THE NARRATIVE FUNCTION OF MUSIC IN A CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY: DESIGNING AN EMPIRICAL APPROACH THROUGH DIALOGICAL AND REPRESENTATIONAL PRACTICES OF THE SOCIAL SELF

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Abstract. The ability of music to transmit emotional intention is a widely acknowledged phenomenon across a range of musicological, psychological and semiological research disciplines. Much of this research has focused on the description of the narrative qualities of music within the communication process. However, there is still insufficient explanation of the underlying reasons for the ability to transmit emotional ideas, and little empirical research has been undertaken on the extent and accuracy of the narrative functionality of music. This article considers the reasons, level and extent of the narrative capacity of music in the context of a contemporary society. For this, it looks at the Self from an angle of internal dialogical activity, in order to investigate the subconscious interaction between individual and society. The article also considers the factors that may influence the shaping of musical taste and that may be responsible of setting the mode through which listeners perceive and filter music in the contemporary culture. Specific emphasis is given to the role of the media not only as an important source of information but also as a mechanism for influencing our perception of societal reality.

Keywords: plurality of cultural voices/personas, plurality of promoter positions, intersubjectivity, social identity, dialogical self, social representations

Music holds a significant part in our lives. It is experienced in various facets whether out of choice or as a consequence of its seemingly omnipresent nature. Music is present when we establish social awareness in family and peer environments. It becomes an integral component of our remembering and demonstrates the capacity to activate emotional responses, to recall faces, images, and evoke situational memories. In addition, music is able to create premises for social bonding or for inner-regression and self-reflection. These final facets evoke the concept of self which, in the context of modern society, has transcended from being inner-directed to being Other-directed (Riesman, Glazer, & Denney, 1950; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). In such a state, the Self is still strongly oriented by personal goals that may override traditional mandates. At the same time, the Self is also strongly influenced by societal imprints developed in part because of the learned importance of being a participant in the consumerist society. In a novel viewpoint of what is a complex relationship, the dialog-

ical self theory (DST) (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010) proposes the multivoiced extended Self, drawing significant attention into the interaction between Self and society into the subconscious milieu. This article explores the way music functions as a narrative stream, taking into consideration the way we build musical appreciation in domains of external and internal societies with which the Self interacts.

The narrative stream can be understood as a communicative process which allows us to specifically consider the emotional meaning that music communicates to the individual. In this way, music is seen as an expressive artefact that establishes information channels which stimulate an emotional response. To investigate this idea, the article draws on elements of DST as a way to develop an understanding on how emotional intention is shared through music. The viewpoints of social identity theory (SIT) and social representation theory (SRT) are explored in order to lay the necessary foundations for the way individuals build social and musical identity. A range of theoretical models of psychology is also considered in order to provide a framework on how individual and collective thinking structure and interact. Particular concern is drawn on memory and on how musical taste is shaped by sociocultural factors, especially the phenomenon of significant Others.

Music and the Representational Dialogicality of the Self

The Internal Society of Voices—The Dialogical Self

DST proposes that the actual human voices a person interacts with in their social environment, even from the very early stages of their lives, become embedded into a person's subconscious. This results in an internal society with which that person interacts through the multi-voiced capacity of the brain. In today's post-modern society humans make subconscious use of their multivoiced brain and experience the Self from a number of different and diverse positions. They create characters that agree or contradict each other, operate their voices and have beneficial dialogues between them (Hermans, Kempen, & Van Loon, 1992; Hermans, 2001; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). In a similar way to the external society, the relationship between Self and emotion in an internal society is intertwined and bidirectional. In the internal society emotions can inherent or facilitate dialogues and, in reverse, dialogues can change emotions (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). Such emotions can be aroused in the process of an internal dialogue between, for example, the voice of my personal *I* and a second *I*, ''*My* mother's'' voice, to which the voice of my personal *I* will agree or contradict regarding an important decision I need to make (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). Since DST negotiates the subconscious interplay between the voice of the individual Self and voices that belong to other selves and societal groups, the role that music holds in such an internal community may have the same characteristics and values as in the external one. Since this article explores the narrative functionality of

music I suggest that, if music holds narrative qualities, those qualities initiate in the sphere of the subconscious. I subsequently suggest that, in order to explore such qualities, it is of primary importance to investigate possible similarities and differences between the external and the internal world of the individual.

The External Society of Voices—The Social Representations

SRT addresses the need of the individual and society to face the unknown and to integrate it within the balance and harmony of a structured environment. What we already know and accept assumes judgemental role towards anything that is new and therefore under critical evaluation. Moscovici (1961) presented the basic tenets of the theory illustrating the importance of a pre-existing and already established belief system that every societal group utilizes as to communicate responses towards facts of novelty (Moscovici, 1961; Wagner, 2012). Moscovici describes social representations as a system of values, ideas and practices that individuals use in order to understand the social and material world they live in and in order to establish a shared code of communication as members of the same social group (Moscovici, 1972; Sammut & Howarth, 2014). Because of the phenomenon of cognitive polyphasia through which different kinds of knowledge and thinking can co-exist in the same individual or group, Moscovici divides social representations into hegemonic, emancipated and polemic. Hegemonic representations are the representations that are shared by most members of a solid structured group such as a nation or a political or religious party. Emancipated representations concern subgroups that share their own, relatively autonomic to the rest of society variation of a representation. Lastly, polemic representations are the representations that relate to social conflicts such as, for example, the one between totalitarianism and democracy (Höijer, 2011).

I will now examine how both internal and external societies of voices develop in the life of an individual and how music relates to this.

Prenatal Period and Infancy

Experimental research has suggested that humans are responsive to music and sound from the prenatal period (Bunt & Pavlicevic, 2001; Juslin, 2001; Thompson, 2009). The foetus has been observed to be responsive to sounds coming from their mother's environment during the pregnancy period. The type of sounds experienced at the listening onset includes the heartbeat, general bodily sounds and external sounds including music. In infancy, curiosity and exploration are observed to drive humans through their effort to understand their own body and subsequently the world (Fogel, De Koyer, Bellagamba, & Bell, 2002). The infant uses voice and gestures to express important needs such as the need for food, protection and mentorship. Mothers respond to their baby's signals and establish bridges of communication through the use of a verbal language of specific pitch and contours that have been observed to be similar

across cultures (Dissanayake, 2000; Thompson, 2009; Tagg, 2012). In this early stage of life, mothers can be seen as the individual's first person of great importance, that is, the first significant Other. In this phase, collective remembering and SRT can be found in the way the mother provides the necessary knowledge and suggests the representations through which the infant will objectify the world.

One form of communication between infant and mother is music and in this way, musical sounds (as distinct from the voice) become part of the narrative stream that facilitates communication between the infant and mother. Since the idea of the Self emerges from a set of regularly practiced routines between mother and infant, these routines, or frames, can be seen as narrative themes and plots that are communicated through a bodily and sonically articulated language. This early-life language, of which music is a valuable component, develops to be both external and internal as the infant soon starts to experience the interaction with the mother even when the mother is absent. In such case, mother is perceived by the infant as an "evoked companion" (Stern, 1985), manifests the existence of the dialogicality of the Self from the first days of life (Fogel et al., 2002) and implies the onset of an embodied narrative functionality of music.

At these early stages of human development, I can assume that the similarities in experience of the sonic environment could be described as near-universal. However, our reactions to music—as opposed to sound—come through the enculturation process that develop as the individual grows and meets with a wide range of ethnic and cultural experiences beyond the sphere of the mother (Fish, 1980; Becker, 2001; Thompson, 2009; Tagg, 2012). In today's modern world of globalization the enculturation process may involve a blend of a considerable variety of cultures of ethnic diversity and the term "culture-oriented" may need to be seen under a different light. In such light musical identity gains cultural polyphony and, the Self, although significantly attached to a collective attitude, becomes all the more critical. To explore such issues I first look into the development of the identity in childhood and adolescence. I then explore adulthood and the way individuals and societies cross-influence, with specific reference to the collective memory notion. Particular emphasis is given to the role that significant Others play in all periods of human life.

Childhood and Adolescence

Concept of musicality begins to formulate in childhood and is primarily influenced by the family members (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Script theory (Byng-Hall, 1995, 1998) proposes that the relationships and communicational dynamics in the family domain are based by large in patterns that solidified in previous generations and appear as transferable into the present ones. This can be understood as "family culture" renewing itself in each new generation. Such previous generations' influence is also expressed through the notion of collective memory, namely the past experience upon

which societies base their understanding of the present and build ways to move towards the future (Bartlett, 1932; Wagoner, 2015). Since collective remembering is always social and created with cusiltural tools, music may qualify to be an integral component of significant worth. SRT views social representations as carriers of collective remembering that a particular group, in this case the family, objictifies in the environment in order to make the unfamiliar familiar and maintain the group's sustainability (Bartlett, 1932; Moscovici, 1961; Wagoner, 2015). The role of the media should also be viewed as of particular importance as they impose the figure of the parent as model and dictate the values that parents should perceive as significant for their children's future (O'Connor & Joffe, 2013). In light of the dialogicality of the Self, family dynamics can be understood as a teaching/learning process between the family setting and the infant/child. The newborn, and later the child, entrusts the mother and the whole family with the receiving of the appropriate cultural and social training, including musical preferences. DST suggests that the sociocultural formations take effect straight after birth. It may then be assumed that this initial Self positioning towards culture, society and music embeds into the subconscious and constantly influences the child.

There are, however, other acknowledged sources of influential importance outside the family that come from individuals or groups. SIT suggests the influence of peer group memberships to be important in the way identity shapes. SIT describes individuals as characters that organize their responses depending on the context and the environment the response in subject is called (Tajfel, 1978). This viewpoint comes in accord with the tenets of SRT as the latter supports the birth of social representations and their embodiment into the collective thinking to be an inside-a-group process (Bartlett, 1932; Moscovici, 1961; Halbwachs, 1992). According to Renedo, social identities and social representations are closely related as "they have a relational genesis and are co-constructed side by side through dialogue with others in the multiple locations in which we live" (Renedo, 2010, p. 12.2).

Adulthood

In adulthood the Self, although more solidified, tends to reposition through the interaction with other individuals. We seem to perceive as strong and most valuable the friendships we create with people of similar enthusiasms and to show disbelief or lack of interest towards a potential relationship with people who vibrate differently (Trevanthen, 2002). Music, song and dance can constitute very powerful and spontaneous elements people can share, especially when they share with persons of significance, cross-influencing and empowering their identity (Dissanayake, 2000).

A very important consideration in the way musical appreciation shapes is the communicational environment which in the current era includes the significant influence of the media which has the ability to manipulate social perception and

cultivate collective thinking and cognition (Höijer, 2011). This particular perceptual dimension comprises representations of the results of technological, scientific, political, economic, environmental and societal changes that require comprehension and integration within what currently makes sense. Communication systems are dynamic and fluid, are constructed to have the functionality of a group membership (Wagoner, 2015) and constitute the premises that SRT investigates (Moscovici, 1961; Wagner, 2012). Individuals engage in this pluralism of systems of knowledge regardless their level of compatibility and create social representations in a two-stage process: anchoring and objectification.

Anchoring is the process through which a person brings new and incomprehensible events into familiar premises (Sammut & Howarth, 2014). The members of the community repeat this process constantly, resulting into one's social representation being anchored into other social representations continuously, transforming each other's meaning and creating that way, according to Höijer, "a kind of cultural assimilation" (Höijer, 2011, p. 7). Once a new event is anchored, it goes to the next stage and gets objectified. Objectification is the process that turns something unknown into something known by giving it a sensory empirical status (Höijer, 2011). Objectification is according to Moscovici a much more dynamic process than anchoring and takes action almost immediately when we are experiencing new events (Höijer, 2011).

Through anchoring and objectification a new piece of information, introduced either verbally or visually, shifts from being an uncanny notion into being attached to established forms of knowledge that our memory stores and draws upon when needed. Due to the phenomenon of cognitive polyphasia, such shift may trigger debates between the individuals that share the experience. If these debates resolve into a communal consensus of a long-lasting importance, the representation becomes hegemonic and constitutes part of the group's subconscious automatic thinking, thus becomes part of the social norms (Wagner, 2012). Once a social representation is established it integrates with the group's beliefs and values and, based on SIT tenets, it can become a potential influence and regulator of social behaviour and a catalyst into the identity-shaping process (Sammut & Howarth, 2013). As a collectively agreed and established cognition social representation is also responsible for producing bonds in societies, communities and groups (Höijer, 2011). Most importantly, if I take into account of, first, the Bakhtinian logic and the DST tenets about a Self that is dialogical between *I*-positions of potential diversity and conflict, and, second, Moscovici's viewpoints about the diversity and contradictive way of thinking that exists in the same individual, I may then look at polyphony of the Self and cognitive polyphasia as "two sides of the same process" (Renedo, 2010). In such light I may have to consider social representations as a process that functions in both conscious and subconscious levels and lay this way a significant overlap between DST and SRT.

SIT gives special attention to figures of significance and of leadership, as power is one of the most acknowledged dynamics in the societal interplay. Similarly, SRT and theories about collective memory embrace the individual-to-individual influence alongside the society-to-individual one. This is expressed through the notions of heteroglossia and cognitive polyphasia, that is, the variety of diverse societal and cultural beliefs living inside the same group and individual. DST extends this notion into the subconscious when it refers to promoter positions as voices of extreme regulatory power and significance. It is therefore essential to investigate the influential importance that particular groups and persons hold in the life of an individual, that is, their significant Others.

Significant Others

In everyday life, individuals often demonstrate reconsideration about life positioning through their interaction with significant influential Others. Because of the way music socially functions, I suggest that significant influential Others may also considerably account for potential repositioning of an individual's musical appreciation. Further to this, since DST tenets take effect since infancy (Fogel et al., 2002), it is likely that significant Others also exist on a subconscious level and are equally responsible for such influence and continuous re-evaluation of our *I*-position (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). It may therefore be that significant Others affect the way we shape and re-evaluate music we like, operating on both our conscious and subconscious world. In other words, such form of influence attributed to significant Others of the conscious (social interaction-SIT-SRT) and subconscious (multivoiced brain's social interaction-DST) domain may result into an individual's increase of exposure to a specific musical piece or genre. Consequently, this may maximize the individual's probability of liking that musical piece or genre and enhance positive predispositions and emotional openness towards it.

Significant Others in their broad sense can serve as promoter positions, that is, a *I*-position higher in hierarchy and able to regulate the organization of the Self in moments of emergency. People of importance that are real, imaginary, connected to memory or anticipation, celebrities that come from arts, politics, religion, etc., and that register as inspiring, even places of established intimacy and value can become promoter positions and be consulted by the Self in moments of instability (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). It is, nonetheless, obvious that both the individual and their people of distinct significance may frequently be parts of the same, narrower or broader, societal environment. Such environment cultivates collective patterns of perception, emotional interaction and memory. It is therefore important to take into account the way those patterns construct and reconstruct and the role music plays into this process.

Music as a narrative stream of emotion

Emotion and Music

Theorists and researchers offer various approaches to the way music and emotion connect. From a philosophical point of view, Davies (2001, 2005) supports the idea of the inherent power of the performer to suggest specific emotions to the listener through their posture, movement, facial expression and general attitude. Other approaches focus on the cognitive response to music listening, where music automatically triggers emotional processes (Robinson, 2005). An alternative approach suggests that musical appreciation is culturally and socially learned (Fish, 1980; Becker, 2001; Thompson, 2009; Tagg, 2012). Each of these models brings their own problems. Davies, for instance, does not address the case of listening to music in an environment where we cannot obtain visual contact with the performer. Robinson's theory does not account for a listener's preferences and the potential for disliking music of different cultures, genres or styles. The final approach is also in need of further consideration because of the complexity of the migration streams and other factors of contemporary living that create a dynamic and continuously changing cultural blend. As such, the consideration of the conditions that play significant part in the reception of music and the formation of emotional as well as aesthetic responses is a complex but essential factor in understanding our relationship with music.

Theories of psychology such as SIT, SRT and DST bring different viewpoints that may offer answers to the problems mentioned above. For instance, in Davies's approach the lack of visual contact with the music's source may be bridged through mental representation references that memory facilitates. It is likely that particular genres or pieces of music that effortlessly trigger emotional responses have been recorded by the brain as significant during the enculturation process, or within the establishment of collective remembering. If so, this music may be automatically emotionally favoured through the processes of the subconscious Self. Similarly, the modern reality about cultural influence in musical appreciation and therefore the mechanism of liking or disliking music of less cultural and societal familiarity may be seen differently under the prism of the dialogicality of the Self and the notion of cognitive polyphasia.

Established approaches

One of the most prevalent and established theories on emotional arousal connects to the idea of anticipation. It suggests a mechanism through which emotions are triggered when the resolution of an expectation is postponed, inhibited or even cancelled (Meyer, 1956; Cook & Dibben, 2001; Huron, 2006). In this respect music has to have the capacity to create anticipation and regulate its resolution in order to be able to genuinely activate emotional responses. The nature of these responses is discussed by

Huron (2006) who makes a distinction between the musical and biological nature of expectation. According to Huron, "the biological goal of expectation is to form adaptively useful predictions about future events…However, the musical goals of expectation are very different. In most situations the musical goal will be to evoke a pleasing or compelling emotional dynamic" (Huron, 2006, p.98). Overall, the anticipation/resolution theory illustrates the power of music to evoke emotion, yet does not refer at all to its narrative qualities.

Expectation alone does not provide an explanation of the relationship between musical sound and the emotional dynamic. Lyons (2003) suggests that music does not have the ability to arbitrarily trigger emotions but proposes the idea that music has a remarkable capacity to link to memories of incidents, which are generally acknowledged as sources of emotional arousal. In this way, listening to a piece of music triggers the memory of emotionally charged moments and reactivates their emotional impact. From this viewpoint, music is understood not to function as an emotional generator, but as an emotional representative (Hindemith, 1952; Davies, 1978; Lang, 1979; Scherer & Zentner, 2001; Sloboda & Juslin, 2001; Dibben, 2002; Tagg, 2012). Although this theory has been widely embraced, it does not provide sufficient explanation for how emotional meaning can be securely conveyed between composer and audience. It seems highly unlikely that composer and audience would share a common memory-stored musical pattern of emotional significance. The representational value of music, however, when considered under theories such as SRT and DST can be seen in a whole new light. Halbwachs (1992) argues that the individual's memory filters the world through viewpoints coming from various social groups, primarily through the views of their significant others. This comes in accord with Durkheim's (1912) notion of the social mind, with the tenets of SIT (Tajfel, 1978) and with Moscovici's (1961) belief that memory is socially engaged. Music may then be seen as an integral component of, at least part of our individual or social memories and the emotional value they withhold. Since such memories, in globalized societies, may be coming from a melting pot of groups of notable ethnic and cultural diversity (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010), music may nowadays be regarded as a communicational stream of broader cultural perception uniformity and subsequently of a more open emotional reception. In addition, if music connects to memories and if memories are descriptive, this may suggest music's acquired capacity of narrative functionality.

The relationship between composer and audience, and the potential for emotional communication is explored by Nattiez (1990) in his study of music as discourse. The problem that emerges is that while we are fully aware of the ability of music to arouse emotional responses, it seems difficult to understand how the composer might exploit this potential without a shared memory. By taking a semiotic viewpoint, Nattiez theorizes that music is not the channel that a composer utilizes to communicate meaning to the listener. Rather, he regards music as a sign that both composer and

listener look at and interpret in their own unique way. In this way, memories do not have to relate to specific or shared emotional representatives; instead, their effectiveness depends on wider cultural and societal imprints. With his viewpoint, Nattiez opens up the possibility to think about the communication process in less specific ways. Emotional representation suggests something wider than an emotional trigger would suggest—it is "largely" in this area and according to cultural conventions, we are enculturated into this vocabulary. Still, this vocabulary should be nowadays considered under the reality of a globalized enculturation and be regarded as an even broader one.

In an attempt to explore such vocabulary further, Tagg and Clarida (2003) introduce a third approach that puts particular emphasis on the narrative qualities of music. To support this thesis, they conducted tests on hundreds of participants using the open text and the affective and associative response methods. In their experiments they asked the participants to respond freely to a piece of music by describing its impact, associating its meaning to a verbal form of documentation. Tagg and Clarida called these tests verbal-visual associations ("VVAs") and attempted through them to use verbal metaphors as connotative responses to music in order to map the uniformity of emotional reception when this is transmitted through music. According to Tagg, the verbal metaphors elicited by music and listed by the participants served only to suggest part of the emotional meaning the listeners perceived after listening to the musical subject of the test. Tagg also argues that these verbal metaphors are almost always culturally oriented. In these experiments Tagg centralizes on the fact that "any music can communicate anything apart from itself" (Tagg, 2012, p. 79) expressing this way his belief on the obsolete status of theories that support an absolute, non-representational notion of music. Nonetheless, although Tagg refers to the narrative function of music he does not offer explanations as for the reasons and the extent that this can facilitate music as an emotional communicator. These reasons may be found in the multiplicity of social and cultural voices that influence the construction and reconstruction of individual and collective remembering in a globalized society (Moscovici, 1961; Halbwachs, 1992). Societies are no longer mono-dimensional and their boundaries have become significantly permeable in order to allow alternative ways of thinking and perception. These ways are, nonetheless, in need to be regulated through semantic communal barriers (Gillespie, 2008).

Conclusion

Music is widely known to raise emotional impact to people and is acknowledged for triggering targeted emotional responses. Such ability of music may hold grounds on its quality as a narrative stream of emotional communication.

In order to acquire a better understanding of the narrative mechanism of music I considered the shaping of musical taste and appreciation as a fundamental field of study

and theorized that such understanding may offer significant knowledge about the emotional terrain on which composer and audience interact through music.

I followed the development of musical perception from the womb to the enculturation and adulthood under theories of psychology such as SIT and SRT. Such theories gave me a better view on the way an individual negotiates and renegotiates his or her personality and musical identity as a result to their sociocultural positioning and repositioning. Most importantly, I drew on the tenets of DST in order to investigate the automatic sociocultural interaction that takes place in the subconscious. I paid particular attention to the influential role that people and social groups of great significance play in the individual's structure of identity and of musical taste and appreciation.

It is my belief that a dialogical identity approach in the subconscious, based on theories of psychology that illustrate the way identity shapes in the conscious world would benefit the understanding of the narrative nature of music. The theoretical basis of such research should be empirically investigated and I intend to carry out a set of tests specifically designed to provide data for such purpose.

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