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## Haiku poetry: An Innovative Approach to Contemporary Music with Primary School Children and College Students

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### Abstract

This article presents one of the actions of the project titled “Re-inhabiting the Neighborhood: Transformation Processes of Empowerment among University-School-Society through Artistic Practices.” Its aim was to introduce haiku poetry in terms of its potential for vocal exploration through collective musical interpretation. Four workshops took place, two in a primary school, and two with students enrolled

in the third year of a graduate program for primary school teachers. Results indicate the potential of this kind of poetry as a learning tool in the approach to contemporary music, encompassing such values as collaboration, group cohesion, and a humane music education.

*Bach through an open  
dawn window –  
the birds are silent*

Jack Kerouac's *Book of Haikus* (2004, p.146)

*Small birds  
Singing today with the moon  
In full light*

(Inés, primary school child)

### **Setting the Stage**

This article presents one of the actions included in the project “Re-inhabiting the Neighborhood: Transformation Processes of Empowerment among University-School-Society through Artistic Practices,” which is part of the project I+D+i (2018-2021). The aim of the project was to contribute to social transformation and citizen empowerment in a particular neighborhood according to three objectives:

1. To design a transdisciplinary artistic program of socio-educational intervention based on the interconnection of university-school-society
2. To implement this program in the neighborhood
3. To evaluate its implementation and impact in the educational, artistic, social and cultural domains

Methodologically, a mixed-methods approach (Robson, 2011) was used in order to meet the level of analysis required by the aim of the whole research.

In the context of the first objective, a program with the title “*Mi barrio, Mi escuela*” (My neighborhood, My school) was designed to include twenty-nine actions. These were devised under the assumption that art experiences involving creative processes of active participation may help in the construction of a network that strengthens the social, educational, and cultural fabric in the neighborhood. It responds to the desire to prepare future primary school teachers to work in socially and culturally underserved contexts, and in so doing, to offer the pupils of

a primary school the opportunity to learn, experiment, create, and enjoy each of the planned artistic educational activities (Berbel et al., 2020; Veloso et al., 2019). Additionally, the university students were given the opportunity to experience the reality of the primary school setting through being directly involved in teaching activities. It is suggested that teaching proposals where the creative aspect prevails may help with problem solving and favor group cohesion (Berbel & Díaz, 2021; Cabedo & Díaz, 2013).

Regarding the second objective, the implementation of the aforementioned actions took place in a School Centre where the socio-economic status of the pupils was considered medium-low to very low. The neighborhood context required a plan for motivational activities to facilitate learning as well as to better reveal the children's capacities that, according to the classroom teachers, were yet unknown to them. Planning included a number of meetings with the participants in the project: university lecturers, artists, researchers, classroom teachers, and social representatives. The activities that were developed in the school were made possible thanks to the constant collaboration and participation of the classroom teacher and the support teacher. The activities that took place in the university were carried out in the music lab under the supervision of the professor responsible.

The university students worked with the pupils from the primary school during scheduled sessions in different settings: outdoors around the neighborhood, the school, and the university campus. In the context of the third objective of the project, each activity was evaluated by the students and their teachers, according to a range of previously defined methodological tools. An initial form was completed with the aims to be attained through each programmed activity, as was a final evaluation form, whereby the results were compared with the global design of the project. Taking into account the contribution of the involved actors (researchers, workshop leaders, college students, primary school teachers, artists, cultural associations activists, and neighbors), all were expected to deliver a final report including the analysis of the data set which included the mapping of the research context, sound and visual records, life stories, and interviews.

### **Introducing “Haiku poetry: An innovative approach to contemporary music with primary school children and college students”**

The aim of this action was to create an environment of pleasure and creativity while enabling the expression of the inner worlds of both the school children and the college students through a word-sound game approach. In this context, contemporary music was understood as distinct from the Western classical tradition, open to all sounds including noise (Cage, 1994), and registered through non-conventional scores.

The following specific objectives were defined:

1. To draw attention to the potential of the own voice in unveiling the small haiku poems
2. To collectively interpret musical haiku as represented in non-conventional scores
3. To invite the children and the college students to make compositions based on their own written haiku.

Methodologically, the workshops were analyzed through participant observation of all involved actors (Zieman, 2012), written comments of the classroom teachers, children and college students, and the reflexive notebook of the workshop leader.

The authors believe that this particular action was in line with what teachers and researchers have been doing for decades—drawing attention to the power that creative activities may bring about in terms of students’ enhanced sensitivity and capability to overcome difficulties and create meaning for the world they live in (Delalande, 1989; Finney, 2011; Glover, 2000; Paynter & Aston, 1970; Tafuri et al., 2003; Veloso, 2020).

### ***Haiku Poetry***

The haiku, as we know it today, originated in the seventeenth century in Japan. Matsuo Bashô (1644-94), the most famous of all haiku writers, created his own school (*Shômon*), and through his work, haiku poetry was raised to the highest poetic level (Basho et al., 2013). According to the *haikai* school, the first stanza (with three verses corresponding to 5-7-5 syllables) was called *hokku*, and it is customary for it to contain suggestions to the season of the year and the overall theme of the poem. Given its importance, poets became increasingly attentive to its elaboration, which has resulted in the isolated composition of *hokkus*. It was between the words *haikai* and *hokku* that the neologism “haiku” was coined at the end of the nineteenth century by the poet Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902) (Reichhold & Tsujimura, 2008).

The haiku’s arrival in Western countries in the twentieth century seems to have influenced practitioners of imagist principles, such as Ezra Pound (1885-1972), poets of the Beat generation like Jack Kerouac (2004), and those who read the translations of Chinese and Japanese classics by R.H. Blyth (1960/2000). While until the 1990s the practice of writing haiku in the West remained the work of a few, in the early nineties it “became widely recognized as a literary form, a discipline in its own right, known of and practiced by many more people” (Hardy, 2002, p. 11). However, haiku writers have meanwhile tended to abandon the seasonal imagery and have broadened the themes to include modern ideas—from the more local to the most significant global current events. Both the traditional canon (17 syllable, 5-7-5 pattern) and a freer version are used, and the movement is gaining an increasingly robust vitality, involving practitioners in all continents.

Regarding transdisciplinary approaches, on a worldwide scale we are currently witnessing a significant interaction of this small poetic form – sometimes associated with Zen philosophy –

with other art forms such as visual arts, music, and dance<sup>1</sup> as well as with health sciences, for example (Savishinsky, 2007). Furthermore, an interesting approach was found regarding the use of haiku in arts-based a/r/t/ography, as a means to represent, in a poetic form, interview transcripts with a group of 14 students in a West Vancouver, British Columbia secondary school rhythm and blues band class. The authors seem to have recognized the power of “the highly condensed haiku to transmit meaning in a synthesized and creative form” (Prendergast et al., 2009, p. 303). This is also in line with new trends to have arts-based research recognized as a potential mode of research in music and art education (Gouzouasis, 2018; Prendergast, et al., 2009; Sivenius & Friman, 2020).

Before addressing the wider use of haiku poetry in music composition and education, it might be the case of summarizing what haiku is, as best explained in the following quote from *The Haiku Handbook* by William Higginson (2010):

When we want to ‘reach’ another person with our feelings, do we just say, “I feel sad?” or “I’m happy?” Unless we tell *what* it is that makes us feel sad or happy, how can (others) share our feelings? In fact we automatically ask this very question when friends say they feel happiness or sadness, pain or joy: “What is it? What is the matter?” Or “What put that smile on your face?”  
Haiku is the answer to this “what?” (p. 5)

### ***Haiku Poetry and Music***

I have always enjoyed my trips to Japan because they have taught me so much. Above all they have taught me to respect simplicity. It is present there in the brevity of haiku. It is present in the décor of the home. It is the secret of Japanese cuisine, where freshness is prized above complexity. It is celebrated in the incense and tea ceremonies.<sup>2</sup> (Shafer, 2012, p. 229)

Schafer’s work as a composer and music educator, among other areas of his artistic endeavors, is extremely significant for an understanding of the possibilities of contemporary music in working with children and young people. That he also looked to haiku poetry in

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0WOMrhCAYjM>

<https://blogs.getty.edu/iris/11-haiku-to-teach-kids-about-art/>

<https://kinderart.com/art-lessons/painting/haiku-paintings/>

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/poeminstrokes/haiku-paintings-explore-the-world-of-haiku-poetry>

Accessed March 11, 2020

<sup>2</sup> Schafer, R. Murray, *Seventeen Haiku excerpt from My Life on Earth and Elsewhere*, R. Murray Schafer 360°, accessed March 11, 2020, <http://biblio.uottawa.ca/omeka2/schafer360/items/show/123>.

composing his *Seventeen Haiku*<sup>3</sup> (1998) gives us the dimension of this small poetic form in conveying meaning and entering the realm of such a specific art form as music. Numerous examples could be given in this domain of composition based on the haiku poetic form. However, Olivier Messiaen's (1962) *Sept Haïkai for solo piano and small orchestra*<sup>4</sup> may point to another significant way of approaching haiku: as instrumental sketches, evoking the virtuosity of Japanese birds, a much-loved inspiration of the music of this composer. It is not the poem itself that is the basis for the composition (unlike the above-mentioned work of Murray Schafer) but the essence of haiku poetry as a literary sketch that can be transposed to music using nothing else but the evocative power of the singing birds' metaphor.

### ***Haiku Poetry in Education and Music Education***

Do you remember, as a small child, when all words were a delight? Can you recall the thrill of hearing a new word, one that you wanted to say over and over? Perhaps it rhymed with one which you already knew, and you connected them again and again into your own poem [...] Can you recall that magical time when words took on significance beyond their meaning? (Hardy, 2002, p. 6)

For Hardy (2002), haiku poetry is like a 'grown-up' version of this magic, and it is, therefore, no wonder that teachers around the world grasp this poetic form to convey a sense of humanity in a concise and absolutely eloquent way. This practice has been happening for a long time already around the globe, whether with very young pupils or adolescents, and taking place in the native language, the second language, or in more elaborated humanities classrooms (Lee, 2011; Yahnke, 1981).

However, when conducting an extensive search for literature on the use of haiku in music education classes, either with young children or young adults, it was disappointing to find that this art form is scarcely used beyond the interpretation or composition of songs and dances based on a choice of haiku<sup>5</sup>. In this study, the authors intended to create a humane pedagogical situation, in the sense of "creating a humane world of music education and, through music education, contributing to the common good" (Yob & Jorgensen, 2020, p. 278-279). It was all about human connection and being attentive to the needs and creative expression of all involved actors.

Moreover, haiku poetry was used to get young children involved with contemporary music

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<sup>3</sup> Schafer, R. Murray (music); Kobayashi, Issa (text), *Seventeen Haiku (excerpt)*, R. Murray Schafer 360°, accessed March 11, 2021, <http://biblio.uottawa.ca/omeka2/schafer360/items/show/124>.

<sup>4</sup> Olivier Messiaen, *Sept Haïkai per pianoforte e piccola orchestra* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnMcor5Cyeo> Accessed March 11, 2020

<sup>5</sup> <https://teachingwithorff.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Inspired-by-Haiku.pdf> Accessed March 12, 2020

while providing the means to start understanding music scores both in reading and writing, and mainly through the use of the voice. This approach borrows from Victor Flusser, a composer, creator and director of the Centre de Formation de Musiciens Intervenants (CFMI), a center for training musicians to act in schools in Strasbourg, and also the promoter of the international movement ‘Music in Hospitals’ (2002)<sup>6</sup>.

According to Flusser (1990), “the practice of contemporary music with children does not, usually, qualify as musical practice. It is seen, when performed, as a ‘game,’ as the ‘development of creativity,’ as an ‘exercise’ or as an activity excessively ‘esoteric’” (p. 5)<sup>7</sup>. On the contrary, he sustains that the practice of today’s music can be a privileged means for a group of children to acquire the **skills, attitudes**, and the basic **keys of access** to the musical language. Focusing mainly on vocal practice, Flusser (1990) states:

The musical work with children should enable the development of

- **Skills:** a technical mastery and a perception ability;
- **Attitudes:** the greatest possible accuracy and demand, a ‘forgetting oneself’ and a personal engagement;
- **Acquisition of the keys of access** to musical elements: conceiving abstract structures and handling the formal relationships (syntactic and rhetorical) of the musical language. (p. 5)

In order to accomplish these aims, which are indeed both simple and complex, he adds an apparently obvious statement: **to make music with children is to make music**. As making music means interpretation and composition, this is the path to follow. And he elaborates, calling attention to the fact that musical practice with children is, mostly, a pedagogical practice, and only through interpretation will it become a musical moment. The score plays a major role as a means of conveying time: musical time. The teacher fades out to make way for the musician, and the children stop being pupils to become musicians. This correlates with his overall position about music education where teachers are responsible for nurturing “pupils’ aesthetic choices and opinions as well as their commitment, so that ethical and aesthetic considerations can be brought together in the same musical act. Only in this way can musical education be worthwhile” (Flusser, 2000, p. 43).

In line with these thoughts, Flusser (1988) composed nine sketches based on nine haiku for children’s voices, 7-11 years old. These small pieces convoke very precise intentions, working

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<sup>6</sup> <https://musicanoshospitals.wixsite.com/apmhis/historia>

<sup>7</sup> The translation of the text from French was done by the authors.

with timbre variations, controlled glissandi, articulation of the different sounds, and breathing.

### ***A Novel Approach***

Regarding the above-mentioned use of haiku in music education classes, how does Flusser's (1990) approach significantly differ from merely singing a song based on haiku lyrics? Firstly, the haiku is deconstructed according to three key components: its phonetics, syntax, and semantics:

1. phonetics – the production of the sounds, and the perception of the sounds that constitute the poem
2. syntax – the sentence structure and playing with its word order
3. semantics – the meanings that our imaginations develop by reading the haiku.

In a music composition, all three of these aspects can be developed, or just one or two. For example, one may imagine the soundscape that the poem evokes, and not even use its words (semantic aspect).

Secondly, in writing the score (one of the major aspects of this approach), a most rigorous method is demanded, one that, like the traditional score, deals with the two axes of time and pitch in a two-dimensional space. The child is elicited to unravel its meaning by a strict decoding system that makes clear what is first, and what follows, what parts of the music are to be performed simultaneously, and what parts follow one another. Indeed, the very same rules of the traditional score.

In order to conceive of working with children both on interpretation and on composition using the voice, one needs to be aware of the fact that they do not yet master all the required techniques. Therefore, according to Flusser (1988), the following issues must be taken into account:

1. The sounds to be produced must be within their capacity while demanding a commitment that enables progression and development
2. Formal relationships must stay at the level of elementary structures
3. “[S]ince music operates at the ephemeral level, meaning that it is in the memory that the object is constructed, the pieces must take into account the possibilities of abstraction of the child’s memory and be short” (p. 6).

In sum, Flusser's double approach to music – interpretation/composition – aligns with the general approach to any language. First, we go through a process of decoding (comprehension/deconstruction), and second, we proceed to encoding (inventing, composing).

### **Workshops with Pupils and University Students**



The haiku workshops took place in October 2019 as part of the project described in the introduction of this article, and they were prepared by one of the authors in collaboration with the co-authors. The workshop with the pupils was developed in the classroom setting at the school in the neighborhood where the overall project was being implemented, on two consecutive days with a group of 23 children, 10-11 years old. The workshop with the university students took place in the university on one day with two groups of 27/28 students enrolled in the third year of the graduate program for primary school teachers within the course subject *Artistic Education: Music. Didactics in primary school*.

The workshops were implemented in accordance with the recommendations of the Committee for Research Ethics of the University. Therefore, the following informed consent was obtained from the participants in the project, namely students and the guardians of under-aged pupils: participation in the overall research; usage of all images captured; commitment to anonymity related to all personal and confidential data.

Prior to the workshops, the university students developed ethnographic fieldwork that led to the writing of haiku inspired by different interesting spots in the neighborhood. This happened after having interviewed some of the residents, taken photos, recorded videos and audios, and finally produced individual reports. These haiku were presented and discussed in class with the children.

The primary school teacher also introduced the pupils to the haiku poetry form, and together they all wrote several poems, adhering to the traditional canon (17 syllable, 5-7-5 pattern) (Figure 1). This was later registered in audio and video format. In line with the above presented argument on creating a humane pedagogical situation, the overall content reflects the children's connection with their neighborhood, family, and peers, as well as environmental concerns, which seemed to be a significant topic within the school<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> The children's haiku were translated from Spanish by the authors, therefore losing the traditional syllable canon.

*Dead trees  
People contaminating  
Save the world*

*I live with parents  
brothers and pets  
I am very happy*

*My neighborhood I love  
with a big heart  
today cleaning up*

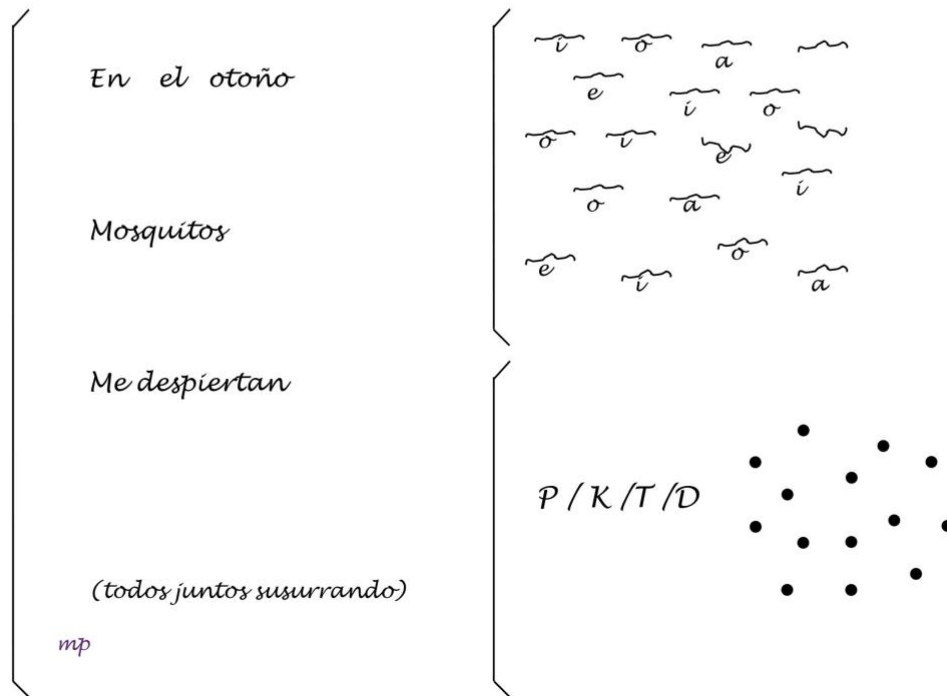
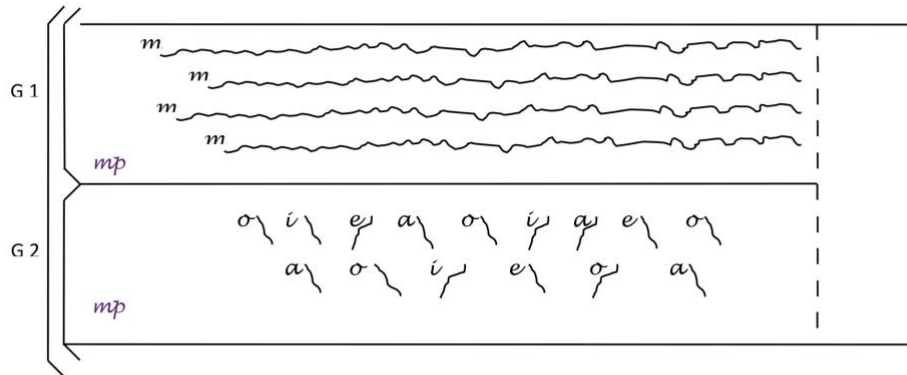
*Figure 1. Poems Written by Primary School Students*

Prior to the workshops with the children and the students, the workshop leader (one of the authors) composed three haiku<sup>9</sup> as a gift to bring into the classroom, and as the starting point for an initial exploration (Figures 2, 3, and 4).

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<sup>9</sup> These were inspired by Flusser's (1988) style of composing and writing scores. He also gave permission for reproducing his own composed haiku.

*en el otoño  
mosquitos  
me despiertan*



*In autumn  
Mosquitos  
Wake me up*

Figure 2. Poem Composed by a Workshop Leader

*¡Eh! Mira la luna  
Y oye el cuco  
En el bosque*

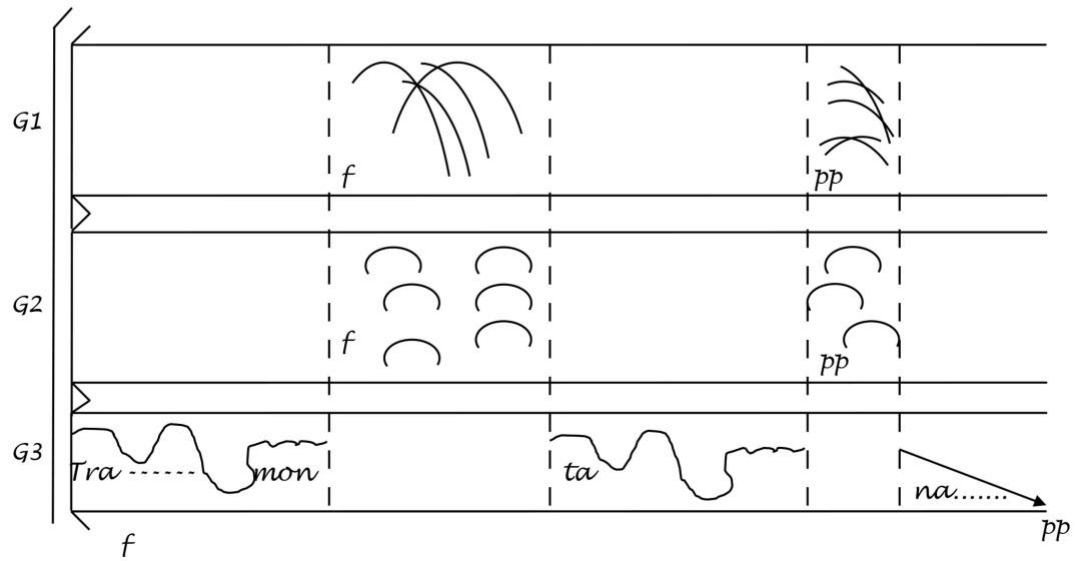
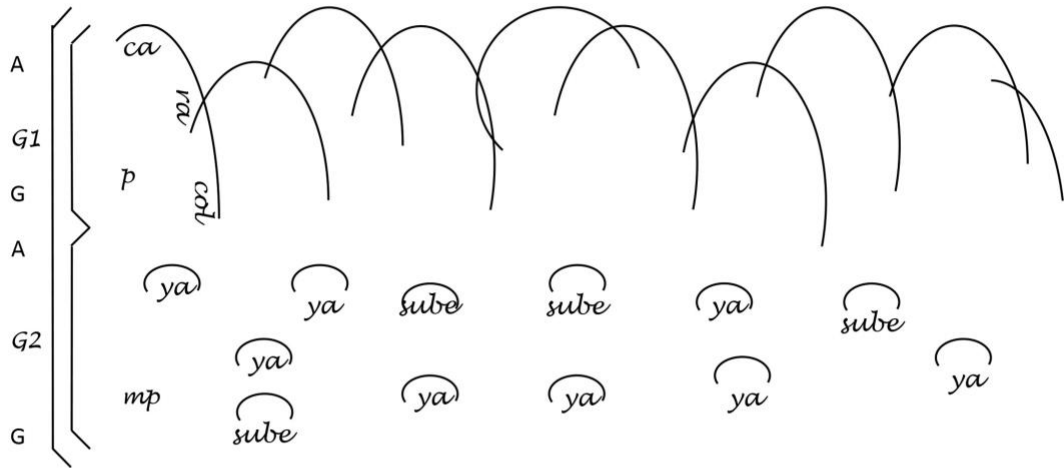
The musical score is organized into three systems, each with a vertical bracket on the left indicating the performer group:

- System 1:** Solo voice (A). It begins with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic and the exclamation *¡Eh!*. The melody consists of several notes, with some marked with accents. The lyrics *cu* and *co* are written below the notes. The system concludes with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic.
- System 2:** Chorus (Todos). It features three staves. The melody is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The lyrics *Bo* and *sque* are written below the notes. The system concludes with a piano (*p*) dynamic.
- System 3:** Chorus (Todos). It features two staves. The melody is marked with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic and the exclamation *¡Eh!*. The lyrics *cu* and *co* are written below the notes. The system concludes with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic.

*Eh! Look at the moon  
And listen to the cuckoo  
In the woods*

Figure 3. Poem Composed by a Workshop Leader

*Caracol*  
 Ya sube, sube,  
 La Tramuntana



*Snail*  
 Yes, climb, climb,  
 The Tramuntana

Figure 4. Poem Composed by a Workshop Leader

### ***Workshops with Pupils***

In the school where the workshops took place, a specialist music teacher was in charge of all music lessons and there was a designated room where all the children attended their music class, for one hour once a week. It was a pleasant room with a number of varied percussion and Orff instruments, a piano and a guitar, as well as a free space for movement and dance. According to a conversation with the music teacher, he privileged a practical approach with lots of singing, playing, and movement. Score reading and writing was not included in his lessons. He fetched the children from their regular classrooms and brought them to the music room while playing the saxophone (much like the Pied Piper of Hamelin). As described by the classroom teachers:

Our school is very musical, something that is in the air. For example, we don't have school bells; it is the music that leads us in and out of the classroom. And every Monday from 9 to 9:30 we sing with the community. We start the week singing with the families songs that have been learned in the music classes.

The two-hour workshop took place in a fifth-grade classroom with 23 children, 10-11 years old, 13 girls and 10 boys. Of those, eight pupils had special educational needs (SEN)<sup>10</sup>. In terms of their ethnic origin, seven were from the Roma community, two from the Sikhs community, one from Pakistan, one from Nigeria, one from Morocco, and one from Romania.

Besides the workshop leader and the principal investigator of the project, other adults present in the room included the primary school teacher and the support teacher as well as a student from the university enrolled in her practicum. The music teacher of the school also attended for a small period of time.

The initial portion of the session was spent getting to know each other, playing rhythmic games with the names of the pupils, as well as other vocal warm-up exercises. The previous work with haiku was recalled, and some time was spent making music together, mainly playing with words, and using the voice in many different ways.

Before distributing the first haiku that was going to be interpreted (Figure 2) the white board was used as the initial approach to unconventional score reading and writing. The workshop leader presented the two-dimensional space of pitch and time and every sound that was being collectively experimented found a place in the score, always in dialogue with the children, and

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/social/family/50325299.pdf> Accessed March 24, 2020

making sure that it was accepted by all. This was quite a straightforward process, involving fun and laughter, but also understanding, correcting each other, and accepting that a number of rules could help in reading and writing using an unconventional music score. A significant part of the first workshop was spent on the initial warm-up, improvising with sound, ways to graphically describe these sounds, and finding a common ground for the interpretation of the first haiku.

With the score of the first haiku ready, it was now time to demonstrate how to read it, and to start to prepare the performance. Although some of the children presented clear difficulties in remaining engaged after the long first part of the workshop, the room soon became filled with the sounds of buzzing mosquitos. In order to hold the children's attention for the remaining time, the workshop leader proposed a change of pace, and everybody was asked to stand for a final concert. The performance took place in front of the adults as the audience, and, at the end, everyone bowed together with the conductor to great final applause.

Reflections about the first workshop (taken from the notebook of the workshop leader):

I was really afraid that the children wouldn't follow me, wouldn't embrace the proposals, wouldn't be motivated for this kind of work. But this fear rapidly disappeared. Nothing of the sort happened, as I felt completely at ease from the very beginning. It seemed as though we had already known each other for a long time. And it was beautiful to see how they were taking it so seriously so soon. But... I am beginning to think that I was too optimistic imagining that it would be possible in two workshops to introduce non-conventional music scores, perform the three haiku and still compose and write down at least one haiku even if we did it collectively. Indeed, the composition may only take place in depth when the whole process of interpretation and score reading is acquired. I can't help thinking about Victor when he affirms that musical creation is, like any other language, a referential order, and that the child will only be able to compose when he/she possesses the syntactic and rhetorical musical references that interpretation can provide.

The next day, the activities proceeded very smoothly. The children were easily able to decode two additional haiku, and their interpretations were achieved within the time allocated for the workshop. For the third one (Figure 4), that included a solo voice, one of the adults present was asked to perform the solo. Similar to the day before, the second workshop ended with a performance in front of a small audience.

As anticipated, the activities did not proceed to the composition of a musical haiku based on

one that had been previously created in-class with the primary school teacher. This is indeed the next, and an important, step in this process.

Reflections about the second workshop (taken from the notebook of the workshop leader):

There is a lot to be taken from these two workshops. But I would stress the following, something that always comes back to me when I have the opportunity to work with children. And I need to state it, even if it will sound redundant: there is no such thing as making music with children, there is just **making music**. And this means to me, as a music educator, that I want them to enjoy it, this is always my internal demand, but also that they take pleasure in the demand for quality. In these workshops we couldn't go so far. I was, first and foremost, wanting them to enjoy it! And, of course, for them to understand the basics of using their voices unconventionally, exploring possibilities, wondering about the interesting and attractive results. And this was achieved. Beyond that, there is a whole world of possibilities to come, building upon this first approach to making (contemporary) music with children.

After the workshop, the children were asked to write down what they remembered from the two workshops. This was done in a short, very condensed way, indicating what was most valued. Some examples of those short texts include:

Child 1<sup>11</sup>: She told us how to sing haiku. This was very nice. Hope she comes again.

Child 2: We learned how to use our mouth to say words in piano and in forte. It was very funny.

Child 3: I had lots of fun. All the rhythms we did for the haiku were so much fun.

Child 4: We learned a lot of new things. And we did mmmmmm, laaaa, traaa, munnnn, taaaa, naaa...I want to do that again.

The classroom teachers also wrote a small report of the activity from which the following statements can be highlighted:

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<sup>11</sup> The authors decided not to use fictitious names when reporting either on the children or the students' views, but rather number the participants sequentially.



The activities that took place on the 28th and 29th of October were very rewarding for the pupils of the fifth class. Through the haiku work, the children discovered new ways of using their voices and “reading” the haiku scores, while following the direction of the workshop leader. She also understood the need for changing pace in order to keep the children attentive throughout the session. It was a beautiful moment when the whole class participated in the collaborative final performance while still being mindful of the individual contributions.

### ***Workshops with University Students***

In this workshop, which took place over two consecutive sessions with two different groups of students (with virtually the same content), a completely different approach was taken, given their age and level of intellectual elaboration. Therefore, the workshop began with an introduction to Flusser’s (1988,1990) haiku composition technique as described above. This was achieved through vocal improvisation, in connection with several score-writing possibilities. The students immediately joined in, and whereas there was some initial surprise regarding the novelty of the soundscapes, it was possible to move quickly through different stages, and proceed to interpretation. One of Victor Flusser’s (1988) most illustrative haiku (Figure 5) was interpreted, which had the positive effect of bringing all the students into the process. In fact, this is a particularly powerful example of the musical elaboration of a haiku focusing on its phonetic and semantic content.

la vache, meuh! meuh!  
 émerge  
 de la brume.

—: suu meuh!

Aigus

BRU  
BRU  
BRU  
BRU  
BRU  
BRU  
BRU  
BRU  
BRU  
BRU

Graves

BRU  
BRU  
BRU  
BRU  
BRU  
BRU  
BRU  
BRU  
BRU  
BRU

Aigus

Graves

V  
PPP

A<sup>#1</sup>  
##

CH  
##

PPP

\* Gue tiao count

the cow, moo! moo!  
 emerges  
 from the mist

Figure 5. Flusser (1998) Haiku Interpreted by University Students

Furthermore, the three haiku (Figures 2, 3, and 4) that were interpreted in the two workshops with the children were also presented to the students, who had no difficulty in decoding their content and figuring out the various sound possibilities. Unfortunately, in this case, there was again insufficient time to start the composition process.

Reflections about the workshop with two groups of students (taken from the notebook of the workshop leader):

I did feel good about the workshop with the students. And again, I confirmed how

this type of work always leads to a creative moment that, in turn, can provide the tools for further and more elaborated processes. And I couldn't help remembering with much pleasure, previous projects with my own students, the re-constructed 'Vivaldi Seasons' or the 'Night of the Four Moons' among many others. I know that this here was not more than a very initial approach to this kind of work. However, the reception is always the same: enthusiasm, and understanding of the huge possibilities it brings about. I hope it will have planted the seed.

After these workshops the students were also asked to write an evaluation of the experience. What follows is a categorization of their reports, which revealed their interest in this kind of work for their personal growth but also in relation to the possibilities it presents for their future work in the classroom with children.

Four main categories could be identified in the evaluation reports:

- Personal development and self-confidence
- Teaching potential
- Inclusiveness
- Social and emotional value

#### *Personal Development and Self-Confidence*

Student 1: The fact that the writing process is less normative has enabled us to feel free to propose things without the 'fear' of doing anything wrong.

Student 2: After the first shock... I felt somewhat embarrassed to express myself in the way she was asking but it turned out to be an incredible experience and so dynamic. It was fun and different. We had never had a workshop like that. With such innovative and psychedelic scores we all found it awesome.

Student 3: What I liked most was that in the end, we were the protagonists of the learning process.

Student 4: Such an added value for someone like me with such difficulties with traditional score reading. It was really special. I could transfer what was being explained and translated into the score to mathematic concepts.

#### *Teaching Potential*

Student 5: Beyond the musical aspect, I would say that there are many other benefits we can take from this approach, such as exercising diction and speaking skills, developing reading,

enhancing memorization, practicing creative writing, expressivity.

Student 6: Personally, I found it particularly useful, also in the sense that the children can express themselves freely, can get up, make noises, or scream, among other things.

Student 7: The results of reading those scores... it was spectacular. This workshop was videotaped, and I am happy to be able to look at it later in order to see how I can work with the children. The haiku were revealed to me. I have seen for myself how this is also a valuable tool for encouraging the child to get closer to the literature, the poetry, the thinking process.

Student 8: There is conceptual development, not only through music but also visually, as the haiku suggest a graphic representation of the sound.

#### *Inclusiveness*

Student 9: It is an inclusive system, where everyone can participate. It releases your imagination and invites creativity.

Student 10: An activity with multiple possibilities even for a population with different needs and skills.

#### *Social and Emotional Value*

Student 11: I never thought that something so simple as a haiku could be expressed in so many different ways and be so emotional.

Student 12: These musical compositions enable the freeing of the child's imagination, giving her the possibility of expressing her own feelings and emotions as well as speaking about concrete things that happen in the neighborhood or even a given concept that was approached in the classroom.

Student 13: I am sure that the children will find it very amusing to translate into sound a text of three lines. I had never imagined that something apparently so simple as a haiku could ever be expressed in such different forms, including emotions.

Student 14: It is also clearly an instrument to deal with children's stress.

Student 15: It has the potential to help the child understand and accept the rules of the game.

Student 16: If they feel a bit lost individually, it has the potential of making them work in groups, where each one can propose a sound, an idea without fear of being judged. There is no

right or wrong.

Student 17: It seems to me that this work is also appropriate for development in music therapy; it is such a powerful way of getting access to the child. Beyond the musical representation of the haiku, the child may develop his autonomy and open herself more easily.

Student 18: I would like to stress the fact that this work is also very powerful, emotionally speaking. You can say a lot in just three lines.

### **Moving On, After the Workshops**

After the workshop leader had left, the university students participated in the first composition session in groups, which included score writing, based on the haiku worked out in the school center. A conductor was chosen among them, and the performances were audio- and video-taped. To conclude the whole activity, the students went back to the school, shared their compositions with the pupils and had them perform their haiku. The performance was repeated in the school hall so that everybody could come and attend. This was followed by an interchange of opinions about the whole process.

Four months after the haiku workshops, the other two authors, and researchers from the project, visited the school center and observed that the walls in the common spaces of the school were full of haiku written not only by the children that participated in the workshops but also from other classes. The Art Space (*Espacio de Arte*) of the school seemed to have been ‘infected’ by the above-described practices, and a common workspace was established within the regular week schedule, composed of a group from the fourth grade, a group from the fifth grade (those that participated in the workshops), and two groups from the sixth grade.

The observed artistic activity was designed as follows: first, the children sat in a big circle and the following question was posed: “What does the word ‘air’ evoke to you?” Each child suggested one or two words. Later, they all agreed on three words from those that were spoken in the circle that were then written down. Then, recalling haiku poetry and its characteristics - short, visual, surprising – they were invited to write a haiku. It was surprising how the children from the fifth grade remembered the work done in the workshops and their ideas and examples permeated the whole group. Some of the suggested words related to ‘air’ were: *life, movement, world, breath, flowers, clouds, plants, contamination, noise, disturbance, and more*. There were beautiful poems, some of them quite profound, others more simple but very amusing.

From here the task was to ‘paint’ the poem. Taking the word ‘air’ as the starting point, the art teachers invited the group to watch a short video that showed how Jackson Pollock, the North

American painter (1912-1956), used sticks and brushes to paint on the floor. Following this inspiration, the moment to paint their poems had arrived.

### **Final Thoughts**

The haiku poetry workshops were integrated in a project with two aims: to contribute to social transformation and citizen empowerment in the neighborhood, and to prepare future primary school teachers to work in socially and culturally deprived contexts, with a special focus on the planning of artistic educational activities. A few thoughts may be offered at this point.

First, in what concerns the possible transformative power of music in the context where the action took place and taking into account the social aims of the project, the authors believe, together with the praxial philosophers of music education (Elliott & Silverman, 2015), that the power of music was dependent on the social context where it was implemented and the social commitment established with the involved participants. We consider that the practices described in this article bear in themselves the potential to evoke in children and young adults a sense of ownership by developing the capacity to express both in words and in sound what is significant in their lives in a given moment. This idea seems to be in line with Turino's (2008, 2016) *participatory music making*, a process where all present were called to contribute in non-competitive practices to create bonds beyond the immediate musical outcomes. This was the core of the haiku workshops. In the first instance, haiku poetry was used as a means of expressing thoughts (mostly inward thoughts) and to understand how those thoughts could be put into sound through creating small musical pieces, apparently so simple, but simultaneously demanding in terms of what they may achieve as an artistic communication tool. It seemed that, according to the posterior developments in the school center, an inclusive action took place, with some children challenging others in a process of belonging that was aligned with Turino's participatory ethos.

Second, and beyond the reflexive thoughts already offered by the workshop leader, together with the written comments of the children, students, and school teachers, the previous section also highlighted what might be considered as implications for arts teaching, in general, and music education in particular. The authors believe that the haiku approach is a valid tool to be developed either in the context of classroom music or music teacher education. By triggering a process of creative sound exploration based on the small Japanese poems while providing basic tools for non-conventional but nonetheless rigorous reading and writing of musical scores, a range of possibilities are offered to young children and college students regarding music interpretation and composition. This also applies to more sophisticated approaches in the context of ensemble music, and artistic projects of various kinds.

Our final thought lies in our hope that the haiku workshops, as part of the broad mosaic of

artistic actions that composed this project, may have contributed towards highlighting alternative learning spaces that encouraged children and young adults of various origins, abilities, and cultures to become the main actors in their own development. In this perspective, and together with Yob and Jorgensen (2020), music education for the common good is, therefore, the most desirable outcome, with the expectation that future artistic/musical projects in that particular setting will go on building networks of learning that may indeed be the core of a humane music education.

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