

The musician as researcher

Enhancing the role of music in local communities through research

A significant number of studies suggest that community-based musical activities can have positive effects on both recipients and providers, namely the musicians involved in carrying out the interventions. Besides improvements in health, wellbeing and social cohesion, these experiences can also offer musicians benefits related to the professional sphere, increasing creativity, motivation, and flexibility. The literature in this field explored communities diversified in socio-economic, geographical and health dimensions, and encompasses a wide diversity in terms of methodology, including qualitative, ethnographic, quantitative, and mixed approaches. Moreover, both active and receptive engagement with music have been explored, providing a comprehensive view about the impact of singing, drumming, songwriting, or listening to music programmes carried out in the context of specific communities.

This presentation will explore how artistic research may promote meaningful encounters between musicians and local communities, and aims to encourage a debate about the following questions:

- In what ways artistic research can inform community-based musical activities?
- Which areas of this field should be investigated more in depth?
- How to create learning environments able to equip developing musicians with research and musical competencies relevant to strengthen their role in local communities?

These questions will be addressed on the basis of international publications and by discussing the main features of two programmes specific for nursing homes developed by the Conservatorio della Svizzera italiana (Lugano, Switzerland). *Art for Ages*, a research project carried out in 2015-2017, investigated the effects perceived by residents and higher music education students participating in a 10-week programme of group music making. The mutual benefits emerged from the results of this study inspired in 2018 *Music and words*, an ongoing project in which each student introduces, performs and comments on some solo works, inviting residents to share feelings, memories and emotions triggered by music.

The presentation will conclude by discussing the role that higher music education institutions can play to prepare emerging artists to conduct artistic research in this field, emphasising the importance of creating strong local partnerships with local institutions and other university departments, and integrating the curriculum of students with extra-musical competences.

Parallel Session



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Paolo studied double bass in Italy (Pescara, Florence, Cremona and Mantua) and Switzerland (Lugano). In 2022 he obtained a PhD in Performance Science at Royal College of Music (London) with a thesis focusing on group music making programmes involving residents in nursing homes and higher education music students. The results of his research have been disseminated in international conferences and in peer review journals. In 2021 he won the call for case studies launched at the Swiss Forum “Culture and Health: Alliance for a Sustainable Future”. In the same year, the programme *Music and Words*, which he developed and heads since 2018, was included as a best practice in the “Arts and Culture in every care home?” report published by the Baring Foundation (UK). In 2022 he was invited to become a member of the scientific committee of the course “Healing through music” (Università della Svizzera Italiana, Lugano).