch and rhythm, thus increasing “the likelihood that they would become perceived as discrete entities with their own meanings.”¹³

According to Mithen’s approximations, the full transition from proto-musical-language to modern compositional language as humanity’s primary communication method likely took about a hundred millennia and ended with the solidification of language 50,000 years ago. What remained of Hmmmmm was then free to concentrate on its strengths, “expressing emotion and creating a sense of group identity,”¹⁴ and developed into music as we know it today.

Rousseau makes no specific claims about the divergence of music and language, but his ideas find some accordance with Mithen’s in their suggestion that each medium serves a different purpose in human expression. In fact, Rousseau expands his analysis to include three types of

¹² Ibid., 255.
¹³ Ibid.
“voices” shared by all people: “the speaking or articulate voice, the singing or melodious voice, and the pathetic or expressive voice, which serves as the language of the passions, and gives life to song and speech.”\textsuperscript{15} It is easy to deduce that the first “speaking or articulate” voice aligns with Mithen’s notion of language, and that the second “singing or melodious voice” is Mithen’s music. I interpret the third “pathetic or expressive” voice to be an innate component of the other two as Mithen describes them, representing their respective capacities for interpersonal communication and expression. Rousseau elaborates that the untrained child, utilizing their third voice, “laughs, cries, laments, shrieks, and groans, but he does not know how to combine these inflexions with speech or song.”\textsuperscript{16} On this point I disagree with Rousseau—my intention for this paper is to highlight the ways in which certain music education approaches draw on children’s natural faculty for productive interaction—but I acknowledge the interdependent relationship between voices that he alludes to in this example.

Just as Mithen claims that musicality is especially adept at “expressing emotion,”\textsuperscript{17} so does Rousseau posit that “the sounds of a melody do not affect us merely as sounds, but as signs of our affections, of our feelings.”\textsuperscript{18} Although these writers hold different understandings of emotion, the latter alluding to Cartesian notions of the bodily passions and the former to anthropological conceptions of community, the resulting internal and external manifestations of emotion in each case are the same. Attempting to find a compromise within a pool of conflicting research, psychologist Klaus R. Scherer defines emotion as “an interface between the organism and its environment, mediating between constantly changing situations and events and the

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Mithen, “Music Instinct,” 10.
\textsuperscript{18} Rousseau, “Origin of Languages,” 59.
individual's behavioral responses.”¹⁹ Of course, emotion directly affects the ways in which humans relate to those around them. Scherer and others have observed that music consistently activates an emotional response in the brain that, in group settings, can encourage communication and empathy between individuals. Mithen also reminds us that “being emotional is essential to being intelligent, making effective decisions, and being a successful member of a social group.”²⁰ Music is especially reliant on these processes. “When two humans are playing together,” says music educator Panagiotis Kanellopoulos, “there is not only a dialogue between the player and the instrument but also between the players themselves. Reference to dialogue implies the existence of an intention to communicate. And just as in the case of verbal dialogues, joint musical action creates an emergent structure.”²¹ Musician Anthony Gritten claims that successful musical communication leads to trust between musicians, which consequently “enables and facilitates interaction, collaboration, risk taking, experimentation, interpretive leaps and all kinds of phenomena that are frequently associated with ‘wonderful’ performance.”²² Good music requires good relationships, which in turn result from the powerful emotional exchanges that occur in successful musical communication.

Many musical relationships and communities develop organically, whether out of a desire to perform, create, listen to, or otherwise appreciate music with a group of like-minded people. Music is especially conducive to the formation of affinity communities, in which individuals connect with each other over personal aesthetic preferences or interests.²³ These affinity

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communities can often—but do not always—form within other identity groups delineated by such variables as gender, ethnicity, religion, and age. Children are prone to organizing themselves in this way; in peer groups, says education professor Amy Kyratzis, “children articulate their own games, songs, and rituals not derived from adult cultural forms.”

Peer-to-peer interaction, involving only those who fit into a given age or social group, gives children an opportunity to experiment with agency and value-formation on their own terms. Without adult interference, they establish community-specific behavioral norms through group activities. Musical interaction and games in particular allow children to simultaneously “deal directly with the core issues pertaining to music (formation of musical ideas, development of structural relationships, expressiveness, communicative nature of music-making)” and also, as I have previously argued, to “convey cultural values and cross-cultural differences that exist outside of the music-making context.” In this way, musical practice can be extremely important to child culture and to the construction and maintenance of relationships between children. This importance should not be overlooked, nor should it be exploited or used haphazardly by educators or other adults who do recognize it. It should be regarded thoughtfully when it appears in both informal and formal settings.

Fortunately, several existing approaches to music teaching do attempt to integrate group music-making into their classrooms in a healthy, productive way. Orff Schulwerk, the Kodály concept, and El Sistema are three of the most well-known teaching approaches in the Western world, each of them providing copious opportunities for children to make music with each other. In the following sections, I will discuss how each of these approaches developed and spread.

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across the world, as well as the manners in which their contemporary practitioners advocate for
the modernization of musical interaction in the classroom. Throughout this exploration, I will
continue to draw upon the narratives presented by Rousseau and Mithen. Their perceptions of
music, expression, and human nature will guide my own arguments, constantly reinforcing both
the universality of music\textsuperscript{27} and “the power of music over our souls.”\textsuperscript{28}

Teaching Approaches

In the following sections, I briefly introduce Orff Schulwerk, the Kodály concept, and El
Sistema. I present their histories, their philosophies, and their practical recommendations for the
classroom, as well as any other points that I believe are significant to my discussion. While
varying widely in many respects, each of these approaches to music education—called
“approaches” in this paper so as to avoid the stricter, more formulaic connotations of
“methods”—share a characteristic dependence on musical interaction between students. Their
distinct contexts and contents serve to reinforce the value of this type of classroom experience
across a wide range of learning circumstances. Practitioners of these teaching approaches also
have a common interest in connecting with greater communities, either indirectly through
curriculum design or directly through the structures of the programs themselves. In combination
with their musical pedagogies, these outward-facing relationships give teachers the opportunity
to affect the future social successes of individual students and their communities. The following
sections illuminate key points of the three approaches that will frame a subsequent exploration of
their imagined and actual social impacts.

\textsuperscript{27} Mithen, “Music Instinct.”
\textsuperscript{28} Rousseau, “Origin of Languages,” 53.
Orff Schulwerk

The main German contribution to music education, Orff Schulwerk, was developed by composer Carl Orff and educator Gunild Keetman in the first half of the twentieth century. The Schulwerk (rendered in English as *schoolwork*) suggests an approach to teaching that prioritizes the creativity and agency of the child, seeking to engage students in music learning by way of organized group improvisation in instrumental music, dance, and speech. Having appropriated many of its activities and instruments from African and Indonesian cultures, it propagates an interpretation of music as an acultural and universal practice. With clear recommendations for both theory and praxis, but also inherently adaptable to new and challenging situations, the Schulwerk invites music teachers to center social interaction in their classrooms and curricula.

At the heart of Orff’s original conception of music and music education was the notion of elemental music. Orff considered elemental music to be not a genre but a circumstance, a special type of music connected with the body rather than the mind. “Elemental music,” he believed, is never music alone but forms a unity with movement, dance and speech. It is music that one makes oneself, in which one takes part not as a listener but as a participant. It is unsophisticated, employs no big forms and no big architectural structures, and it uses small sequence forms, ostinato and rondo. Elemental music is near the earth, natural, physical, within the range of everyone to learn it and to experience it, and suitable for the child.29

He describes an embodied musical experience that introduces foundational musical concepts at exactly the developmental level at which a student is ready to absorb them. Notably distinct from elementary music, which is written for children by adults, elemental music ideally comes from within the student.30 Orff’s use of the word “natural” to describe music seems to echo Rousseau’s

30 Ibid.
fascination with the “natural” man, a hypothetical individual who lives strictly by the values that Rousseau believed to be most closely associated with human nature. Relatively unscientific, this conception of the “natural” is highly subjective and encourages the discreditation of many actual cultural practices in favor of one idealized cultural fantasy. To avoid such connotations, we might instead say that elemental music is accessible or intuitive. Shirley Salmon, president of the International Orff-Schulwerk Forum Salzburg, defines elemental music-making more simply as “a concept of active and creative music practice for everybody.”

This belief that elemental music is inherently available to and appreciable by all aligns with Mithen’s understanding of music as a universal capacity and has made the Schulwerk popular among contemporary music therapists.

Although the Schulwerk and most writing about it place a strong emphasis on its philosophical approach to music teaching, Orff also had a vision for how to create a productive experimental atmosphere in the classroom. To him, improvisation did not just mean unstructured chaos. It began, like any good elemental music practice, with rhythm. This was clear to him even in the early days of the Schulwerk, during which students “practised freely-made rhythmic improvisations for which simple ostinati served as foundation and stimulus.” The repetition of an ostinato allowed the improvising students to explore rhythmic patterns and variations without worrying about or preparing for an unexpected change in harmonic context. Initially, all rhythmic improvisation occurred on the low and high ends of a piano or on two separate keyboards; later, Orff and Keetman introduced barred percussion instruments adapted specifically for this practice (see Figure 1). These instruments had removable bars, which allowed for strategic pitch limitation as students introduced further variation into their

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31 Shirley Salmon, “Inclusion and Orff Schulwerk,” The Orff Echo 44, no. 3 (Spring 2012): 12.
At first their melodic exploration was purely instrumental, but in the years following their Bavarian Radio feature, Orff and Keetman realized the elemental value of the human voice and encouraged its inclusion in Schulwerk spaces.\textsuperscript{34}

Rhythmic and melodic improvisation, said Orff, are “the starting point for elemental music-making.”\textsuperscript{35} He believed that improvisatory practice was the most comfortable way for children to experience music, suggesting that any child who comes across an instrument “lying idle”\textsuperscript{36} will make their own music with it, beginning to explore, however casually, its qualities and capabilities. When presented with a xylophone, for example, a child will instinctively start to play it. Orff’s teaching philosophy takes advantage of this musical curiosity, allowing and even encouraging children to act like children in the classroom. As much as this improvisatory learning style is meant to be enjoyable for students, it is also an effective educational tool. According to Orff practitioners Amy Beegle and Judy Bond, “improvisation often naturally leads

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{34} Orff, \textit{Schulwerk}, 1978.  
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 22.  
\textsuperscript{36} Orff, “Musik Aus Der Bewegung,” 98.
to the analysis, revision, and memorization or notation of musical ideas.”

Especially with the guidance of a trained teacher, the process of group improvisation can become a much more intentional experiment, resulting in the gradual discovery and comprehension of new concepts in music theory.

Orff stresses that elemental music, and by extension the Schulwerk, has inherent value on its own. The elemental music experience, he says, is not a supplementary lesson to be added on top of ongoing classical training, but rather “a self-contained musical practise, in itself complete, that should come before the world of art music.”

Orff speaks of elemental music as an entry point into the broader musical world; ideally, he believes, all children should begin their musical journeys as students of the Schulwerk, regardless of the genre or style they grow into or whether they continue making music at all. More generally, Orff insists that music classes “should not be installed as a subsidiary subject, but as something fundamental to all other subjects.” In making this suggestion, he alludes not just to the value of music, but also to its potential to affect other academic subjects and aspects of a child’s life. This belief is reiterated by Kodály practitioners and Sistema directors alike.

As specific as its theoretical basis might be, “Schulwerk did not develop from any pre-considered plan”; instead, it took shape over decades of research and development. The conception of the Schulwerk can be assigned to 1923, when Orff first approached artist and educator Dorothee Günther about the possibility of implementing his ideas in a brand new

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38 Orff, “Musik Aus Der Bewegung,” 100.
40 Ibid., 134.
school. One short year later, the Güntherschule, a training center for gymnastics and music, opened its doors in Munich. The school was just as much a site for experimentation as it was for education, determined as was its staff—now including Gunild Keetman and dancer Maja Lex—to construct a new kind of music learning for its students. Frequent performance by the Güntherschule community eventually caught the attention of the organizer of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, leading to their most public showcase yet. Progress slowed due to the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party—with whom Orff himself became entangled—and the Güntherschule was destroyed in 1945. Orff’s work on the Schulwerk did not end there, as in 1948, he was invited to feature his students on the Bavarian Radio. Following this radio program, he and Keetman became music education superstars in Germany, giving presentations and distributing materials all over the country as interest spread. Orff’s previous ties to Nazi Germany were forgotten as he fabricated an elaborate story of resistance to clear his own name. “By the early 1960s,” writes music professor and Orff teacher training specialist Joani Somppi Brandon, “interest in ways to adapt the Orff approach to classrooms was growing among teachers in the United States, even prior to the founding of the national organization, now the American Orff-Schulwerk Association (AOSA), in Muncie, Indiana in 1968.” Now taught in primary schools and music centers across the world, Orff Schulwerk has been wholeheartedly embraced by contemporary music educators.

Out of all of the Schulwerk’s qualities, perhaps the most well known and appreciated among music teachers today is its adaptability. Orff’s particular style of improvisation, where each student plays their own valuable role, is ideal for a modern classroom in which students

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41 Orff, Schulwerk.
43 Orff, Schulwerk.
might have different musical backgrounds and abilities. During his time at the Güntherschule, Orff observed that “if the advanced student was able continually to find new possibilities, so the beginner could always be learning while she played her simple drone. Teaching this way in groups proved its value since every student could be given a task according to her ability.”

Even very young children can benefit from this learning style, since the Orff xylophones, metallophones, glockenspiels, and other percussion instruments are some of the easiest musical instruments to play with limited motor skills. Some teachers have found success in using other simple instruments, such as “sonorous natural objects (e.g., stones, nuts), everyday and household objects, or elemental instruments such as boomwhackers, kazoos, recorder mouth pieces, swanee whistle, and many others.” Any object that inspires a child to make music is a suitable addition to the Schulwerk. Thanks to this flexibility, the Schulwerk has found a secondary calling in the rapidly expanding field of group music therapy. Even Orff himself, although he did not originally plan for his teaching approach to be utilized in this way, acknowledged and appreciated its capacity to benefit children of differing abilities.

Due to the wide variety of participatory options built into the Schulwerk, Orff students experience social growth no matter how they personally engage with their education. Music teacher Matthew Pedregón comments that “when considering the Schulwerk, student engagement and choice can be found almost everywhere. From exploration activities, to arranging pieces as a class, to deciding on a form, to improvising, to composing, student choice is almost unavoidable with the Schulwerk.”

The decision-making power bestowed upon students in the Schulwerk demonstrates to them that their perspectives are valuable both

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individually and in combination with each other. Additionally, the creative emphasis of the Schulwerk provides students with the space to express anything they wish through music, as well as through other related mediums such as dance and spoken word. This gives students the chance to bring non-musical issues from the outside world into the classroom and to process these situations in a safe environment among peers and mentors, empowering them as individuals and helping them build communities according to their own social needs. By strengthening their sense of a “communal self,” the Schulwerk provides its students with the social skills that will carry them into socially successful adulthoods.

The Kodály Concept

Similarly interested in developing communal identity, both the Kodály concept of music education and the teaching method that it inspired use musical practice to arouse connections between students and their local cultures. Coinciding as it did with the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Zoltán Kodály’s interest in the music classroom was colored by a strong sense of Hungarian nationalism. He used Eastern European folk songs as educational material, citing both their simplicity and their familiarity as highly beneficial to music students. Building upon his ideas, his colleagues also combined several established educational techniques—moveable-do solfège, Curwen hand signs, rhythm syllables, and stick notation—to improve the learning process and to encourage the acquisition of music literacy. Now practiced in schools around the world, the Kodály concept has mostly abandoned its nationalist roots, but it maintains a powerful social motivation that shapes the ways that its students interact with each other and the world.

Kodály was not always interested in the education of the young. From the outset of his musical career until his death in 1967, he engaged with Hungarian music as both a composer and an ethnomusicologist. These two identities were quite intertwined for Kodály, given that Hungarian folk music was at the fore in both his research and his original musical work. He was not alone in his fascination with the folk; László Eősze, music historian and founding Executive Secretary of the International Kodály Society, writes that “during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, numerous composers turned to their respective native folk musics as an inspiration for composition. For Kodály the music of rural Hungary was always this, but also an object of study in itself.”

In 1906, Kodály and fellow Hungarian composer Béla Bartók joined forces in an effort to document and elevate Eastern European folk music, hoping to “preserve a tradition they viewed as threatened” by the dominating field of Western art music. The two accompanied each other on numerous collection tours throughout Hungary and neighboring countries until World War I made further research impossible. They were overwhelmingly successful in their efforts to legitimize Eastern European folk traditions and to develop a truly Hungarian sound.

It was not until 1925 that Kodály’s attention turned to the music education of children. As did his scholarly and compositional work, his approach to music education hinged upon the careful use of Hungarian folk music. According to Eősze, Kodály did not hesitate to use his existing platform as a renowned musician and university professor to promulgate these theories:

He gave lectures, wrote articles, conducted concerts all over the country and waged a veritable battle against musical illiteracy and semi-education. His ex-pupils were involved in the struggle, helping him as conductors, teachers or publishers. As early as

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the beginning of the 1930s he was able, without any official support and in the teeth of renewed press attacks, to start the Singing Youth movement on a national scale. And within ten years the time had come for a radical change in elementary-school music education.\textsuperscript{54}

The post-war Hungarian government finally voiced their support for Kodály in 1945, after which they assisted in the dissemination of his approach into schools across the nation. The Kodály concept was soon accepted as the official Hungarian Music Education System; in 1982, Magda Kalmár observed that “in Hungary... all singing-music curricula both at nursery school and general school are based on Kodály.”\textsuperscript{55} As early as 1949, Kodály’s philosophy appeared in schools in the United States and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{56} Despite Kodály’s lifelong work in composition, ethnomusicology, and other scholarly fields including “ethnology, music history, music aesthetics, music criticism, the history of literature, linguistics and language education,”\textsuperscript{57} it is for his work in education that the public best remembers him today.

In the years following World War I, Hungary struggled to develop a cohesive national identity, having been forced to stifle its diversity and blend with other nations and cultures under the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As a result of this uncertainty, in the subsequent decades “it became an explicit goal of the arts, not just an inherent property, to express the specific truth of the ‘imagined community’ they served, and assist in its self-definition.”\textsuperscript{58} Kodály, Bartók, and their colleagues had already researched and written some of their own Hungarian music, but it would prove far more difficult to establish that music as culturally representative in the hearts and minds of the Hungarian people. By targeting his approach at primary schools, Kodaly hoped to plant the seeds of a strong new Hungarian culture, based upon his understanding of the old, in

\textsuperscript{54} *Grove*, “Zoltán, Kodály.”
\textsuperscript{57} *Grove*, “Zoltán, Kodály.”
the younger generation. The creation of a uniquely Hungarian music was not a small task; as his widow, Sárolta Kodály, said in the keynote address of the Organization of American Kodály Educators 1990 conference, “that concept large in words and very often used may not have the weight today that the words had when they were said for the first time. But if you think about what the concept means, the impact is tremendous.\textsuperscript{59}

In order to achieve his lofty goal, Kodály placed Hungarian folk music in the hands of Hungary’s music teachers. He was “convinced that folksong was important not just as a monument of the past but also as a foundation for the future.\textsuperscript{60}” Rather than simply revitalizing the folk song, which he, much like Orff, considered “primitive,\textsuperscript{61}” he hoped to inspire the next generation of musicians to follow in his footsteps by adopting folk idioms in their own original work. He often referred to folk music as the Hungarian people’s “musical mothertongue,” saying that “music instruction must begin with the folk song with which we have been brought up from birth and learnt from our mother.\textsuperscript{62}” As the most intuitive form of music-making native to the area, folk music appealed to Kodály as being beneficial to both Hungarian culture and music students themselves. The accessibility of the folk song makes it an ideal pedagogical subject, the study of which facilitates quick absorption of the microstructures—forms, idioms, and rhythmic and melodic language—of the style.\textsuperscript{63} Additionally, “using folk songs and singing games in the school allows the teacher to work with appropriate material that is already part of the child’s cultural experience.\textsuperscript{64}” Children’s familiarity with the folk tradition, however subliminal, allows them to engage more deeply in the learning process. While the Kodály concept was intended

\textsuperscript{60} Grove, “Zoltán, Kodály.”
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{63} Kokas, “Kodály’s Concept.”
\textsuperscript{64} Houlahan and Tacka, \textit{Kodály Today}, 21.
solely for use in Hungary, “the efficacy and universality of his philosophy is demonstrated in the wide transmission and adaptation of his ideas in many other contexts around the world.”\textsuperscript{65} We will return to its multicultural potential in a later section.

The Kodály concept of music education rests on the idea that “the acquisition of musical skills should proceed logically and sequentially from the known to the unknown.”\textsuperscript{66} Curricula should begin very simply and as early as nursery school, using easy children’s songs and games\textsuperscript{67} that take advantage of students’ tendency towards routine and variation.\textsuperscript{68} The transition to more complex folk material is gradual, as students “must be trained to perceive the simpler musical phenomena before being able to follow the more complicated forms.”\textsuperscript{69} In this way, Kodály-inspired teaching mirrors children’s acquisition of other skills like cognition and language, beginning with the fundamentals and only addressing more advanced concepts as they arise in the child’s experience. Kodály insisted that only the highest quality folk songs, or “good music,”\textsuperscript{70} be used in the classroom. While he offered few specific recommendations for exactly how teachers should have their students engage with cultural material, he did stress that music classes should not overanalyze folk songs and lose sight of their perceived natural musicality. In Sárolta Kodály’s words, “it is very important that a folk song does not become a kind of musical piece that is only in the head and you know how many syllables it has and how the lines end and so on and so on. They are music and we should not forget that they are musical pieces and have a gesture, air and atmosphere of their own.”\textsuperscript{71} This perspective is reminiscent of Orff’s fascination

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\textsuperscript{66} Grove, “Zoltán, Kodály.”

\textsuperscript{67} Kodály, “Role of Authentic Folksong.”

\textsuperscript{68} Coberly, “‘Say, Say, My Playmate.’”


\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 9.

\textsuperscript{71} Kodály, “Kodály,” 29.
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with elemental music and its deep physicality. In the end, however, Kodály’s intention was to prepare his students for success with the classics of the Western art music world, which he claimed “are much nearer to folk song than it is generally supposed.” The Kodály concept itself, then, is not really a method of folk education but rather an approach to more general music education that uses folk songs as means to an end. Its effect on Hungarian culture may have been profound, but that result was in many ways secondary to its musical goals.

The prioritization of musicianship over cultural membership is even more apparent in the so-called Kodály Method. First proposed by Kodály’s former student Jenő Ádám in 1944, the method is more structured than the original concept, integrating several other popular teaching techniques into its pedagogy. In addition to centering folk music in its lessons, the Kodály Method encourages the use of “relative solmization, hand signs, rhythmic syllables, and a form of musical shorthand known as stick notation.” Solmization, “the use of syllables in association with pitches as a mnemonic device for indicating melodic intervals,” has been documented all around the world for over two thousand years, but credit for developing the Western system—solfège, as we know it today—is usually assigned to eleventh century music theorist Guido d’Arezzo. The solmization used in modern Kodály classrooms is borrowed from the tonic sol-fa system, a form of moveable-do solfège developed by nineteenth-century English music educator Sarah Glover. In the Kodály Method, this system is accompanied by Curwen hand signs (see Figure 2 and Figure 3), named for their 1880 creator John Curwen but often

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73 Zemke, “Kodály Music Education.”
74 Grove, “Zoltán, Kodály.”
76 Ibid.

Figure 3 (right) Modern Curwen Hand Signs. Darren Wicks, “Handsign Diagram,” Kodály Music Education Institute of Australia, 2015, https://kodaly.org.au/.

Figure 4 Examples of stick notation used in music classrooms. Andrea Bartolomeo, shared with author on May 3, 2021.
mistakenly called Kodály hand signs due to their prevalence in the method.\textsuperscript{78} Solmization and hand signs address the melodic component of any given musical material; rhythm syllables and stick notation, on the other hand, help children learn rhythm. Just as solmization simplifies intervals, rhythm syllables allow children to connect more directly with notes of different lengths. Stick notation (see \textbf{Figure 4}), offers a similarly basic entrance into music reading and writing. All of these techniques in combination provide students with the tools to analyze and learn from folk music. This multifaceted, deconstructive learning process is what makes the Kodály Method unique.

I am not the first to suggest that Kodály’s approach highlights the social or communicative aspects of music. Hungarian music pedagogue Klára Kokas writes that while “the earlier system of music instruction taught the sounds (syllables) first, followed by a certain system of pitches (the scale), and only later the melodies constructed out of them,” the Kodály concept divides the folk song “into phrases and words, the words into syllables, the syllables into sounds.”\textsuperscript{79} This quotation heavily implies the existence of a sort of observable—or subconsciously acquirable—musical syntax, a framework in which music is understood to have a structure not unlike that of spoken or signed language.\textsuperscript{80} Interpreted more loosely, the above quotation reminds us of Rousseau’s assertion that song and speech are but different

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\textsuperscript{79} Kokas, “Kodály’s Concept,” 50.
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manifestations of the same expressive drive. Even more relevant is Mithen’s origin story and its suggestion that music and language may have left traces of themselves in the other. These traces provide for a more holistic understanding of musical communicativity and give educators conceptual flexibility in their teaching; by taking advantage of this flexibility, Kodály practitioners can unlock more of music’s communicative potential and reinforce its strength as a social device.

Above all, Kodály believed that “it should be made possible for everyone to take part in musical life.”81 Only partially invested in the cultivation of a generation with technical musical skill, he was extremely clear on his position that musical practice, which he called one of “the finest gifts of life,”82 helped people to become the best versions of themselves. Practitioners today understand that “Kodály cared deeply about the person being educated and believed that music education contributed to the moral, spiritual and social good of the person.”83 This utilitarian notion of music education, not dissimilar in philosophy from El Sistema and its extensive support programs, has inspired many Kodály educators to consider carefully the social and societal implications of their teaching. Different educators undertake this work in different ways. Many, represented here by Jody Stark, simply list among the learning goals of their classes the aim that “the students who study music in [their] music programs come to a more profound understanding of themselves as musical people and as human beings,” and that they intend to pursue this outcome by intentionally teaching music “in the service of a larger existential goal.”84 Perhaps a smaller percentage, including internationally renowned Kodály practitioner Sister Lorna Zemke, insist that music teachers “must also infiltrate the civic community and society in

82 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
general and speak eloquently in defense of music as a basic right for every child and every citizen of every community." Whether their aspirations of musical inclusivity are limited to the classroom or extend outside of it, Kodály educators are conscious of their roles in shaping the next generation of adults. The Kodály concept, with its goals of both inward- and outward-facing social development, is an effective tool for this work.

El Sistema

We cannot rightfully discuss the social side of music education without including El Sistema, whose numerous mottos include “Music for Social Change” and “Social Action Through Music.” The program, manifesting as a now-global network of youth orchestras and choirs, is less than fifty years old, making it significantly younger than the Kodály and Orff approaches. Even so, El Sistema is unique in its structure and its explicit appreciation of the social power of music, causing many teachers, scholars, professional musicians, politicians, and others to call it revolutionary. It has also received increasing criticism in recent years, making a study of its pedagogy all the more valuable. These conflicting perspectives raise a number of important questions about the capacity of music education to improve the livelihoods of students, provide a platform for cultures otherwise underrepresented in concert music, and enact tangible, positive social change.

El Sistema was founded in Venezuela in 1975 by José Antonio Abreu, an economist and musician. According to Sistema legend, Abreu held his first orchestral rehearsal in a parking garage and, expecting fifty students, only ended up with eleven. Rather than shutting down the program before it began, Abreu dedicated himself to expanding and developing that group into

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one of the world’s leading orchestras.\footnote{Tricia Tunstall, “El Sistema: A History,” in El Sistema: Music for Social Change, ed. Christine Witkowski, (New York: Omnibus Press, 2016).} Sure enough, his ensemble became an inspirational success, spawning similar programs across Venezuela and making global headlines after a 2008 60 Minutes feature\footnote{“El Sistema: Changing Lives Through Music,” 60 Minutes, CBS (April 13, 2008).} and Abreu’s 2009 TEDTalk.\footnote{José Antonio Abreu, The El Sistema music revolution, TED Talk (February 2009).} Now with around 250 programs in over fifty countries,\footnote{Sistema Global, “About Sistema Global,” 2021. https://sistemaglobal.org/about/.} El Sistema is one of the most widespread music education approaches in the world. The philosophy behind the program is simple: it seeks to improve the quality of life in under-resourced communities by making music accessible to their most vulnerable children. “By providing a path to ensemble music learning while simultaneously fostering positive youth and community development,” says Sistema practitioner Christine Witkowski, “El Sistema programs reach those who otherwise might never have the chance to join an orchestra.”\footnote{Christine Witkowski, “Part 1: Why El Sistema?”, in El Sistema: Music for Social Change, ed. Christine Witkowski (New York: Omnibus Press, 2016), 18.} True Sistema programs are non-auditioned and tuition-free. These standards remove barriers that might normally keep low-income families from pursuing music lessons for their children. Consequently, students of El Sistema have opportunities for musical practice and performance that are unusual for their demographic.

Every Sistema ensemble in Venezuela operates out of a núcleo—a physical community center where rehearsals and other activities take place. Most núcleos house several ensembles, including multiple orchestras of different skill levels, a choir or two, and possibly a teacher or parent ensemble. This variety of ensembles allows all musicians to participate in the program regardless of their musical abilities or backgrounds. More than just a practice space, the núcleo keeps students off the streets and in a safe, supportive environment. According to renowned Sistema practitioner Eric Booth, the núcleo also seeks to serve as a social hub, “a haven of safety,
fun, joy, and friendship, with an ethos of positive aspiration, where all students are encouraged relentlessly to explore their potential.¹⁹¹ Students rehearse up to twenty hours every week and perform frequently throughout the year.

Sistema-based programs in other countries, while differing in many ways from those in Venezuela, usually share the same central values of opportunity, community, and performance. They are similarly organized as extracurricular commitments, supplementing rather than replacing whatever music education students receive in school. Some Sistema-inspired programs have taken on a life of their own; for example, Youth Orchestra Los Angeles (YOLA), founded in 2007 by Sistema alumnus Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, originally served a cohort of eighty students at one location but has since expanded its student base to include nearly 1,300 students at four locations⁹² with a fifth to open in Spring 2021.⁹³ YOLA has become a model for all US Sistema programs in its adaptation of Venezuelan practices, from its academic tutoring, leadership opportunities, and community engagement to a high musical standard that pushes its top ensembles to the same level of accomplishment as Venezuela’s own Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra (see Figure 5).

Several of the differences between El Sistema and our previous two teaching approaches have already become apparent. While Orff and Kodály are intended for use in general music classrooms during school hours, El Sistema takes the form of extracurricular ensembles. Orff and Kodály keep their educational opportunities within the school community, but Sistema programs use public concerts, tours, and other community outreach to connect more directly with the world around them. Perhaps their most significant difference, however, lies in their respective

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recommendations for praxis—or, rather, the absence in El Sistema of a standardized methodology of any kind. Although celebratory writings abound, no one has been able to pin down exactly what a Sistema rehearsal is meant to look like, or whether any expectations for a pedagogical sequence exist. Argentinian scholars Ana Lucía Frega and Jorge Ramiro Limongi observe that “there is no evidence of a sistema as a formal method, either in the sense of traditional pedagogy or sustained by the main contemporary music education theories.”⁹⁴ If anything, it has “drawn somewhat haphazardly on a range of older methods, primarily of European origin, plus some Suzuki elements,”⁹⁵ most of these borrowed elements having to do with conventional Western orchestral practices. In any event, these minor borrowings are not

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⁹⁵ Ibid., 567.
obviously intentional and are poorly documented. Such limited information poses a challenge to foreign practitioners looking for a model to replicate in their home countries.

Lacking any guidance, specific núcleos or community centers often develop methodologies on an individual level. There have only been a few scholarly studies on this topic. Music professor Michael Uy completed one such study in 2012, during which he spent three months teaching at núcleos in Puerto Ordaz, Chacao, La Rinconada and Los Chorros. In that time, he took copious notes on the inner workings of the núcleos and their sequencing choices:

Most, if not all, students begin their education singing in the choir; this is in conjunction with their lenguaje musical (musical language) classes that teach them the basics of music. Students are taught how to sing notes through the use of solfège syllables. They are not taught vocal techniques per se, but teachers sometimes emphasize basic voice production skills. Many students also begin on the flauta dulce (recorder), an inexpensive, plastic, mouth-blown instrument where they can learn the discipline of how to read and play music before entering an orchestra. To teach rhythms, percussive instruments like drums, the triangle, maracas and the tambourine may also be used...

After several months participating in the choir (and also possibly in flauta dulce classes), depending upon whether positions are available in the orchestra, students may advance and choose their desired instrument. Some students may choose to remain in the choir and only sing, while others may choose to participate in both the choir and the orchestra. The majority of the students, however, will choose to leave the choir and participate in only the orchestra... Class time is usually divided into three categories: talleres (workshops, instrument sectionals), ensayos generales (general rehearsals, the entire orchestra or by strings/winds) and lenguaje musical (music theory and some music history, albeit minimal). About 45% of the time is spent in talleres, 45% in ensayos generales and 10% in lenguaje musical.  

Obviously, students at these four núcleos are not simply wandering around playing instruments; there exists a clear sense of organization and an expectation of how students will progress through each activity, both on a day-to-day basis and over the course of several years. Uy also notes that students always begin with singing and solfège, reminding us of a simplified Kodály approach to teaching music. A similar initiative appears in some of YOLA’s ensembles.

According to the main YOLA webpage, YOLA’s Heart of Los Angeles location (YOLA at

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HOLA), in addition to maintaining rehearsals for two orchestras, bases its classes around “music creativity, singing and solfège, ensemble rehearsals, and an hour of academic tutoring daily.” In addition to the Kodály-esque sequence that Uy observed in Venezuela, YOLA at HOLA seems to echo Orff’s emphasis on musical creativity. It is significant, though, that both Uy’s and YOLA at HOLA’s remarks are not prescriptive, borrowing from some greater plan outlined by founder Abreu, but rather descriptive of the processes that take place in these particular settings. Neither the philosophy of El Sistema nor the national and international organizations that now oversee all official Sistema programs makes any specific recommendations for how music should be taught.

Equally hazy is the relationship between El Sistema and various musical styles. Global media, especially North American news outlets, call El Sistema “a classical music education program,” a label that, while simple and snappy enough for public consumption, is not entirely accurate. Just as El Sistema leaves praxis in the hands of its practitioners, so does it fail to claim an association with any one musical genre. Again, this decision falls to individual ensembles and their directors. The relatively young Kalikolehua program in Hawai‘i “has responded to community interests by developing a repertoire of classical, Hawaiian, and popular music; children play Bach and Beethoven, oli (Hawaiian chant), sing modern Hawaiian standards, practice Broadway tunes, and experiment with jazz.” On the other hand, every Sistema-based ensemble in Gothenburg, Sweden, in addition to performing more conventional repertoire, learns pieces composed specially for their program, featuring text that “emphasises community and belonging. For example, lines of text include ‘We are El Sistema’, ‘Everyone is cool, here at our

97 “Youth Orchestra Los Angeles.”
school’, and ‘Would you like to be part of our gang? Come on over and we’ll just hang.”

Finally, back in Venezuela, music educator Eric Shieh witnessed

the musicians at a núcleo performance striking up a seemingly impromptu salsa and
leading the audience in a dance-along as they make their way off stage, performances of
Venezuelan repertoire that include a quattro (a strummed Venezuelan folk instrument)
section in the orchestra behind the cellos, and a live performance of Bernstein’s Mambo
through which the musicians shout and dance.

Each of these three Sistema branches—Hawai’i, Sweden, Venezuela—plays the music that
its students want to play, that its community wants to hear. While many ensembles do fall back on
Western classical canon to fill their concert schedules, this is not always the case. This type of
flexibility might be more comfortable for teachers than rigid repertorial requirements, especially
in the early days of a núcleo, but the inconsistency in repertoire among individual ensembles
results in a lack of program-wide cohesion. What El Sistema actually entails as an educational
approach becomes less and less clear.

Pedagogical ambiguity aside, El Sistema has also garnered significant scholarly criticism
in recent years regarding the program’s claims to social change. Music professor Geoffrey Baker
has been particularly outspoken about the inconsistencies in the Sistema myth and has published
extensively on its history of misrepresentation. Early Sistema coverage by Venezuelan media, he
says, may not have been entirely unbiased. By the early 1990s, Sistema founder Abreu was also
both Minister of Culture and President of Venezuela’s National Council for Culture (CONAC),
his triple employment granting him a great deal of power over local media. According to some of
Baker’s interviews with Venezuelan journalists, Abreu took advantage of that power,

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encouraging several publications to censor any writing that might reflect poorly on El Sistema.\footnote{Geoffrey Baker, “El Sistema, ‘The Venezuelan Musical Miracle’: The Construction of a Global Myth,” \textit{Latin American Music Review/Revista de Música Latinoamericana} 39, no. 2 (September 2018).} This strictly pro-Sistema echo chamber expanded in the early 2000s when the program went global; eager to capitalize on such an inspirational story, most contemporary Western media heralds El Sistema as “positively life-changing”\footnote{Christine Manby, “Jose Antonio Abreu: Venezuelan Conductor Who Created Music Education Programme ‘El Sistema,’” \textit{The Independent}, March 28, 2018, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/jose-antonio-abreu-died-dead-el-sistema-conductor-venezuela-a8277481.html.} without probing any deeper into the program’s history. Baker also illuminates a few more specific instances of misrepresentation, including several disappointing studies sponsored by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), one of El Sistema’s primary funders. The unflattering results of these studies were sugarcoated and presented to the media as impressive and even inspirational. This pattern of misreporting information even extended to the biography of the founder himself; for decades Abreu was believed to hold a PhD in Petroleum Economics, a claim that El Sistema only withdrew in 2017.\footnote{Geoffrey Baker, “Abreu’s Phantom PhD,” \textit{Geoff Baker} (blog), December 10, 2017, https://geoffbakermusic.wordpress.com/el-sistema-the-system/el-sistema-blog/abreus-phantom-phd/\footnote{Baker, “El Sistema.”}} While the fabricated PhD does not necessarily affect Abreu’s legacy in music education, it does call into question the legitimacy of the rest of El Sistema’s history.

The largest piece of misinformation in the public understanding of El Sistema is that it has always had the same social, transformational goal at its core. In reality, the mission statement for which El Sistema is known today was developed in the early 1990s, replacing a more general desire to fortify the Venezuelan classical music scene. Baker believes that Abreu introduced the social element in an effort to give El Sistema more merit as a youth program, given that he requested funding from a new government ministry around the same time.\footnote{Baker, “El Sistema.”} While the concept of social change through musical community is an interesting and potentially effective one if
implemented in a careful way, the idea itself appears to have been born of purely financial motivations. Furthermore, perhaps due to its haphazard conception, the social initiative accompanies some harmful rhetoric regarding the lives and values of low-income students. According to music educator Eric Shieh, “more than a few teachers, both in Venezuela and in Sistema-inspired programs abroad, quote Abreu as saying, ‘material poverty can be defeated by spiritual wealth.’”\textsuperscript{106} The notion that underprivileged children can play their way out of poverty is of course fantastical, and fails to address the structures and policies that actually affect them.\textsuperscript{107} Additionally, the fact that this supposed rescue primarily occurs through engagement with European classic tradition diminishes local music and culture and is even somewhat reminiscent of colonialist ideology. That El Sistema perpetuates these ideas is antithetical to the real social change that the program and its practitioners claim to pursue.

Despite all of this controversy, El Sistema and similar projects have continued to thrive around the world. It remains unclear whether Sistema-style music programs genuinely see their students “defeat” poverty, but some studies have documented positive impacts on students. For example, a 2016 study by Margaret Osborne, Gary McPherson, Robert Faulkner, Jane Davidson, and Margaret Barrett tracked the academic and non-academic well-being of disadvantaged students at two Australian primary schools, comparing the students participating in the schools’ respective Sistema-based music programs to students not in the programs. The study found that at one school in particular, the music students “reported significantly greater well-being” than their non-musical peers. “They felt happier,” the authors report,

\textsuperscript{106} Shieh, “Relationship, Rescue, and Culture” 573.
had more purpose in life, a greater sense of belonging, and got along better with others. They seemed to have better self-control over impulsive behaviour. These characteristics tended to remain the same or slightly increase over time. They also reported greater attachment to school and motivation to achieve, had a more positive identity and self-esteem, and were more likely to view school as a source of positive feelings.\(^{108}\)

There appears to be a minor correlation between entrance into the music program and improved livelihood. As the study only lasted for twelve months, Osborne and her colleagues could not comment on how the music program may have altered the futures of these students, but it seems likely that the program had a positive effect on their day-to-day lives.

El Sistema is in many ways an imperfect approach to music education. Sensational as its mission may seem to the media and the general public, it appears to have grown out of inconsistent and troubling rhetoric that can be difficult to reconcile with the program as it operates today. In particular, the relationship between El Sistema and its young musicians is deeply complicated; just as “the love for classical music that the students display is mixed up in a love for the space and the opportunities it provides, in a pride over craft, in relationships with teachers and other students,”\(^{109}\) so does El Sistema’s consideration of its students struggle between the philosophical and the practical. Still, its widespread public messaging and international fame put it in a unique position to disseminate the positive social effects of collaborative music-making. Abreu himself held that “to sing and to play together means to intimately coexist toward perfection and excellence.”\(^{110}\) Implemented with enough care, El Sistema may be able to use its existing social platform to help its students achieve these goals of “perfection and excellence” in their musical practice, their social lives, and their connection to the world around them.

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Synthesis

As I have made clear, each of these music teaching approaches—Orff Schulwerk, the Kodály concept, and El Sistema—is unique in its engagement with musical and social practice, in the contexts of both their individual students and their surrounding communities. Organized thematically by classroom component, my discussion here illuminates the social intentions and impacts of all three approaches in comparison with each other. My points will, for the most part, be theoretical, laying out possibilities for hypothetical classrooms rather than describing what necessarily occurs in real ones. First, I will establish the potential educational and social benefits of active participation in the classroom and summarize the ways in which each approach encourages, and even requires, this sort of behavior. A clear understanding of active participation will provide a basis for the rest of my discussion. Next, I will explore how repertoire selection can provide students with opportunities for efficient learning, cultural growth, and increased agency over their education. After that, I will analyze the significance of instrumentation as a vehicle for emotional expression, personal responsibility, and cognitive development, all of which prepare students to be successful members of society. Finally, I will draw connections between the performative structures in each approach and examine how those structures allow students to practice positioning themselves in both their classrooms and their local communities. In reviewing all of these points, I hope to clarify exactly why and how music education can contribute to the social education of its students.
Active Participation

In order to discuss the specific roles of repertoire, instrumentation, and performance in these approaches, we must first gain a general understanding of how each approach centers active participation in its classrooms. In the field of linguistics, active participation is understood to be an integral part of the development of linguistic and social skills, whether in the classroom or outside of it.\(^{111}\) In a musical context, this type of interaction requires that students internalize the material they learn and analyze it until they are able to produce output of their own, whether through improvisation, repetition, audiation, or even just a continued enthusiasm that demonstrates appreciation for the music being produced. This classroom design contrasts with older models of music education, used today with high school and college students, that rely on the memorization, reproduction, and analysis of musical devices without the same kind of engagement.

I am not the first person to suggest that our three music teaching approaches rely heavily on the active participation of their students. As we will see, many scholars use the word “active” in their descriptions of classrooms that fall under each of the three methodological umbrellas. The concept of active music learning became a topic of concentrated discussion in the 1990s, when “a new postmodernist philosophy of music education began to gain momentum. Praxialists, as these scholars were called, argued among other things that music was not a sonic object, but rather a human practice or praxis.”\(^{112}\) Praxialist music education, then, “seeks to broaden the study of the many ways music is used in multiple communities,”\(^{113}\) and should logically include a good deal of music-making as a means of teaching its students about those

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\(^{111}\) Schieffelin and Ochs, “Language Socialization.”
\(^{112}\) Stark, “Kodály Music Education,” 19.
\(^{113}\) Ibid., 20.
customs. As I will show, the Schulwerk, the Kodály concept, and El Sistema all align with these basic definitions of praxial music education, but it is worth noting that the development of praxialism followed the foundations of all three approaches. Given the order in which they were conceived, as well as my stance as a non-expert on praxialism, I will avoid making any erroneous generalizations by continuing to refer to this educational technique as active participation, my own term. Inspired by both praxialism and sociolinguistics, I define active participation as a form of acquisitional engagement that hinges on the physical practice, modeling, and recontextualization of material as it is acquired. As it is usually practiced in a collaborative group setting, active participation can play a significant role in the social development of the participants.

The key to understanding how the concept of active participation manifests in the music classroom is acknowledging and accepting all possible forms of student engagement. Campbell writes that “the diversity of children's participation in music is stunning.”114 While the most obvious way for children to participate in a music class is by making music with their voice or an instrument, they might not always prefer those methods of participation. Salmon says that depending on their motivation level, musical background, physical or cognitive ability, current mood, relationship with the teacher or the other students, or any number of other factors, they might instead choose to participate by “perceiving, exploring, experimenting, playing, communicating, recognizing, remembering, choosing, varying, distinguishing, improvising, inventing, practicing, creating, reflecting, [or] discussing.”115 Of course, students are not limited to using one or even a handful of participatory forms at a time; many of these processes occur simultaneously for children, allowing them to participate in classroom events on several levels at

114 Campbell, Songs in Their Heads, 242.
once. Some of the forms that Salmon mentions—perceiving, recognizing, remembering, distinguishing, reflecting, and possibly others—may not seem to be active in comparison with some of the more physical forms, but they are just as legitimate and important to student growth.

I have previously suggested that “music is an active and interactive medium, comprising both uptake, an internal analytical listening process, and output, either external or internal (through audiation, the realization or comprehension of a sound that is not physically present).” Both uptake and audiation are fully internal processes, not easily observable by other people, but both are still active for the students experiencing them. All of Salmon’s aforementioned participatory forms, therefore, are equally significant to a child’s development.

While each of our three music teaching approaches share several participatory forms and opportunities in common, it is perhaps most practical to present them separately to highlight their variety. I will begin my review with the Kodály concept, which, according to scholars and practitioners alike, requires “the active participation of the children, both motor and mental.” In Kodály classrooms, students participate actively by singing, recalling and producing solfège and rhythm syllables, using Curwen hand signs, practicing notation, and internally combining and cross-referencing these activities in relation to the musical material. By allowing their minds to “actively focus on the music itself, rather than ‘about’ the music,” they engage directly with the material and acquire musical skills more rapidly than they might in a lecture-style class. This efficiency extends also to the indirect acquisition of practical information about the cultures from whom the curriculum has borrowed folk music, a relationship I will investigate further in the following section. The effects of active participation, while already somewhat social due to their

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116 Coberly, “‘Say, Say, My Playmate,’” 12.
118 Georgia A. Newlin, “Active Music Making without Moving around the Room?”, The Orff Echo 45, no. 2 (Winter 2013): 30.
engagement with culture and the expressivity of music, are intensified by the collaborative nature of the Kodály classroom. Kokas writes that “the children observe and imitate the movements, voice, and tone of the adult and the other children, and this takes active effort. At the same time each child adjusts his own movement, rhythm, and elocution to that of the others and this also takes active work.”\textsuperscript{119} This sort of interactive music-making is therefore made even more active than a solitary alternative “through the necessary interdependence inherent in contributing one’s part to an ensemble.”\textsuperscript{120} In learning to make music together, students learn communication, cooperation, and empathy, all of which they retain in other areas of their lives.

Cooperative participation and its developmental effects, of course, might be even more acute within El Sistema, which is explicitly and exclusively based on classical ensembles. Shieh claims that “large-ensemble playing is not known... for its reciprocal negotiation of musical practice between student and teacher, or student and student”;\textsuperscript{121} while he is correct that there are few opportunities for one-on-one musical exchange in such settings, I disagree that large ensembles have nothing to offer in terms of active musical interaction. In order for an ensemble to play a piece successfully and as a single cohesive unit, each member must attune to the others—to their interpretations of rhythm and pitch, their expression, their breathing, their entrances and cutoffs—and respond to that information through their own musical action. Anthropologist Shirley Brice Heath speaks to the real-world value of this quest for cohesion in her own words:

"Working within an ensemble environment forces individuals to hold their memory for details. The context demands as a matter of course visual attentiveness, mental quickness, and collaborative skills. Such skills are the same as those required in an information-based and technology-driven world where academic advancement,"

\textsuperscript{119} Kokas, “Kodály’s Concept,” 54.
\textsuperscript{120} Campbell, Songs in Their Heads, 254.
\textsuperscript{121} Shieh, “Relationship, Rescue, and Culture,” 571.
employment, medical care, and other critical aspects of daily life rely on quick and ready use of them.\textsuperscript{122}

If executed effectively, this collaborative engagement with others can have positive repercussions beyond the music program itself. The same is true for more formal opportunities for active participation, such as those proffered by the precedent in El Sistema for using student teachers to bolster program staff. These student teachers, called “monitores” in Venezuela, are recruited from pools of the most advanced Sistema students to lead much younger musicians in group lessons.\textsuperscript{123} After completing short apprenticeships with experienced teachers, monitores are deemed qualified to teach “the same material as standard teachers at other núcleos”\textsuperscript{124} and receive minimal pay for their work. At other núcleos, peer-to-peer instruction takes place on a smaller scale, appearing in the casual interactions between students of differing musical ability.\textsuperscript{125} Whether or not their positions are official, these students are able to participate in yet another way by teaching their peers. They must learn to position themselves simultaneously as educators and peers, to demand new respect while not losing sight of the other social contexts in which their relationships exist. This level of responsibility—or even the possibility of it, for those not yet advanced enough to teach others—can also increase students’ motivation, a goal that El Sistema shares with Orff Schulwerk and many other teaching approaches.

The Schulwerk places active participation at the very center of its methodology. Dependent as it is on student-driven improvisation, the Schulwerk works best when every student contributes to the creative process. Even elemental music itself, as Orff practitioners understand it, requires “active”\textsuperscript{126} engagement “in which one takes part not as a listener but as a


\textsuperscript{123} Uy, “Venezuela’s National Music Education.”

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 14.

\textsuperscript{125} Booth, “What is El Sistema?”

\textsuperscript{126} Salmon, “Inclusion and the Schulwerk,” 12.
participant.” In addition to the participatory opportunities that the Kodály concept and El Sistema provide, the Schulwerk encourages and in fact might not function without other types of participation: creating original musical material, listening and offering feedback to peer composers, discussing and implementing musical changes, reflecting on those changes, memorizing or even transcribing a new piece, and more depending on the particular classroom. Their motivation to participate, another significant catalyst of successful learning, can be increased by creating more opportunities for student choice in the classroom. I argue in favor of self-directed music learning in my Linguistics thesis:

Through casual, peer-oriented pedagogy, educators can encourage their students to learn on their own level, thereby providing them with a sense of connection with and control over the material. By validating their musicianship and the music that they practice, music teachers can help their students to become stronger musicians.

The more say a student has in the direction of their learning, the more they will feel empowered in their musicianship, and the more likely they are to participate in classroom activity.

Active participation is certainly a broad behavioral category, but it is nonetheless an important one to delineate if we hope to understand the potential of music education to affect children’s social development. Our three teaching approaches deal with music in different ways and using different classroom formats, but those varying techniques point to the same foundational notion that group music-making is inherently a social phenomenon, one that indirectly informs all of the social contexts and relationships that follow in an individual’s life. Mithen is sensitive to the link between music-making and human socialization, exemplifying it in a hypothetical:

If I were to start singing and you were to synchronize your voice with mine, that would be a form of cooperation, and I would take it as a willingness on your part to cooperate with me again in the future. I might change the melody or rhythm to test whether you

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127 Orff, “Das Schulwerk,” 144.
128 Coberly, “’Say, Say, My Playmate,’” 52.
would follow my lead; you might do the same. We might also both be aware of a third person who refuses to join our song, or who deliberately sings another, and interpret that as a sign of their unwillingness to cooperate with us both now and in the future.¹²⁹

Music can be simultaneously social in itself and the object of social exchange as long as the musicians in question are active, sensitive, and intentional participants in its production and interpretation; consequently, we can locate opportunities for and examples of social action nearly anywhere that music is practiced. These social processes occur within music education in relation to many methodological components, including but not limited to those on which I focus in subsequent sections: repertoire, instrumentation, and performance. Just as each component shapes the way that students learn music, so does each one facilitate a unique kind of social growth.

Repertoire

At the pedagogical core of each music teaching approach is the repertoire with which its classrooms engage. In each approach, founder and practitioners alike have selected particular musical genres, traditions, and styles of practice that they believe will serve as appropriate educational bases for children and other novices. Orff Schulwerk, more reliant on creative processes like improvisation and composition than on the reproduction of existing work, has just a small selection of pre-written material available to its teachers and students. The Kodály concept, originally intended as a vehicle for Hungarian nationalism and cultural unity, centers folk songs and singing games in order to conform with whatever culture is most prevalent in a given area. El Sistema has perhaps the broadest repertorial range, spanning everything from the Western classical canon to the music of local cultures to songs written specially for Sistema

programs. Each of these three frameworks for music education has its own methodology, leading their repertoire selections to vary as a result.

Despite their variety, however, these unique repertories accomplish—or seek to accomplish—many of the same goals. One such goal, that of naturally and comfortably sequenced curricula, is emphasized in both the Kodály concept and Orff Schulwerk. While Kodály did not propose a specific sequence for music education, he did believe that “our ears must be trained to perceive the simpler musical phenomena before being able to follow the more complicated forms.” The Kodály Method, developed by his colleagues, echoed this belief in its suggestion of a loose pedagogical sequence “that introduced the most common musical elements first” before moving to less common, more challenging musical features or patterns. Similarly, in the Schulwerk, “there are expectations that musical knowledge will proceed from simple to more complex.” Orff’s rhythmic lessons at the Güntherschule always “began with hand-clapping, finger-snapping and stamping in forms and combinations that ranged from simple to difficult” and used “freely-made rhythmic improvisations for which simple ostinati served as foundation and stimulus.” This technique notably differs from that of El Sistema, which sometimes selects music for its students according to “the very challenge” required to play it. Students in Kodály and Orff classrooms never dive into a folk song or an improvisation session completely unprepared. Their teachers present them with material and theoretical concepts in a logical order that allows them to experiment freely with new variables, already being quite comfortable with all other musical aspects of a given project. Rousseau would likely support this

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130 Hilda Mercedes Morán Quiroz, “From Theory to Practice: Kodály Music Education in a Multicultural Environment,” Kodály Envoy 33, no. 2 (January 2007).
133 Beegle and Bond, “Orff Schulwerk,” 34.
134 Orff, Schulwerk, 17.
135 Ibid., 22.
type of educational sequencing. “Before you can practise an art,” he says, “you must first get
your tools; and if you are to make good use of those tools, they must be fashioned sufficiently
strong to stand use.” If a musician’s tools are the understanding and control of musical features
such as rhythm, pitch, articulation, expression, and so on, those features must be practiced
repeatedly in order to solidify them in a student’s mind.

This approach to sequencing mirrors first language acquisition, in which young children
master syntactic structures and lexicon in order from simplest to most complex. Kodály and Orff
sequences facilitate the smooth absorption of new musical devices and prepare their students to
manipulate them just as they would spoken or signed language. Other pedagogues have leaned
more explicitly into this parallel, such as Shin’ichi Suzuki, who believed that children should
learn music just as they learn their native languages. Even Rousseau and Mithen seem to
legitimize such a connection in their statements on child-speak. “It has long been a subject of
inquiry,” says Rousseau,

whether there ever was a natural language common to all; no doubt there is, and it is the
language of children before they begin to speak. This language is inarticulate, but it has
tone, stress, and meaning. The use of our own language has led us to neglect it so far as to
forget it altogether. Let us study children and we shall soon learn it afresh from them.

Mithen is more specific, asking, “when we hear mothers, fathers, siblings and others ‘talking’ to
babies are we perhaps hearing the closest thing to ‘Hmmmmm’ that we can find in the world
today?” Here Mithen is loosely referring to a type of language that linguists call
Infant-Directed Speech, or IDS, characterized by extremely simplified words and sentences.
Parents in many cultures use this type of modified speech around infants in order to make their

137 Rousseau, Emile, 90.
139 Rousseau, Emile, 32.
140 Mithen, Singing Neanderthals, 275.
utterances more comprehensible and to aid in the language acquisition process. Both Mithen’s invocation of IDS in comparison to the hypothetical Hmmmmm and Rousseau’s interest in pre-verbal expression suggest a strong connection between music and language that is best supported through strategic musical sequencing. If executed properly, this sequencing can help Kodály and Orff students gain expressive agency in their musical practice that resembles the agency they have over their own native languages.

This same agency can be encouraged through opportunities for creativity and projection of the self onto one’s music-making. The Schulwerk is surely the most creation-based of our three approaches given its near-total reliance on improvisation. The processes of Orff-style improvisation, composition, and play are “not a random free-for-all, but [involve] carefully planned activities and open-ended questions to encourage spontaneous creative thinking by the students.”141 Once students have internalized a number musical devices through the aforementioned educational sequences, creative outlets such as those provided by the Schulwerk are the ideal settings for safe experimentation.142 To a much lesser extent, the same is true of musical expressivity and singing game variation in Kodály classrooms. Even El Sistema creates the illusion of student agency through repertoire written especially for its ensembles, a practical large-ensemble alternative to student creation. These specially written songs often relate to the lives of the students in some way. For example, back in Gothenberg, Sweden, “the song ‘Side by Side’, which expresses the theme that everyone is equal and that together we are strong, also highlights belonging within the El Sistema community to which the children, their families, educators, and musicians all are meant to belong.”143 In addition to mentioning the positive social

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impact of El Sistema itself, “Side by Side” centers the narrative voice of the students, allowing them to reflect on their roles in their community through musical practice. Significantly, “this positioning is not carried out in isolation, but in collaboration with a strong learning community,” so that the students are empowered as a group rather than as individuals. The same can be said of expressive exploration in the Kodály concept and group improvisation in Orff Schulwerk. By increasing the agency—or even the perceived agency—of groups of students, these approaches can use music as a medium to prepare those students for real-world collaboration and creative work.

If students are to put these skills to good use in their communities, they must first understand the relationships between their own and other cultures. While both approaches have appropriate materials and platforms to facilitate healthy multicultural learning, at the time of their founding, the Kodály concept and Orff Schulwerk had fraught relationships with the cultures from which they borrowed. El Sistema, too, draws upon several musical traditions at once in a way that can be either empowering or harmful to students depending on the way in which the material is framed. The following paragraphs explore these pedagogical dilemmas in detail, one approach at a time, before presenting a potential solution that would strengthen the cultural contexts and contents of all three approaches without otherwise detracting from their philosophies.

Kodály’s desire for “authentic” folk music in the classroom was just as driven by cultural value as it was by sequencing potential, if not more so. To Kodály, the cultural context was a vital piece of these musical customs. Ultimately, he hoped his students would become global musicians rather than just Hungarian ones, and he encouraged the exploration of foreign

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folk music accordingly, “but to become international,” he believed, “first we have to be national. We must belong to one distinct people and speak its language properly not gibberish. To understand other people, we must first understand ourselves.” While honorable in its intention of revitalization, Kodály’s belief in a cohesive Hungarian folk culture was and remains a fantasy. Like all countries, Hungary is home to many cultural and ethnic groups, each with their own customs, musical and otherwise. Kodály’s pursuit of “one distinct people” seems to overlook that diversity, instead encouraging the violent combination of numerous cultures and likely silencing some of those cultures in the process. Despite his nationalistic motivations, his judgment of Hungarian folk cultures was equally problematic, as demonstrated by his frequent choice to refer to his preferred pedagogical material as “primitive.”

The Schulwerk, too, contains some unresolved multicultural residue in terms of the legacies of both its custom instruments and its classroom format. The first set of instruments were rattles or “jingles”; as Orff says in his autobiography, “we used exotic models, mostly African, that could be found in every folklore museum... These primitive sound sources could have an exciting effect when used with rhythmic movement exercises and with dancing.” His use of the word “primitive,” like Kodály’s, disparages these foreign elements and seems to contradict his acknowledgement of their pedagogical value. He also appropriated his specialized barred percussion instruments from a type of African xylophone. The role of these instruments in the Schulwerk was not culturally informed in any way, which is especially reprehensible in retrospect given how central that role was; they appeared in his praxis “not accidentally but fundamentally, shaping form and tone color, developing a life of their own.” The same can even be said of the format of the Schulwerk classroom, modeled as it was on the gamelan

146 Ibid., 18.
147 Ibid., 69.
ensemble, a type of percussion orchestra native to the Indonesian peoples of Java, Sunda, and Bali. Orff comments on this similarity:

> The Gamelan music of Indonesia, with its polyrhythms and polyphony, can be considered as the peak of achievement for a non-European music culture, and is from a certain viewpoint an equal counterpart to western art music, looking back as it does over hundreds of years’ history. Even when only considered visually this orchestra from the East, with its instruments that have a cultish and magical meaning, leaves behind an overwhelming impression.  

Orff’s description, while perhaps intended to be complimentary, clearly denigrates Gamelan music, placing it and all non-European music on a separate value scale from Western art music. The word “cultish” has especially disrespectful connotations here, especially considering that Orff’s own classroom is modeled after these ensembles but somehow escapes the same “cultish” judgment in favor of a sense of what he perceives as a natural and thorough education. Nearly all of Orff’s praxis is appropriated from other cultures, and while he does occasionally allude to this in his writings, he speaks of the non-Western practices diminishingly and without regard for their value in their native cultures.

In Sistema programs, the relationship between repertoire and local culture is even more complex than in the other two approaches. There exists a widespread misconception in global media that El Sistema seeks to rescue the impoverished youth of Latin America through the exclusive use of the Western classical canon. If this were true on a systemic level, it would be deeply troubling; certainly, to assume that primarily-European classical music is the only chance at salvation for Venezuelan children, especially given the nation’s own rich musical history, would be, to borrow Shieh’s word, “grotesque.” This mindset echoes that of the colonial powers that first disturbed Venezuela in the early sixteenth century. In reality, however, nothing in El Sistema’s public materials mentions classical music at all. On the official website of the

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148 Ibid., 92.
149 Shieh, “Relationship, Rescue, and Culture,” 574.
Venezuelan branch, officially called El Sistema Nacional de Orquestas y Coros Juveniles e Infantiles de Venezuela, the mission statement of the program is stated as follows:

_Venezuela’s National System of Youth Orchestras and Choirs is a social program of the Venezuelan State established in service of the pedagogical, occupational, and ethical rescue of infancy and youth through musical instruction and collective practice dedicated to the training, prevention, and recovery of the country’s most vulnerable groups in both age and socioeconomic terms._150

While the social angle of the program is made extremely clear, there is no mention of a preferred musical style or tradition. The program name itself calls for the use of traditionally European orchestras and choirs, a Sistema tenet frequently emphasized by Abreu, but even the legacy of these ensemble formats does not necessarily detract from whatever cultural impacts that individual ensembles seek to make on their communities. Music history professor Ludim Pedroza believes that Sistema ensembles are used “as a canvas where musical styles are blended,”151 that they are “Latinoamericanized and revitalized in the hands of a non-European youth force.”152 In this setting, European and Venezuelan (or any other local) culture can coexist productively.

All of these examples raise the question of how to appropriately implement our three approaches in contemporary Western classrooms, particularly from a cultural perspective. In the case of Orff’s instrumentarium, Beegle and Bond suggest “accepting the instruments as acultural and using them for pedagogical purposes.”153 While this tactic would certainly require less planning and sensitivity than any alternative, it would also eliminate the opportunity for active engagement with a variety of musical cultures. An assumption of cultural neutrality would also undermine the subtle cross-cultural leanings of El Sistema, as well as the entire premise of the

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152 Ibid.
Kodály concept, rather than solving their existing issues of ignorant cultural amalgamation.

Offering another solution, ethnomusicologist Juliana Cantarelli Vita writes extensively on the concept of teaching music practice “in and as culture” as opposed to holding the two somewhat separately:

When embracing the idea of music in and as culture, three major facets must be considered... (1) sonic elements (including notation, instrumentation, and the sound and ‘flavor’ of the music); (2) sociocultural context (i.e., functions, meaning, and context); and (3) transmission (i.e., the attitude or frame of mind of musicians or audience, and the way a tradition is passed on).\(^{154}\)

Cantarelli Vita’s philosophy accepts that all music is inextricable from the cultural context out of which it grew, and that the technique of teaching music in and as culture should extend to all music, including “that which surrounds our lives, our students' cultural backgrounds and roots, our own personal roots, and music available in our community.”\(^{155}\) Within this framework, every song, instrument, and rhythmic or melodic motive is positioned explicitly within the tradition from which it originated so that students are learning culture as they practice it.

Culturally engaged teaching is, of course, Kodály’s ultimate goal, and it is neither counterproductive to or incompatible with Orff’s original intentions for the Schulwerk, setting aside for a moment his political beliefs; Cantarelli Vita is sure to note that “the adoption of music in and as culture serves to strengthen, rather than substitute for, the elemental experience.”\(^{156}\) The intermingling of culture can be especially powerful for Sistema students when it is executed with public intention. Pedroza offers an example:

the April 6, 2008 concert by *Pabellón sin baranda*... brought together vocals, flute, cello, clarinet, bass flute, and marimba, with Venezuelan instruments such as the *cuatro*, the *arpa llanera*, and the *maracas*. The selections included merengues, *joropos*, and *valses*


\(^{155}\) Ibid., 44.

\(^{156}\) Ibid., 46.
This concert saw the juxtaposition of European music with Venezuelan music, European instruments with Venezuelan instruments. In overtly multicultural contexts such as this one, young musicians are able to engage with European musical customs while mindfully contrasting them with musical practices from their home country, consequently developing deeper connections with their own national and cultural identities. Shieh posits that this approach is “at its best a kind of ownership that brings a power in reimagining, in reinterpreting a musical tradition with elite associations.” Of course, Sistema-based programs outside of Venezuela need not concern themselves as fully with the musical traditions of Venezuela, but there is space in every program for culturally-specific material. If taught and programmed sensitively, and ideally juxtaposed with music with which the ensemble is already familiar, the European musical tradition can provide an opportunity for students to engage with their cultures in a productive, educational, and reclamatory way.

Without their particular repertoires, these three teaching approaches would accomplish neither their unique learning goals nor the objectives that they share—efficient acquisition, agency and creative thinking, and sensitive cultural positioning. It is clear, however, that while repertorial choices do matter, it is the strategic implementation of those choices in the classroom that enables students to engage with them in a socially productive way. Kodály’s folk songs and singing games, Orff’s ostinati and improvisatory exercises, El Sistema’s mix of Venezuelan, European, and student culture—these characteristic features of each approach are rich with musical and social possibilities. With careful planning, practitioners of all three approaches assure that their students will activate those possibilities through ensemble music practice.

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157 Pedroza, “Music as Live-Saving Project.”
Instrumentation

Just as music education is nothing without a strategically implemented repertoire, so is that repertoire useless without some form of instrumentation with which to perform it. The ability to produce music as we recognize it, Mithen tells us, is uniquely human, coinciding as it has with the emergence of *Homo sapiens*. Rousseau, too, is enamored by the natural humanity of the singing voice, imagining that “as soon as vocal signs strike your ear, they announce to you a being like yourself”; the same, of course, is true of the sounds of a piano, a ukulele, a cymbal, an alphorn, a talking drum, or any other instrument constructed or repurposed by a human. That said, I am not interested in whether a child chooses to play trumpet or violin so much as I am in whether the instruction is instrumental, vocal, or both. Both singing and instrument-playing are vulnerable, challenging, and deeply personal undertakings, and both are beneficial to social education in their own ways. The emphases of the Kodály concept on singing, Orff Schulwerk on simple instruments, and El Sistema on a sequence involving both choirs and orchestras all inform the ways in which their students learn to make music and to communicate with, empathize with, and actively participate with their fellow musicians. The following discussion reviews each of these emphases before returning to Kodály and Orff for a deeper analysis of their multifarious techniques.

The Kodály concept is not unique in its insistence that music education begin with singing, but it is the only of our three approaches to end with singing as well. This stipulation, that music should be taught to young children through the voice alone, was one of Kodály’s only practical recommendations for the music classroom. He wrote that “all people should sing before

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159 Mithen, *Singing Neanderthals*.
160 Rousseau, “Origin of Languages,” 63-64.
161 Stark, “Kodály Music Education.”
playing an instrument, if any... We should make musicians before we make instrumentalists and all would be better.”¹⁶² At the core of this resolution was the belief that singing, especially at a young age, fosters fluent musicianship in a way that novice instrument-playing does not. The voice, being so deeply rooted in the body and its systems, is “the most intimate of all instruments”;¹⁶³ this intimacy turns music-making into an embodied practice. As a consequence, “a given work of music will be living reality for the child because he has experienced the structure of the work with its melodic and rhythmic elements through his own singing.”¹⁶⁴ To produce a song from one’s own mouth, lungs, and vocal cords demands high levels of familiarity with and comprehension of the piece. This process can feel very vulnerable in a group, especially to children with little experience. Combined with the natural emotionality of music, ensemble singing quickly becomes a profoundly social and expressive activity, a potent form of communication between the individual singers. Campbell writes that the voice

is affected by the singer’s physical self: when she feels good, her voice can sound ‘good’; when she has a cold, her voice may sound less healthy, too. The voice is influenced by the state of the singer’s mind, too: rarely can a troubled and unhappy singer sound genuinely joyful. The voice is conveniently situated, easily transportable, and able to perform a continuum of communication that stretches from speech to song. Undeniably, singing is part of person’s inner and unseen self, yet while the vocal mechanism and production process may seem abstract, singing is very real.¹⁶⁵

The ability of the singing voice to transmit inner experience and truths makes it an extremely powerful vehicle for musical expression. Its proximity and similarity to the speaking voice naturally compound this effect.

In an unfamiliar setting or group, however, children might not be willing to sing in front of their peers, and instruments can provide a more comfortable alternative. “Instruments,” says

¹⁶³ Houlnahan and Tacka, Kodály Today, 22.
¹⁶⁵ Campbell, Songs in Their Heads, 250.
Campbell, "are naturally viewed as less personal to children than their voices; as extensions of
the children, instruments may be considered less likely to bring exposure and possible
humiliation." Even so, instruments, especially as they are used in Orff Schulwerk, maintain an
expressive ability that can lead audiences to “treat music as a virtual person and attribute to it an
emotional state and sometimes a personality and intention.” This social faculty of instruments
should not be overlooked. Salmon speaks of the role of the musical instrument in interaction:

Instruments and sounding objects impart sensuous impressions and empower individual
expression. They can activate, encourage, stimulate, and motivate. Moreover, they serve
as a means for establishing contact—to oneself, to the instrument, and through the
instrument to others. In pedagogy and therapy, instruments and sonorous objects are
media that can build a bridge between an individual’s inner and outer worlds.

Orff Schulwerk, which uses instruments almost exclusively in its pedagogy, encourages this
relationship. Instruments can act as proxies for Orff students, helping them to get their social and
expressive needs across to their peers without the use of verbal communication. In learning to
play with each other, they learn to interact with each other in a productive, creative, and
respectful way. The physicality of an instrument can also be useful to certain students; “children
seem to appreciate that they can see as well as hear their sound production while playing an
instrument (as opposed to the more “covert,” nonvisual activity of singing), and their active
fingers, hands, and arms have them involved in... pronounced physical activity.” While singing
requires the careful connection of one’s own internal organs to the outside world, instruments are
conceptually simpler for those students with limited singing experience. This is especially true of
Orff’s specialized percussion instruments. In this way, instruments—and Orff’s in
particular—can be used as accessible, age-appropriate expressive tools whenever singing is

166 Ibid., 241.
167 Mithen, Singing Neanderthal, 275.
169 Campbell, Songs in Their Heads, 241.
impossible or impractical for students. To be clear, instruments should not always replace singing but should be considered equal alternatives with merit of their own.

El Sistema seeks to include the best of both vocal and instrumental pedagogy in its instrumental sequence and multi-ensemble structure. As I have already established, it is difficult to generalize about practices across núcleos and community centers given the absence of a common methodology, but several Sistema scholars have identified patterns in how singing and instruments are used in at least a few program locations. According to Booth’s observations, “in students’ early years, the music fundamentals are introduced through games, play, and chorus, with many kinds of music. Children move into instruments around ages four and five” and then settle into orchestras. Uy’s aforementioned fieldwork produced a more detailed yet similar account of Sistema students’ transitions from vocal to instrumental performance. By beginning music instruction with singing, Sistema practitioners take advantage of the immediate expressivity of the voice in their lessons before, in keeping with Kodály’s vision for vocal pedagogy, transferring their students’ resulting skills to instrumental ensembles. Instruments, as we have observed in the Schulwerk, carry a good deal of social weight in the classroom, and many Sistema students find additional significance in the act of playing and owning an instrument. At the Kalikolehua núcleo, several students expressed “sentiments similar to a young man who said, ‘My favorite thing is being in music class—learning all those instruments because I never played an instrument in my whole life.’” While children from low-income families might not otherwise have owned or even touched an instrument, El Sistema provides this opportunity, usually free of charge. Students are able to practice the “acquisition and care of

170 Booth, “What is El Sistema?”, 47.
171 Uy, “Venezuela’s National Music Education.”
material objects," preparing them for adulthood in a way that their normal day-to-day lives might not have otherwise. This preparation places them in a position that is more socially equitable with that of their higher-income peers—who may have already experienced the responsibility of ownership—accomplishing on some level the goal of social change via music that El Sistema promises.

Compared with El Sistema’s public allegiance to both vocal and instrumental practice, Kodály’s and Orff’s social depth is subtler and more deeply entwined with the other, non-instrument activities involved in each approach. Kodály students are frequent multitaskers, often combining and switching between singing, lyric repetition, solfège, rhythmic syllables, hand signs, rhythmic movement, notation and transcription practice, and other forms of dramatic movement or dance. In a study of students in music-centered nursery and primary school programs, Kalmár showed that “music education based on Kodály’s conception has a beneficial role in children’s mental development,” specifically in the areas of “creativity, concept formation and motor skills.”

Given that the music classroom, while obviously placing priority on musical learning, “provides models of experience on which later the external experiences will leave their imprint,” this development easily translates to the real world. Advanced cognitive skills improve children’s ability to function both inside and outside of group music lessons, setting them up to be more successful members of society. The Schulwerk places a similar emphasis on cognitive development through the variety of participatory options made available by its improvisatory class structure. Within the Schulwerk, individual musical roles and expectations can be adjusted according to the strengths of each student. Additionally, the multifaceted, multisensory nature of the Schulwerk is “important for students whose sensory integration is still

174 Kalmár, “Effects of Music Education,” 68.
175 Kokas, “Kodály’s Concept,” 51.
developing; the loss or underdevelopment of one sense often can be compensated by other senses.”\textsuperscript{176} This quality of the Schulwerk allows for the relatively easy inclusion of children with sensory challenges or limitations. Even the neurological ties between music and emotion can strengthen students’ social skills and can be “used to build the capacity to feel and identify emotions among students with trauma”\textsuperscript{177} in a trauma-informed music classroom. It is almost surprising that music therapy was not Orff’s original intention in developing the Schulwerk, considering its vast potential for sensitive, inclusive teaching; in many respects, however, this implementation is just a modern extension of Orff’s belief that elemental music “can be learned and experienced by everyone.”\textsuperscript{178}

It is interesting that our three approaches, while all combining intimate, internal experiences with external, kinesthetic ones, are said to have such a broad range of effects on the social developments of students. Of course, it is possible that Kodály and Orff students also gain an increased sense of maturity and responsibility as a result of their music lessons, that Orff and El Sistema students also see an improvement in cognitive functioning, and that El Sistema and Kodály students also feel included in their lessons regardless of ability, but each method is still considered to have its own individual strength in social education. Instrumentation does matter, but just as we observed in our exploration of repertoire, it is the implementation, the context in and intent with which instruments are used, that shapes the way they facilitate social growth.

Performance

The role of instruments in the classroom is closely tied to how each approach frames the act of performance. In the context of music education, performance can refer to many different

\textsuperscript{176} Salmon, “Inclusion and Orff Schulwerk,” 13.
\textsuperscript{177} Pedregón, “Trauma-Informed Teaching Practices,” 47.
\textsuperscript{178} Orff, “Schulwerk and Music Therapy,” 15.
activities, including but also extending far beyond formal concerts. El Sistema does, of course, subscribe to a concert-centric rehearsal model, but as Orff Schulwerk and the Kodály concept do not, it is necessary for us to expand our conception of performance. According to Richard Schechner, founder of the performance studies field, “performances exist only as actions, interactions, and relationships.”¹⁷⁹ His emphasis on “interactions” and “relationships” points to the inextricability of performance from social practice. He implies an exchange, a moment of contact where not one but multiple parties are actively involved. Pianist and musicologist Jonathan Dunsby adds that performance is “an activity that draws on the past and unfolds into the future (satisfying our eagerness to perceive what happens next), but one that exists in that inevitably mobile time called the present.”¹⁸⁰ By bringing together past and future into one action in the present, performers simultaneously employ their past experiences and inform their future experiences. For this reason, performance is significant to both individual and social growth.

Building on the work of Schechner, Dunsby, and others, I define performance as any action or set of actions carried out by an individual (the performer) with the awareness, conscious or not, that one or more other individuals (the audience) are observing that action. The action can be musical or otherwise artistic, but is not necessarily so. The performance act builds upon past knowledge and activities (the process) and results in a present event (the product) that is interpreted and evaluated by the audience in the future (the reception). Depending on the formality or explicitness of the performance event, its engagements with past, present, and future can be separate or completely entangled with one another. In the discussion that follows, I will explain how these facets of performance—performer, audience, process, product, and reception—function differently in Orff Schulwerk, the Kodály concept, and El Sistema. I will

also explore how the various facets can impact the social lives and identities of the performers in both an individual and an ensemble sense.

So far, I have only acknowledged two roles in performance: the performer and the audience. Throughout his own breakdown of musical practice, musicologist Lewis Rowell includes a third role, the composer, who is responsible for creating the music that the performer enacts and the audience perceives.\(^{181}\) I have chosen to omit the composer in my discussion due to the vastly different manifestations of that role in our three approaches, from the broad range of named composers in El Sistema to the unknown folk composers in the Kodály concept to the students themselves in Orff Schulwerk. The other two roles, the performer and the audience, remain vital to my conception of each approach. In all three approaches, the students are understood to be active performers, regardless of the form that their participation takes. The audience role is more varied between approaches. El Sistema features traditional concert-style performance as a centerpiece of its pedagogy, with a clear, physical divide between performer and audience. The audience is made up of non-performers, either local community and family members or residents of other cities that the performers are visiting on tour. On the other hand, Orff and Kodály—and still El Sistema, but to a lesser extent—utilize a model for collaborative participation in which students are simultaneously the performers of their own acts and the audience for the performances of their peers. This duality, while difficult to separate for analytical purposes, allows for a truly reciprocal exchange of social information that is equally if not more potent than that of a more traditional performer–audience relationship.

While performance can occur in any setting, it requires a certain level of self-awareness and intentionality that is not always present in other activities. To account for this difference,

“special rules exist, are formulated, and persist”\textsuperscript{182} for performed actions. Rules can appear in the music classroom in any number of forms, from explicit guidelines to implicit norms or standards. They can be created and enforced by the students, the teacher, or both, although, as Salmon points out, “rules that students set for themselves are often more effective.”\textsuperscript{183} These rules or guidelines are integral to performance because they provide grounds on which an audience can evaluate or place social judgment upon a performed product during its reception stage. As a result, evaluation is instrumental to the installation and maintenance of cultural norms. This is certainly true for child peer groups,\textsuperscript{184} but the same procedure occurs within groups of all sizes, cultures, and demographics. It is evaluation that allows these groups to retain cohesive social identities.

In order to create a productive evaluative space, each teaching approach must include guidelines or rules in its pedagogy. Rules can apply to nearly any level or aspect of music-making depending on the type of performance taking place. These rules both shape and are shaped by the performance process and product. In El Sistema, like any other conventional ensemble, this process takes the form of frequent rehearsals over a long period of time, resulting in the product of a formal concert. Consequently, rules must be introduced that prepare students for success in rehearsal and concert. Whether or not they are explicitly announced, there are rules associated with traditional concert conduct: wear formal clothing, stay silent between pieces, concentrate on the director, do not wave to your friends and family in the audience, and so on. Only if students follow these guidelines, act professionally, and play their best can a concert be considered successful. Rehearsals also constitute performance in and of themselves, positioning

\textsuperscript{183} Salmon, “Inclusion and Orff Schulwerk,” 16.
\textsuperscript{184} Kyratzis, “Talk and Interaction.”
every núcleo community member as both performer and audience and therefore requiring their own set of rules. Uy reports that, in his experience, such expectations are usually shared with students and their families during their initial registration:

New families learn about participation requirements during this inscription process. Parents learn about the schedule of picking up and dropping off their children on a daily basis, and they are given a list of núcleo guidelines and procedures that details what is to be expected of the child and the parents, including practicing, attendance and participation in concerts. Before the students even begin, they and their parents are told that participation requires active involvement and commitment... The list of general rules given to the parents outlines requirements for students to come prepared to study, that they participate in all activities, and, in return, they will receive proper attention. The list also cites the schedule and the available transportation to and from the núcleo. The students agree to respect the facilities, the instruments, the equipment and the teachers and staff.185

These expectations provide an instruction manual for any individual or family that seeks to immerse itself in the culture of a núcleo. If they follow the rules, they will be accepted into the community. If they do not, even if their noncompliance is accidental, they will more likely be held at a distance from the community or removed altogether. In this way, Sistema members use actions to perform their interest, or lack of interest, in joining or staying in the community, a performance that is evaluated in turn by the current community members. Just as in a formal concert setting, performance demonstrates the performer’s values and prompts a positive or negative social judgment.

Performance in the Kodály classroom tends to look quite different from that in El Sistema given their varying approaches to learning and exercising musical skill. As in El Sistema, students interact with each other and exchange musical knowledge throughout the process leading up to performance. Unlike El Sistema, however, the Kodály concept does not typically plan for formal concerts. This is not to say that Kodály students never perform in concert; depending on the desire of individual teachers to showcase student work, these classes might


hold concerts several times a year. Given the inconsistency of this practice across Kodály programs and the omission of concerts in Kodály’s own pedagogical writing, I do not consider this form of performance to be an integral part of the Kodály concept. Instead, the approach centers the collaborative rendition of existing musical works. A successful rendition is defined by the accurate acquisition and execution of a song, including all of its musical components: melody, rhythm, lyrics, movement, and expression. Singing games, a specific area of the Kodály repertoire, are particularly conducive to this sort of active, collaborative learning given their complexity.\textsuperscript{186} Even in singing games that are inherently improvisatory, Kalmár writes that

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there are rules which set limits to free imagination, e.g. the plot, given rhythm, number of syllables, etc. These situations are thus analogous to the conditions of adult creative activity, in contrast to children’s free play. Within the limits of these rules the children are encouraged to be as bold in inventing ideas as they can and to find variations which are very different from each other.\textsuperscript{187}
\end{quote}

These in-game rules provide inspiration through limitation while also defining what is acceptable in gameplay and what is not. “Because clapping games have performance as their goal,” I have previously explained, “it would be against the players’ interests to allow a variation to go unaddressed. At the end of gameplay, any variant that has not been either eliminated or integrated into group practice jeopardizes the consistency and perceived success of the performance.”\textsuperscript{188} Rules therefore represent the criteria on which performance is judged. Depending on the specific piece or the genre or culture from which it has been borrowed, some components, like melody, rhythm, and lyrics, might be more strictly enforced through recordings or sheet music than others, like movement and expression, which might be left up to the teacher or students. Either way, expectations of some sort must be established so that students can strive to meet a certain standard of performance. In doing so, each student simultaneously performs

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\textsuperscript{186} Coberly, “‘Say, Say, My Playmate,’”
\textsuperscript{187} Kalmár, “Effects of Music Education,” 64.
\textsuperscript{188} Coberly, “‘Say, Say, My Playmate,’” 21-22.
\end{flushright}
respect for their collective musical practice and for their classmates, who are all ideally contributing that same level of effort and care.

With yet another approach to performance, Orff Schulwerk contains perhaps the most explicit opportunities for students to express their own values to their peers. The vast majority of performance in the Schulwerk occurs, of course, through improvisation. Anthropologists Alessandro Duranti and Steven Black posit that improvisation “consists of the production of meaningful actions that follow patterns or principles… that are both sufficiently specific to provide guidelines and constraints on what to do (and what to expect) and sufficiently generic to allow for individual and collective creativity.”189 A similar dichotomy exists in all of the meaningful interactions that shape children’s social development; these interactions expect “conformity to a given model or pattern while leaving room for some variation.”190 This same improvisatory frame is consistently present within the Orff classroom. Bond says that “enabling creativity in the music class requires a delicate balance between structure and freedom.”191 Structures or repeated routines streamline the learning process by enabling students to focus on a smaller number of variables while others are controlled. Viewed in the other direction, the stability of some musical (or social) features allows for deeper and more rewarding exploration of others. This stability comes as a result of a set of rules that limit the range of musical input that is considered acceptable in group improvisation. Students listen to each other’s contributions and evaluate them by responding in whatever way they see fit. In other words, this type of ensemble improvisation is truly a team effort. Working together and gently guided by their

teacher, children begin to develop a collective sense of what is acceptable and what is not—what should stay within a piece and what might best serve a future project. In refining their collective musicianship, they simultaneously assist in teaching each other and exert agency over their own learning.

Students in these music classrooms can use performance to assert and defend their positions within their communities, modeling a more general process of social positioning that will carry them through adult life. The reception of a performance is therefore extremely important in both musical and non-musical contexts. The audience’s judgment can, of course, be positive, negative, or somewhere in between. It can also be as blunt as the audience sees fit, ranging from a direct announcement, as in a competition or other graded performance, to a subtle physical motion or ambiguous comment from a peer. Regardless of their overtness, all forms of evaluation are critical to the preservation and cohesion of a given community, as well as to the impact that individual performances have on that group. For insight into the potential functions of performance, we can turn once again to Schechner, who uses a helpful visual in his 2013 book *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (see Figure 6). Perhaps (although not necessarily) excluding engagement with the sacred and the demonic, the rest of Schechner’s functions of performance seem quite relevant to our teaching approaches. We see an emphasis on community-building and healing in therapeutic applications of the Schulwerk, on identity celebration and cultural teaching in the Kodály concept, and on aestheticism and entertainment in El Sistema. Still, all three approaches arguably contain aspects of all six functions. The impact of these approaches on the social world, then, is enormous, acting on numerous branches of the human experience.
As I have shown, performance in El Sistema, the Kodály concept, and Orff Schulwerk takes a wide array of forms. All three of these approaches, however, ensure that performance takes place in a setting balanced between control and openness. Students are presented with guidelines for their social and musical behavior and may opt in or out of compliance in an effort to express their alliance to the community from which those rules emerged. This framework allows for the reconceptualization of the music classroom as “a special world... where people can make the rules, rearrange time, assign value to things, and work for pleasure.”\textsuperscript{192} Within this “special world,” children have the opportunity to exercise a high level of agency that they are not necessarily permitted in their everyday, adult-driven lives; the philosophies of the teaching approaches explicitly value the input of their students. Additionally, their progressions from  

performance process to product—rehearsal to concert, practice to rendition, and improvisation, which simultaneously encapsulates both process and product in the Schulwerk—parallel the maturation that every individual undergoes throughout their lifetime. As Schechner puts it, “the long infancy and childhood specific to the human species is an extended period of training and rehearsal for the successful performance of adult life.”

Conclusion

I return now to our narratives, to Rousseau and Mithen and their discrete yet similar positions on the social capacity of music. Throughout this paper, I have built upon their claims in my exploration of formal music education. Admittedly, however, I have not acknowledged whether either scholar discusses this type of education in their own work. This omission has not been accidental; instead, it has allowed me to develop my own ideas on the topic without interference. In reality, Mithen does not touch upon education or formalized teaching in any of his work aside from occasional discourse on Infant-Directed Speech. Given that his scholarly expertise rests within evolutionary archeology rather than any of the more musical fields inhabited by authors I have cited, his failure to mention education comes as no surprise. Rousseau does write extensively on both academic and social education in *Emile*, and in that treatise offers several paragraphs’ worth of thoughts on music education and his preference for moveable-do solfège. Still, he insists that when “viewed as an art, the success of education is almost impossible, since the essential conditions of success are beyond our control. Our efforts may bring us within sight of the goal, but fortune must favour us if we are to reach it.” This somewhat disconsolate

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195 Ibid., 6.
perspective stems from his belief that humans on their own can never replicate the sort of thorough, holistic education that nature provides. To seek to provide that level of education, he implies here, would be somewhat futile.

These two perspectives, the philosophical-literary and the scientific-historical, illuminate the breadth of intellectual fields in which pedagogy has been and must be considered. However, while I am grateful to Rousseau and Mithen for their work in establishing a sociomusicological basis for my research, their respective indifference to and pessimism towards formal music education do not align with my own view. I believe that music learning—or, more precisely, music acquisition—is a vital part of the human experience. Using Orff Schulwerk, the Kodály concept, and El Sistema as models, I have shown how music education can produce more socially intelligent students, and how active engagement with repertoire, instrumentation, and performative processes can equip students with interpersonal skills and cultural knowledge that will help them succeed as members of adult society. In the right conditions, the music classroom doubles as a controlled gateway into the social world; as I have argued throughout this paper, group music-making is the key to achieving this multivalent educational experience. Orff Schulwerk, the Kodály concept, and El Sistema have their flaws, but their pedagogies display a firm dedication to nurturing social classrooms.

Moving forward, then, what can these three approaches learn from each other? The rapidly changing social conditions of the twenty-first century have placed additional pressure on educational programming to keep up; music classes are no exception. In an increasingly technological present, Orff Schulwerk illustrates a potential benefit of technology in the elementary music classroom. According to Beegle and Bond, “advances in assistive technology have made it possible for children with special needs to play instruments in ensembles.”

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creative essence of the Schulwerk allows for technological adjustments in classroom praxis as long as those adjustments encourage creative musical exploration and increase the accessibility of the material. The Kodály concept, on the other hand, aspires to accessibility through its willingness to base formal lessons on the music that children encounter in their everyday lives. Building upon its initial interest in locally relevant folk music, Kodály teaching can draw on other musical styles that are even more familiar to its students, such as popular music and rap.

“By validating their musicianship and the music that they practice,” I argue in my Linguistics thesis, “music teachers can help their students to become stronger musicians and more effective cultural learners.” Music teachers can also support their students outside of the classroom, as exemplified in many Sistema programs. While musical skills are, of course, valuable on their own, Abreu believed that “the orchestra and the choir are much more than artistic structures. They are examples and schools of social life.”

El Sistema’s goal of engagement with local communities, pursued through public concerts, structured familial involvement, and academic resources, helps to create concrete links between the musical and non-musical lives of their students. These links allow educators to amplify the social impact of their teaching and offer a useful blueprint for practitioners of other approaches to music education.

None of these initiatives are impossible for the average music classroom. On the contrary, they are practicable and arguably even necessary if we hope to maximize social growth in group music lessons. Just as Rousseau believed that children are born with the tools required for making “perfect music,” so does Mithen maintain that “we can only explain the human propensity to make and listen to music by recognizing that it has been encoded into the human

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197 Coberly, “‘Say, Say, My Playmate,’” 52.
198 Abreu, El Sistema music revolution.
199 Rousseau, Emile, 113.
genome during the evolutionary history of our species.”

Campbell agrees, but warns against treating the capacity for music as a given and leaving this sociomusical learning up to chance. “Unless we seize opportunities to develop what is natural through training and education,” she says, “the musical impulse is likely to wither and fade.”

It is our responsibility as music educators, then, to make the most of our time with our students, to fill every moment with active and exciting musical experiences. We must emphasize both musical and social learning in every activity, regardless of the approach to which we subscribe. As we choose to ground our music teaching in collective practice, we encourage our students to become both better musicians and better, more socially sensitive versions of themselves.

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201 Campbell, *Songs in their Heads*, 218.
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