
Living Heritage conflict resolution and reconciliation during musical contests and performances – experiences, observations, and applied strategies

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Resumen

People who have witnessed or been involved in musical contests or performances may recall the cocktail of emotions one is exposed to or can experience during those events, ranging from nervousness, anxiety, stage fright and frustration to joy and even trance like euphoria. Besides that, behind the scene and sometimes put on stage intentionally, one may notice conflicts, be it between individuals (for instance between rivals or members of the jury at eisteddfods or between musicians of an orchestra) or between groups (for instance at choral competitions or samba performances among many others). Music, in those performance situations, can divide people, but it can also contribute to a lasting conflict solution, especially when people achieve something together; be it as a culturally defined or situational community. Besides that, it can contribute to the conservation or enrichment of Living Heritage. A number of studies conducted in community projects show that making music not only may have a positive impact on the perpetuation of cultural knowledge, but may also show various considerable side effects: it may boost the self-esteem and resilience of people, instill pride in one's culture, improve mental wellness and intra- as well as intercultural connections, stimulate mutual appreciation and relationship building and be utilized for social bonding (Good et al. 2021; Fanian et al. 2015; Bartleed, Sunderland and Carfoot 2016). Music is furthermore a tool that enables people to share political opinions or put pressure on individuals (Finnegan 1988: 273), and it can serve as a sort of public arena for formalized as well as informal music contests or competitions in which individuals or groups are competing and testing their skills. Musical contests, as several studies show, can have an ambiguous character, as they may impose power relationships, be demotivating for participants and even lead to physical conflicts, on the one hand, but stimulate creativity, foster social cohesion and facilitate reconciliation among people, on the other hand (see, for instance: Näumann, Nussbaumer and Probst-Effah 2018; Fackler 2005; Dudley 2003; Oliveira Pinto 1994 and 1996; Miller 1995; Ranger 1975). The latter aspect, namely reconciliation, has specifically caught the attention of music scholars who dealt with conflicts (including ethnic conflicts and war), conflict resolution or transformation. Often applying a sociopsychological approach in studies on conflict transformation and socioemotional reconciliation they question the role music can play in conflict resolution and reconciliation, for instance as a non-violent and alternative

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form of expression with dialogic qualities that enhance the restoration of communication between opposing conflict parties or social and ethnic groups, or as a useful tool for diplomacy and for the healing of traumata. (Dietrich 2017; Pinto-Garcia 2014; Pruitt 2011; Bergh & Sloboda 2010; O'Connell & Castelo-Branco 2010; Urbain 2008; Skyllstad 2008; Wild 1986). But, as mentioned above, conflicts and reconciliation not only take place in war or post-war sceneries or due to unforeseen inter-cultural contact. They also happen in connection with ordinary and less threatening events. On the basis of selected cases of musical contests and performances in Latin America, the Carribean Islands and Europe which are either defined as Living Heritage or somehow connected with it, the panel will focus on conflicts, conflict resolution and reconciliation before, during and after those (almost) ordinary events.

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Contraseña: Living Heritage, conflicts and conflict resolution, reconciliation, musical competitions and performances