



MUSIC AND PEACE

Alba Sanfeliu. In charge of the Music, Arts and peace program at the School for a Culture of Peace. alba.sanfeliu@uab.es¹

The roles of music:

Music is an eloquent language that allows us to **express** what is happening around us in many senses, and to **reflect** the times and the situation in which we live. It is inseparable from our social, political, economic and cultural reality. At an individual level, it also permits us to communicate our emotions, sentiments and life experiences, etc., and it has a relevant role in our process of socialization.

Music is a form of communication different from words, though obviously there are many songs whose lyrics strengthen the message that the author wants to express, emphasizing the sense of the song. On the other hand, in instrumental music, some additional reference is necessary, because the music alone isn't able to offer a unique and unambiguous meaning for what is being expressed.

Art is that means of expression coming from people who want to produce, consciously or unconsciously (or sometimes even unwillingly because of an obligation), some creation to try to describe the world around them or anything at all they might feel like characterizing. Artists make their creations known to us, converting their individuality into a social identity and thus sharing their ideas and experiences.

Art can be a means of resistance for confronting the cruelty of the world, generating values of solidarity, non-violence and dialogue. It's a living process of creation and dynamism, of dreams, of utopia and of emotions, becoming at times the only possible language available. It not only describes the world, but reinvents and transforms it, opening doors to reflexion and posing questions about life itself.

Music is sometimes a means of **communication** which **sensitizes** people who are facing the challenges of the world. The works and songs become **witnesses** to experienced or imagined events, and, as a **source of knowledge**, they permit us to construct our own social reality, allowing us as well to **reflect** upon our surroundings.

In any event, we should take into account these words of Johan Galtung, one of the founders of peace studies: *"Art uproots us into a virtual reality. Art is something that has touched our soul and moved it on".* But we must also consider the following: *"This may not happen at all. We sit through a concert, walk through an art gallery, read a book –yet nothing touches our soul, nothing moves us. Is there something wrong with us? With the artist? Or the art product? Or, possibly a better angle, with the relation? Not the right art for me-here-now? To say honestly, it did not touch me, seems as much a human right as the right to have access to that moving, uprooting, uplifting experience"* (Urbain, et ál. 2008: 54-55).

Music is also a means of **intergenerational communication** that allows us to rethink the world of yesterday, of today and of tomorrow, giving us the opportunity to learn from the past. At the same time, it acts as a means of **intercultural communication**. Music can unite people, permit communication, break down barriers, etc. because it is a powerful **means of participation**. It's also a **means of education**, since playing music together we can learn such values and qualities as knowing how to listen and exchange ideas, learning to respect and work with others, and developing solidarity, emotional communication, empathy, etc. on both a musical and human level. Music can inspire such values as solidarity, non-violence, dialogue and unity, and it strengthens feelings of both self-confidence and confidence in others, as well as developing creativity and imagination. These are important factors when struggling to find a successful resolution to conflicts. At the same time, music is also a **means of unification**, creating a sense of belonging to some greater whole.

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What is peace?

As far as peace is concerned, we should keep in mind that many different approaches have been made to it throughout history and it has been interpreted in various ways around the world by different figures in various historical periods. I will center my analysis of this concept in the Western world, where peace has, for many years, been understood as the absence of war and of **direct violence** (meaning physical, verbal and psychological violence). The concept has been interpreted negatively: peace is "Not war". This **negative conception** has, for years, caused the idea of peace, apart from its contrast with war, to be lacking in appreciable content, being converted into a concept that is passive, vague and easily manipulated, without a dynamism of its own.

Beginning in the 1950s, people began to reject the limitations of this negative concept of peace and Johan Galtung spoke of **Positive Peace**, thus changing the central object under study: now we are no longer limited to beginning with the concept of direct violence as the only form of violence available for understanding peace, but we can also consider, as an object of our study, **structural violence**, that which forms part of our social structure and prevents the fulfillment of basic human needs.

A wide, rich, inclusive and multidimensional conception of violence permits us to elaborate a vision of peace that is wide and rich as well. Considering these other forms of violence will reveal to us other kinds of peace. At the same time, these new concepts of peace will be accompanied by other concepts that will serve as starting points for achieving peace. Some examples, among others, are social justice and development, human rights and democracy, disarmament and respect for the environment.

Subsequently, J Galtung also took into account **cultural violence**, referring to those aspects of our culture, such as religion, ideology, language and art, that can be used to justify or legitimize direct and structural violence. It was in the 1990s when first appeared the notion of a **culture of peace**, as an alternative to a **culture of violence**. The culture of peace is that culture which rejects violence by means of a positive commitment to the practice of active nonviolence, to developing the capacity of generosity, to active listening for deeper understanding, to preserving the planet and finally to reinventing the concept of solidarity.

In all events, along with this development, an epistemological change of perspective in the investigation concerning peace has been going on for some years now. As Vicent Martínez, professor of philosophy at the University Jaume I in Castelló, Spain asserts *"It seems that the conceptual elements that serve as indicators for building peace are still «that which isn't peace» (...) It isn't a question of learning about peace from the perspective of what is not peace (violence, war, marginalization, exclusion, etc.), but to «make explicit the notions of peace that are implicit in our analyses of our present society and of other historical contexts in various cultures, so as to reconstruct these notions as positive indicators of how peaceful coexistence is possible»"* (Enciclopedia de paz y conflictos: 2004: 916-919).

Music and peace:

Having introduced the concepts of peace and music, I would now like to focus my attention on the **relationship between them**. First, however, I should mention that, in the same way that music can be related to peace, it can also be related to violence, and even though I don't plan to develop this topic, it has to be kept in mind that music has also been used and is still being used to foster hate or vengeance, with an objective of humiliation, repression, terror and even torture. As George Kent, professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Hawaii has said, *"Music is peaceful or unpeaceful not because of the inherent character of the music itself, but because of the way it is used. Whether or not music is peaceful depends on context, but it also depends on how it is heard. If it is used to glorify evil, it is not peaceful. Music can contribute to peace, but that contribution is limited so long as it is held captive by those in power"* (Urbain, et ál. 2008: 104-107).

In **classical music** there are numerous examples, from the Renaissance to the present time, of composers who decided, or are deciding, to respond musically to the conflicts and the events that have taken place in the world, or in their own countries, using music as a kind of spokesman for peace. What's



more, they often become personally involved in specific cases and in the construction of a better world (as was the case of Pau Casals).

- Moving on, there are some compositions written in the Baroque period that make reference to the **Roman peace**, a concept tied to the idea of **pactum** and which generally followed the peace treaties that put an end to armed conflicts. Peace here is interpreted in a negative sense, defined as the absence of war, especially as war between states and direct violence. (Some examples appear in the projection.)

J. B. Lully, *Le temple de la paix*.
J. P. Rameau, *Nai's*, peace opera.
G. F. Händel, *Te deum de Utrecht and Jubilate. The Music for the Royal Fireworks*.

- We can also find some notable compositions in other periods, but it was especially in the first half of this century that a need was felt to react against the barbarism of the First and Second World Wars, to reveal their horrors, and to establish a mandate for putting a halt to them and for searching out new horizons of hope where war does not exist. Under these premises, we find many compositions that (as we see in the projection) have to do with **armed conflicts** and **peace, human rights, justice, democracy** and **liberty, disarmament, nonviolence**, etc. An effort should be made to study these compositions in music schools, conservatories and normal public schools, as part of an effort focused on education for peace.

Armed conflicts and peace:
War Requiem, Benjamin Britten; *Yo lo vi*, Luis de Pablo
Justice:
Schonberg, *A Survivor from Warsaw*
Michael Tippett, *A child of our time*
Human Rights:
Cristobal Halffter, *Yes, speak out, Cantata for the human Rights*
Democracy and freedom:
Compositions of Luigi Dallapiccola and Gian Carlo Menotti
Disarmament:
Krzysztof Penderecki, *Threnody for the victims of Hiroshima*
John Adams and Pete Sellars, *Doctor Atomic*
Nonviolence:
Philip Glass, *Satyagraha*, about Gandhi and nonviolence
Leonard Balada, *Black symphony*, about Martin Luther King
Cristobal Halffter, *Gaudium et Spes-Beunza*, dedicated to Pepe Beúnza the first conscientious objector from Spain.

During the last fifty years, in **popular music** and specifically in what is called **pop-rock**, many singers and groups have composed songs with themes related to peace, personally becoming involved by giving concerts in solidarity with various social causes and making their music into a kind of spokesman and instrument for peace. Nowadays many musical organizations are also making music a powerful means for bringing people together in building a culture of peace.

Many **singers** and **groups** have been notable in their musical careers for advocating peace in the subject matter of their songs and performances. They have become involved in social causes, offering solutions and a desire for a better world. Some of them can be considered to be pacifists, while others have promoted musical movements to transform certain political situations. Some of them have interested themselves in environmental issues, disarmament, human rights, in the struggle against poverty and in improving the situation of children around the world. We can mention, for example, Joan Baez, John Lennon, singers from the Latin American Nueva Canción, the Catalan Nova Cançó, Bono-U2, Noa, Youssou n'Dour, Juanes, REM, Manà, etc.

These are important figures that have found a communication channel that permits them to say and do what they like, whether or not they realize that their actions might have certain unexpected repercussions or implications, or even create new references on a social, political, ideologic or cultural level. Their shows have often been criticized. Their life-styles, excesses, excentricities, contradictions and opportunism, as well as their desire not be relegated to the sidelines of certain musical initiatives are also important considerations to keep in mind when evaluating their relevance.



In pop-rock music there have occurred various massive **rock concerts** related to social causes. These concerts are intended to awaken people's sensibilities and social consciences concerning a specific issue, as well as to raise funds for the cause (in some cases there are criticisms that it isn't known where all the money raised has gone, or that the collected funds were dispersed too slowly). At any rate, the reactions of solidarity from countries not directly involved in or affected by the issue in question are quite notable. The music becomes a channel for attracting people from well-off cultures and for allowing them to contribute to bettering situations that people remote from them are living through. The concerts provide a meeting ground for individuals from different cultures with different ways of understanding. Some have been organized, from both a musical and social point of view, to protest against and to question armed conflicts and to support the victims of these conflicts. They are also used to inform the public about crises facing humanity --such as the food crisis, displaced persons and refugee problems, and AIDS--, as well as uncovering discreditable political situations, demanding freedom for victims of political regimes or for those condemned to death, and finally for reaffirming the right of all peoples to choose their own destiny.

Concerts for peace and against war:	1969- Festival de Woodstock. 1978- One Love Concert, Jamaica. 2005- War Don Don, The peace Festival. Freetown. 2008- La paz sin fronteras.
Concert for disarmament:	1979- No Nukes.
Concerts for humanitarian crisis:	
Post-war situations:	1971- Bangladesh Concert. 1979- kampuchea Concert.
For hunger:	1985- Live aid concert. 2003- A birra for a compatriot. 2005- Live 8.
For HIV/AIDS:	1992- Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert for AIDS Awareness. 2004- 46664 Give one Minute of your life to stop AIDS.
For the situation of children around the World:	2004- We are the future.
Concerts for the human Rights:	1986- Conspiracy of hope. 1988- Human Rights Now!
To denounce political situations and demanding freedom for victims of political regimes or for those condemned to death:	1985- Artists United Against Apartheid. 1986- Freedom Festival on Clapham Common. 1988- Nelson Mandela 70 Th Birthday Tribute Concert. 1997- Benefit Concert for Mumia Abu-Jamal.
For the Independence:	1996-1999-Tibetan Freedom Concert.

The people who attend these rock concerts do so for a variety of motives: to enjoy the music itself, to see the groups in person, to have a good time, or because they are sympathizers with the social objectives of the concert. As these concerts develop, we should pay special attention to the remarks that the performers themselves make, the statements that often appear on the giant screens that are set up near the stage, and to the information stands that the organizations giving support to the social objectives of the concert have installed. And, of course, to the lyrics of the songs that are performed, which can have a great impact on the audience. These songs can advocate social goals and transmit values and perceptions both through what is imaginary and what is real. Some songs might have social, ideological or political impact and affect the course of human society, transforming or perpetuating various social realities. Some of these have marked a turning point, creating a before and after from the moment in which they were first performed, and turning themselves into songs representative of an era, describing the world in the past, present and future, and drawing attention to themes related to peace (for example, "Imagine" by John Lennon, "Biko" by Peter Gabriel or "They Dance Alone" by Sting). The songs can also influence people to become involved in the causes, since they carry a strong emotional message.

Apart from the personal involvement of the artists, or the performance of these concerts, nowadays many **musical initiatives** are being carried out around the world in the contexts of armed conflicts, post-



war rehabilitation or imperfect peace. These initiatives use music to develop activities whose purpose is the search for peace and the resolution of conflicts.

There are organizations that focus on the potential of music as an educational means of achieving peace, working on skills for promoting communication, creating social bonding, and developing cooperation; they use music to transform social realities and help distance the young from violence. A good example is the *Sistema Nacional de Orquestas Juveniles e Infantiles de Venezuela*, founded by José Antonio Abreu, or the music project of Carlinhos Brown called *La Timbalada*.

There are also organizations that use music to promote interpersonal communication on various levels (musical, human, cultural, etc.), especially in cases where conflicts have brought about a loss of communication or, what is worse, a refusal to communicate. Music tries to break down these barriers and make itself an element of reconciliation between cultures that seem to have irreconcilable differences. An example is the orchestra-workshop *West Eastern Divan* created by Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim.

There are musicians today that have become personally involved in building peace through music, responding to the situations of extreme violence in which they live with musical creativity. This is the case of such artists as Vedran Smailovic, César López, or Emmanuel Jal and Abdel Gadir Salim.

Also, many musical initiatives are being developed for therapeutic ends in countries experiencing armed conflicts or post-war rehabilitation, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Gaza Strip or Sierra Leone, and in treatment centers for victims of torture.

In conclusion, I would like to say that obviously music alone won't bring us a world at peace, but considering the current world outlook, and that conflicts are becoming more and more violent and numerous these days, it is important that we explore and apply the opportunities and power of music for peaceful and effective conflict transformation, both supporting and promoting it, because it is gradually becoming an indispensable reference point for transforming and reinventing the world in which we live, and in which we want to live.

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