



Music as an Universal Language for Peacebuilding

A Review of Counter-arguments

Anja Andriamasy

First published on May 2023

Keywords

Music, language, universal language, Socratism, peace, Arthur Schopenhauer, inner life.

Abstract

Many people claim that music is a universal language considering the impact and beneficial results that it usually triggers, whereas others reject the idea due to contextual or cultural sentiments and parameters that must be considered. Both sides' arguments make sense but, despite skepticism, music should be considered as a universal language, which becomes clear by depicting it in the context of peacebuilding and by exploring its linguistics and therapeutic effects, through various domains such as philosophy, music theory and the contemporary world. The author argues that considering the counter-arguments and balancing it with this central claim, it is possible to reach an inspiring and complementary common ground between performing arts as music and philosophy.

Corresponding Author: Anja Andriamasy, Globethics Online Library Assistant.
Email: andriamasy@globethics.net To quote this article: Andriamasy, Anja. 2023. "Music as an Universal Language for Peacebuilding: A Review of Counter-arguments" *Journal of Ethics in Higher Education* 2(2023): 45–67. DOI: 10.26034/fr.jehe.2023.4022 © the Author. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Visit: <https://www.globethics.net/jehe>

1. Introduction

In his straightforward speech on the importance of the role and value of music to the world, in 2019, Antonio Guterres, as the UN Secretary General, conveyed the following message:

“ First, music is a universal language. Music brings us together. Music is a symbol of peace. But, at the same time, music represents diversity. In each country, in each region of each country, in the talent of different people, you have all kinds of different expressions of music. And that diversity is an enormous richness, not a threat, and it is exactly what we need in today’s world.¹

The allocation depicts the challenges that the world is facing regarding issues on human rights and diversity (be they social, cultural, political, religious) to which values need to espouse social cohesion for peace.

The vision raised in the speech delivered by Antonio Guterres was also the theme of the Third International Conference of Globethics on 25-29 January 2009 in Nairobi, Kenya on “Care and Compassion. Sharing values across Cultures and Religions” to which “significant time and energy was spent/endowed on determining a methodology for sharing values across religions”².

This philosopher Michel Serres, has genuinely and artistically outlined the topic of this article, without mentioning the word “music” as a crucial need to find a connecting language for peacebuilding:

¹ Guterres, António, “Music Represents Diversity, Brings People Together, Says Secretary-General at the Day of Action Event with United Nations Peace Messenger” (27 May 2019), *Day of Action with United Nations Messenger of Peace Yo-Yo Ma Event*, United Nations, Vienna.

² *Globethics Principles on Sharing Values across Cultures and Religions*, Texts Series, No. 1, Geneva: Globethics Publications, 5.

“ In his latest book, *Relire le relié* (2019)⁴, the French philosopher Michel Serres explains that the spirit of synthesis is becoming important in our time, because we live in an era where a global perspective on things and people has become crucial. Perhaps one of the most important reasons could be the meeting between the visible world and an invisible world, in a “blinding” and “incandescent” new horizon offered by the semantic of both terms “relire”, *to reread*, and “relier”, *to connect*.³

Music better than any other form of either literary or performing art seems a good candidate for reaching some kind of “connecting” universality. Many people claim that music is a universal language considering the impact and beneficial results that it usually triggers, whereas others reject the idea due to contextual or cultural sentiments and parameters that must be considered. This topic is often discussed yet rarely understood as both sides’ arguments make sense and, therefore, require more detailed explanations and inputs in order to reach a common ground. Thus, despite the scepticism about this, this article would attempt to defend the challenging opinion that music is a universal language by depicting it in the context of playing and living the experience together for peace in diversity with the clear purpose and understanding of peacebuilding. It will therefore explore its linguistics and therapeutic effects through various domains such as philosophy, music theory, and the contemporary world, while considering the counter-arguments and balancing them all to reach a common ground, for unity in diversity.

2. Understanding the language

The idea of peacebuilding in this article refers to the notion of pacifism, which is inspired from the Latin origin of the word “pacific”, which means

³ Serres, Michel. 2019. *Relire le relié*. Paris: Ed. Le Pommier, quoted from : Introduction. In: Ike, Obiora. 2020. *Applied Ethics*. Geneva: Globethics Publications, 9.

“peace-making”⁴, whose objective is to apply non-violence in all actions, rejecting war as a justified means for settling disputes and therefore building peace.

In fact, music, understood as the vehicle that allows people to communicate and speak out, even without *wordy* speeches, can be used to convey emotions, ideas and sentiments, which can also be a powerful tool to connect cultures and human beings. If we see music as providing a warm environment which helps balancing, regulating or controlling moods and energy, indeed, we can find evidences that musical effects on physical and mental health may help overcoming stress and operates regulating effects on the character. Music is not only a source of personal expression for the artist, it is as well a source of comfort and joy for the auditor, helping to prevent negative emotions of all sorts, regardless of the genre⁵.

When it comes to discern and analyse the distinctions that contribute to the assertion that music is a universal language, we propose to first introduce a perspective focusing on the language as such, then on an art or a metaphysics of art with at its core music as key element, and finally we would articulate better the idea of a therapeutic of the soul by the means of music, which could enforce our self-knowledge, in particular the part of self-knowledge related to emotions, feelings and even moral sentiments. After this preliminary conceptual clarifications we will show how it relates to peace, how our music could be a solid ground for peacebuilding.

⁴ Fiala, Andrew, “Pacifism”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (Fall 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (Ed.), URL: <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/pacifism/>>

⁵ This seems to be recognized since Epicurus and even perhaps Pythagoras. See: Konstan, David, “Epicurus”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (Fall 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta, Uri Nodelman (Eds.), URL: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/epicurus> Of course, the opposite claim has also be made, that music may induce some additional instability in case there is a melancholic tendency in the soul, see Jean Starobinski. 1960. *Histoire du traitement de la mélancolie*, quoted by Ignace Haaz. 2006. *Nietzsche et la métaphore cognitive*, Paris: L’Harmattan, 244.

2.1 The linguistics

Music is a universal language that can be understood and appreciated by people of all cultures and backgrounds. The language of music is mainly made of sounds, rhythms and musical notes, rather than spoken words. Similarly, as all other types of language in order to sound coherent and perceptible, there are “grammar rules” which will be characterized as “musical rules” in this context. From the perspective of a composer and a musician, the rule is clear: aligning the notes in the melody composition according to a universal syntax and a certain prosody in order to spark off particular or intended emotions and sentiments⁶.

Boleslas Gajewski, in his article “Solresol, grammar of the musical language”⁷, endeavoured to make up a universal language of music called “Solresol”, based on Jean-François Sudre’s model. Gajewski shows well how music solfa (*solfège*) does not necessarily require to be learnt for understanding it and that it crosses over all borders of communication and cultures. The French linguist goes as far as claiming sophisticated semantic structures related to set of musical melodies (e.g. DOFATISOL = honesty⁸ or DO-RE TI-DO-TI= I am learning⁹) He creates melodies to which the public can identify and influence mind-sets and environments. Therefore, from this theory, music is the most reachable language that the human being can easily capture, both cognitively and emotionally as a natural language perceptible by all.

⁶ The basic notes that are famously known are composed of DO RE MI FA SOL LA SI DO (A, B, C, D, E, F, G) embellished with flats and sharps in consonance with the scales, measures, pitches, rhythms and the emotional intention conforming to the musical inspiration and partitions to order the form and create the harmony in aligning a musical phrase.

⁷ Inspired by Gajewski, B. 1885, « Le langage universelle de Sudre », In: *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*, Issue No.3, Vol. 8, <<https://doi.org/10.3406/bmsap.1885.6405>>

⁸ Gajewski, « Langage universelle de Sudre », 613, op. cit.

⁹ Gajewski, 608, *ibid.*

It is however important to note that even though this syntax is universal, the way the music is composed (i.e. pitches, measures, rhythms, tempos, structure) differs from cultures as this difference represents their unique cultural and proud identity that makes the rich history of the culture itself.

Furthermore, to illustrate this thought, whatever the context, from this musical theory, despite the cultural differences (e.g. instruments played or types of vocals) musicians, or whoever inspired by music, can play music together disregarding each and everyone's culture, education and background. Music allows experiencing life in a transcendence outside the reality of the phenomenal world, without prejudices and judgements. Music is as-if we were reaching the experience of new-born babies and children who ignore each other's backgrounds but who love to play together, enjoying the moment, in some form original experience. This alignment of the notes, tempos and rhythms respecting the prosody rule to express sentiments builds the orchestra, which transforms the polyphony of the instruments and voices in the melody to a greater sentiment of unity in the diversity of the world.

Although the picture of music painted as a universal language depicted through music theory is appealing for us, because the assertion that the language of music does not require training to be captured may be partly true, this is also partly incomplete. Music deserves in our view a more profound study and some deeper arguments, especially if the value it is expected to deliver is not only an entertaining one, but music is seen as providing a real access to a form on transcendence *within the world* as natural original presence to the world, and *from the world* as liberating power from empirical attachments, servitude and/or lack of proper good balance of our capacities.

The particular criterion of the language of music, to be connecting us with the "will of the world" as a deep and partly immanent conception of nature as *a will* drawn by Arthur Schopenhauer's metaphysic of the art, where the language of music, as the most formal or abstract art among all arts, may claim universality and even a proper *sense of the world*. It is striking, to take concrete examples, how the bird's music, the natural breath of the wind at

sunset, or the waterfall’s burble easily convince us of a dual attributes of both extension and a musical spirit, of a same substance, as Spinoza already formulated it in his *Ethics* the World, which is also conceived a diving pantheistic presence, for both Spinoza and Schopenhauer¹⁰.

2.2 The language of the sentiments

To a have deeper understanding of music as a universal language, we require a deeper exploration of how pure music could be seen as a language on its own, what human speaking and writing could not translate. All human art and mastering could be seen as aspiring to the perfection of music, which in turn echoes essential aspects of the human sentiments. Indeed, it is universally understood that music is a significant engine generating emotions and sentiments. According to Arthur Schopenhauer, music wears a universal characteristic as a language by its capacity to inspire or influence the sentiments made out of love or fear, impacting human thoughts, behaviours and actions (e.g. joy. peace, hatred, sadness, etc.). Music helps us incarnating the *Will of the world* and communicating straight to the human sentiments, as an “objectification and copy of the whole *will* as the world itself”:¹¹

“ music (...), since it passes over the Ideas, is entirely independent of the phenomenal world, ignores it altogether, could to a certain extent exist if there was no world at all (...)”¹², a world that would exist even without the empirical world raising it to a higher meaning of the

¹⁰ Inspired by Haaz, Ignace, «Schopenhauer, Nietzsche et la musique comme expression du monde », *Nietzsche et la métaphore cognitive*, 71-72, op. cit. See also : Jean-Pierre Leyvraz, « Variations sur Schopenhauer et la musique », *Revue de théologie et de philosophie*, 121, 1989, 377-89.

¹¹ Schopenhauer, Arthur. 1818. Representation of the Will and Ideas, *The World as Will and Idea*, Vol. 1. Everyman Paperbacks; 1995, Abridged edition, 336.

¹² Schopenhauer, *ibid.*, 336.

representation of the empirical world, as the incarnation of the Will¹³.

Following this deep understanding of music as a universal language, we would need to distinguish aspects or faculties which are necessarily innate from our self-development through learning skills.

When we interrogate on this point Sudre's theory on the language of music acquisition, as well as considering the language of music as related to the language of the sentiments, musical training seem to be to large extend required. This aesthetic education produces a consciously orientated opening of the minds to ethical sensitivity and universality. Therefore, music is a language that everyone can speak, regardless of background and culture, and it can be a powerful tool for unifying and connecting people around the world, communicating to the sentiments and thus to the soul.

2.3 Music as the language of the soul

On one hand, political and religious leaders have clearly understood that music is a powerful tool for communicating a message that each and every one is able to understand, apart from entertainment and advertisement it produces. In addition, since the classical Greek Socratic dialogues, we discover throughout history that many have mainly supported the position that music, as language of the soul, endorses the incentive that can stimulate the inner morals and can help to order the human character. In transmitting Socrates views, Plato shows that there are reasons to be convinced that harmonies and notes deserve to be learnt and trained to be understood in a more profound manner. On teaching the language of music:

“ (...) musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful, or of him who is ill-

¹³ Cf. Haaz, Ignace, *Nietzsche et la métaphore cognitive*, 73.

educated ungraceful (...) and when reason comes he will recognise and salute the friend with whom his education has made him long familiar.¹⁴

Musical education does not necessarily mean that anyone with musical education will definitely think, behave in a reflective and reasonable way. If music is to be considered as a powerful universal language for peacebuilding, considering both natural and unique characteristic to speak to the inner being as the language of the sentiments, we need to further clear some possible objection against its irrational aspects. As a matter of fact, music can help building bridges, fostering understanding and inducing dialogue¹⁵, regardless of language barriers or cultural differences, but why should it do that without any noise at all?

3. Music as comprehensive and expressive therapeutic

The general understanding of music as a capacity to bring peace and educate the heart should not exclude the possibility that negative emotions are also provoked, which destructive not only on a personal level, could harm also the collective context. Let's only think about some music which historically reminds us of negative events, as conflicts, leading in turn to negative thoughts or memories, and eventually spreading to behaviour and action. If we consider that traumatic events and sad emotions can be revealed by music, is that a strong objection against the listening to music or the performing of music? This is not at all sure as psychological research reveals.

¹⁴ Plato, *Republic*, Book III, 401D-E, 402A, translation by Jowett, Benjamin, Oxford: UP, 1888, 2017.

¹⁵ Reeve, C. D. C., “Plato on Friendship and Eros”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (Ed.), URL=<<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/plato-friendship/>>

Instead of thinking that some types of music may inspire war rather than peace and thinking therefor that music might shape the human character in the wrong way. We could rescue music is a useful universal language that can move and change the world considering the unique experience of each person, and the concrete collective experience of each society if we can recognize concrete benefits to music which soothes the spirit or at least reveal specific destructive tendencies, which even if they cannot be balanced through musical harmony, could help predict further imbalances.

Probably in some cases, a few people may also need specific medical therapeutic attention, which music may not be able to provide on the long-term. Overall, depending on how we define musical education, it could either assist a person in his training and discipline, or it is more likely to arouse emotions, but not necessarily those type of emotions which as feelings, dispositions related to clear intentions. Therefor one should distinguish between perception of music and a contemplative activity and the expressive use of music by the artist. First listening to music, and contemplating the performance of the artist might help us to recover and connect with who you were when we first listened to the same performance, usually between age 14 and 24, and it helps to remake connections between strong emotions we first made in these early years and which are essential for our constitution all our life. Second, important work has been done over more than a decade, proving how much *writing about traumatic events* is important. The written expression and literary form of arts (Pennebaker, 2011) brings fundamental structuring therapeutic results. By analogy, other experiences have shown that playing music, dancing and most of the performing arts bring healing, not only against pain but the cause of the pain itself (Rabbani, 2022)¹⁶.

¹⁶ Pennebaker, James W. & Chung, C.K. "Expressive Writing, Emotional Upheavals, and Health", In: H.S. Friedman (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Health Psychology*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2011. Rabbani, N.S., Azami, N., Makka, S.A., Sodeifian, F., Mohamed, K., Rezaei, N. (2022). "Art Therapy: An Innovative Approach to the Treatment of Cancer". In: Rezaei, N. (Eds.) *Handbook of Cancer*

It appears consequently that music should not become only an abstract language, on the contrary the universal healing effect of language can take the colour and form of communication between peoples, varying across cultures. Different cultures have different musical styles and rhythms, and even within one culture, different groups may interpret the same piece of music differently.

Let's seen how reasoning as key role of philosophy could challenge this universal language, which claims to have further advantages absent in musical forms of comprehensive therapeutic or performing art.

4. Reason and philosophy: Socrates and Socratism

It has been proven that music owns regenerative and inspiring qualities that would bring humans to feel a certain inner peace, which could lead, inspire or motivate them to live a life without excess. However, that is not counting each and everyone's contextual backgrounds (culture, education or collective history), which once revealed as related to a traumatic history, may need further strategies which will play a role in the therapeutic process. Therefore, due to the abstract facet of the language of music, the phenomenal (real) world is more prone to rely on languages that are supported by empirical facts and experiences. Indeed, if it is argued that music is the language of the sentiments and that musical education does not necessarily make a human more human, this may not be the most trustful language to engaging in. Socratic activities could be seen as more useful in the search for *eudemonia* (true happiness) as reflective thinking not music, could be considered as essential for building the ethics of the character, as solid core fundament (Flynn, 2017¹⁷).

and Immunology. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-80962-1_283-1

¹⁷ Flynn, Molly Brigid. “Socratism as a Vocation”. *Society*, 54, 2017, 64–68. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-016-0101-x>

Journal of Ethics in Higher Education 2(2023)

4.1 Universal rationality: What does Socratic philosophy as the truest art adds to music?

The view that reason, both as dialectical method of presentation knowledge by some sort of contradictory process, or revealing reason by means of irony and the maieutic process of transforming the other and the world, or simply any type of reasoning may qualify, as a strong claim against music as the main canal for conceiving a universal human art, following the view called “Socratism”, or what tradition has captured from Socrates legacy, this view differs from what the Socrates in the dialogues of Plato precisely intended to say, as Vincenzo shows in his comparison between both optics, based on Nietzsche’s struggle both with Socrates in his writings, as his favourite “spiritual enemy”.

In classical Greek art, life presents to the artist the phenomena of sense, which the artist re-presents in his own medium, giving coherence, forming a pattern, a figure and background artistic appearance. Such process is true of instrumental music and more evidently in drama and poetic fictions, but music is more imitative at the time of Socrates and Plato and representative aim of art does not mean, at this stage, to comprehend but that a field of life and experience is present, as a tragic incident happening to the hero of a tragedy (pathos: meaning emotions, or being affected).

If with music some radical truth on the human emotions and spiritual condition overall could be grounded in the model of the early Greek tragedy, in none of the extracts of the Socratic dialogues authored by Plato we find even a short note that music may ground a profound meaning of life, on the contrary “his philosophy is the highest in the art of the Muses¹⁸”,

¹⁸ “With Socrates there originated a type of existence unheard before him -the “theoretical man:” ... the unshakable faith that thought, using the thread of logic, can penetrate the deepest abysses of being, and that thought is capable not only knowing being but *correcting it*.” Vincenzo, Joseph. “Socrates and Rhetoric: The Problem of Nietzsche’s Socrates.” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 25, no. 2 (1992): 162–82. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40237716>, here 166, 168, 172. See also Haaz, op. cit., 230.

following Nietzsche, who reads Socrates as the Socrates of the Socratic tradition. On this line of argument, with reason-based prose, we are far from the delicate prose of Euripides, who praised music in such an elegant way in *Electra* and *Phoenissae* showing the lyric power of a musical imitation of the nature:

“ O famous ships, you that once with countless oars
went to Troy, conducting dances with the Nereids,
[435] *where the music-loving dolphin* leapt and rolled at your
dark-blue prows [...].¹⁹ (our italic)

Again in *The Phoenissae*, the Chorus makes from the wind
and the sailing boat, the “sweetest music in the sky”:

under the snow-swept peaks of Parnassus; through the Ionian
sea I sailed in the waves, [210] over the unharvested plains,
*in the gusts of Zephyrus that ride from Sicily, sweetest music
in the sky.* (our italic)²⁰

As Vincenzo shows well, such opposition between reasoning, reason-based thinking and teaching and Socrates is what we call the traditional reception of Socrates, mainly inherited from 19th Century philology, but also from what we teach as Socratic activities.

It is not always what appears from the reading from the second speech of Socrates in the *Phaedrus* (257-79), as example where he shows the highest respect and deference for the power of *Eros* and lovers of the Muses or “poetic madness”²¹. In focusing on the inspiration by the Muses, we see that there should be an interdependence between reason, self-control, love and

¹⁹ Euripides. *The Complete Greek Drama*, edited by Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr. in two volumes. 2. *Electra*, 432-40, translated by E. P. Coleridge. New York. Random House. 1938.

²⁰ Euripides, *ibid.* 2, *The Phoenissae*, 203-10.

²¹ Vincenzo, Joseph. “Socrates and Rhetoric: The Problem of Nietzsche’s Socrates.” *ibid.*

art (Long, 2007)²². In the following section we shall bring musical art, in dialogue again with philosophy and focus on peacebuilding, as both may be a common ground for reaching together to find conflict resolution strategies.

4.2 The social contract based common ground and peacebuilding

As argued earlier, reason and philosophy can be pondered as universal languages for peacebuilding as they can, more easily, come across cultural and language barriers in a more tangible and accessible cognitive understanding. As shown both provide a first layer for a common ground to understand and agree on different concepts and ideas that may be used to resolve conflicts and promote cooperative undertakings, among and within different cultures. This is also what *ethics* could be seen as all about, in reuniting parties and resolving conflicts, building bridges for the common good to foster better understanding. Ethical reasoning helps to address the underlying causes of conflicts and disagreements and provide a neutral approach to their resolution.

In fact, what we identified as Socratism or Socratic activities outlines this aspect of peacebuilding through reason and philosophy, in referring to wisdom as the path to eudemonia, which can be acquired with reason and philosophy espousing all cultures and languages, following the same reasoning of rational wisdom²³.

Although we find reference to the duty to obey the law in both the Sophists and the Socratic dialogues, together with the idea that humans have the inner capacity to behave as a moral agent, the concept of a *social contract* seen as essential to regulate and safeguard collective peace is found in early modern political philosophy, in Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651). Following the English philosopher, a hypothetical compact, or agreement, between the ruler and between the ruled is vital in order to build political

²² See on this line: Long, C. P. (2007). "Socrates and the Politics of Music: Preludes of the Republic", *Polis: The Journal for Ancient Greek and Roman Political Thought*, 24(1), 70-90. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/20512996-90000108>

²³ Ryan, Sharon, "Wisdom", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

stability. The reason why the social contract can be considered as a model for both sovereignty based political legitimacy and reason-based deontological reason or motive for justice, in preventing conflicts is as simple as utilitarian in spirit. The paradigm of the public political and contractual agreement educates and regulates the human mind to act in a more balanced way and remains based on our capacity to reason and reflect on benefits and costs of mutual collaboration²⁴. Human being is considered weak and therefore, according to Hobbes, the establishment of the sovereign power is the reasonable solution to protect individuals from insecurity that jeopardize their fragile human nature and mind.

Let's come back to the point where arts and music by adding a sense of reconciliation, which can stabilize further our concrete experience, provides important healing effects, provided we continue to reach ex post, the satisfying conditions related to the contract agreement we have found ex ante, when we entered in the political community as citizens.

5. Music, reason and philosophy: the universal language revisited as a global experience

To decide whether or not music should be considered as a universal language or instead Socratic reasoning and philosophy, is an ongoing debate among scholars and musicians with no clear-cut answer. We propose instead a variation on the idea of a synthesis of both positions, a common ground as a prospective solution to embrace to some extent both in some interdependent manner²⁵.

²⁴ Hobbes, Thomas, 1651. *Leviathan*, Edited by J. C. A. Gaskin, Oxford: UP. 2008.

Kelly, P. 2003. *The Social Contract from Hobbes to Rawls*, Routledge.

²⁵ This is probably at the heart of the first Nietzsche's project, the Nietzsche of the *Birth of the Tragedy*, where Dionysian and Apollonian tendencies in art are contrasted with Socratic resistances. On this line, see as example Vincenzo, Joseph. "Socrates and Rhetoric: The Problem of Nietzsche's Socrates", 172, op. cit.

We propose a variation on the role of music and art in relation to true peace. In our view peace-building can be clearly experienced and achievable only in the empirical world, through the practice of conflict resolution as a specific domain in intersection between ethics and politics but music has a role to play. It is true that music can express powerful emotions and sentiments, which is then characterized as the language of the sentiments as it speaks to the human inner being and experience, it contributes to the *representing of the Will and ideas*, to use the Schopenhauerian terms, for a more concrete appreciation. As we saw, in his work, Schopenhauer has even characterized this as experiencing a *world behind the empirical world*, which would explain how music has the natural virtue of soothing the mind, operating a Platonic turn relating concrete experiences and real ideas, or in a Kantian tone operating a form of transcendence.

However, the abstract meanings or ideas may differ according to the aesthetics modes depending on various influences such as culture, language, history, etc. This, consequently, would justify to consider reason and philosophy, not only artistic creation and experience, as a language which is way more universal as art, the transcendental need for a common ground and a realistic approach, relies necessarily also on the empirical world and the principles that govern the world, as Schopenhauer understood well.

Therefore, in order to consider music as a universal language, it would be bold to declare that music should be “globalised”. This assertion may sound not realistic, considering the diversity of the world but it seems not to be completely absurd either. Indeed, the question of considering either music as a universal language, or Socratic reasoning and philosophy, should be grasped as a holistic approach. Indeed, music is certainly a powerful tool to express emotions and sentiments as the representation of the will and as the language that speaks to the inner being as Schopenhauer clearly presented it, while reason and philosophy can also bring universal understanding that can build the human character in rationality and wisdom²¹.

Therefore, considering the enriching characteristic of those two positions, in their combination which could certainly create a nuanced impact. In fact, listening to music is certainly an activity related to entertainment and

pleasure that can either appease or thrill the mind. Indeed, referring to Spinoza’s theory, music is neither considered as good or bad, but the music’s ethico-affective ambivalence is informative as it leads to a type of *deep-listening* which *balances a plurality of affective states* and ethical dispositions²⁶. Probably inspired by Spinoza, Schopenhauer stresses this balancing capacity, we would argue. In order to view music not only as a hobby and to overcome the thrilled emotions that may lead to odious passions and behaviours, it is valuable to listen to the inner voice, the intrinsic capacity and quality that all human beings are capable of. Then this inner voice needs to be accompanied by reason and philosophy to guide it in thinking with rationality and wisdom inspired by the music. Indeed, the inner voice through meditation to find peace and time for self-reflection is more efficient when inspired by or with music, not only for oneself but also for interacting with others. As synthesized in Hegel’s Aesthetics:

“ Music expresses, and allows us to hear and enjoy, the movement of the soul in time through difference and dissonance back into its unity with itself. (...) In Hegel’s view, however, the purpose of music is not only to arouse feelings in us, but—as in all genuine art—to enable us to enjoy a sense of reconciliation and satisfaction in what we encounter²⁷.

More specifically, I think that we could underline the fact that music can also be understood as a universal language through rhythms and melodies, considered attractive, especially in virtue of the capacity of music for being placed in contexts in which the themes and artistic motives are understood, regardless of language and culture. Music has a religious dimension or even

²⁶ Marie Thompson, Marie. “Spinoza and musical power”, *Textual Practice*, 33:5, 2019, 803-820, DOI: 10.1080/0950236X.2019.1581686

²⁷ Quoted from: Houlgate, Stephen. 2021. “Hegel’s Aesthetics”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (Ed.), URL=<<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/hegel-aesthetics>>

an interreligious one, and this dimension has not been much commented before late 20th, beginning 21st century readers.

In the context of interreligious dialogue, language and culture can easily be put aside as long as it is understood that the aim of the dialogue or gathering is to praise God. However, in order for it be truly valuable, this cannot be considered as general since genuine receptivity should be applied, especially when it comes to language and rhythm as the song's words and message need to be understood for it to be appreciated and feel a sense of belonging and unity. Some do not necessarily care about the words as long as they understand why they are together, so the meaning of the song is normally understood rather the great lines, as when singing in Ancient or a foreign language. If we take the phenomenon of the globalisation of information and the cultures, we see how closer engagements and interaction between different value systems are enriching but also challenging our capacity to sustain the plurality of the values and affects. Communicating in a universal manner, as Obiora Ike and Divya Singh propose entails an art of spiritual and cultural travel:

“ Imagine the vast spectrum of all the cultures in the world. Listen to the music - from the gentle drumbeats of Africa, to the melodic didgeridoo of Australia, to the scream of the electric guitar. Taste the curry from India, the coconut milk from Thailand, the cheeseburger from the United States. Now imagine that all these cultures are compressed into one super-culture. ²⁸

In order to come to a common ground in a world that is shaped *through* and *with* diversity, it “requires (i) sensitivity, (ii) awareness, and (iii) a balancing act between (a) finding common values, and (b) respecting the differences and beliefs of ‘the other’.” In fact, this is the path that can lead to understanding, agreement and moral unity.

²⁸ Singh, Divya, “Reflections on the Vision of Obiora Ike”, 37-38, op. cit. See also: *Globethics.net Principles on Sharing Values across Cultures and Religions*, 106.

We see that musical education, corrected and embellished with reason and philosophy, is a complementary medium of dialogue, embracing the universal values that all cultures, languages and educational backgrounds have in common. This is indeed what music in its pure composition and interpretation has always supported and promoted, in the knowledge of how these values are experienced.

Several initiatives have supported this notion of globalization of music, especially when referring to the music concept as music of the world, such as the “Playing for Change” (PFC) initiative that has brought together several musicians and artists from all over the world, playing together one song with their respective cultural and musical identities (e.g. instruments, vocals, etc.) adding each proper musical key to this polyphony, with the objective to come over the boundaries and gaps that separate individuals²⁹. The lyrics accompanied with melody define the clear and understanding of the objective to promote and advocate the values that are universal, which is how music is indeed a universal language.

To conclude this synthesis and illustration we can add that there is a vast and worldwide variety of musical experiences which have inspired each and everyone’s inner experience. We have been guided and educated by good proportions of musical education, combined with reason and philosophy, which are the genuine application of the philosophical wisdom of music.

6. Conclusion

Music can be seen as a universal language, if this claim is true, it would invites us to look at how the use of this unlimited human language relates to the facilitation of concrete bridge building process and peacebuilding.

Both the universal linguistics characteristic of music, its transcription as the language of the sentiments are two strong reasons why it has long been considered as transcending the barriers of culture, race and particular non musical languages. As a way of expressing emotions and conveying ideas,

music is a powerful tool which has been in the centre of attention as relating to key philosophical and ethical concepts on the one hand, but the role of artistic musical inspiration is a complex one, as we saw and many simplifications have been made, which have hidden the key role of the Muses. On the other hand, many composers and musicians have used their art to explore questions of morality and justice, often drawing on reason and philosophical sources for inspiration (let's think at John Lennon). Music can also be used to promote unity and understanding, as its message transcends the limitations of words and can be shared across cultures and generations. Ultimately, music can be a powerful tool for exploring reason, philosophy, ethics, and our shared humanity.

Therefore, the language of music imbued with the language of reason and philosophy can be a powerful tool for peacebuilding as it can foster the world unity and respect in understanding. It can provide an environment for people to connect with others through shared values, regardless of language and cultural differences.

Nevertheless, it is true that some melodies may not inspire the same sentiments of peace as this would still depend on many other parameters (traumatic events, culture, history, etc.), but part of peace building is conflict understanding. If inner peace cannot be built within us, how can peace be built outside? Appreciating the language of music with a clear and educated mind for guiding our moral sentiments and ethical actions leads to reconciliation and peace.

7. The Bibliography

Ambury, J.M., "Socrates", *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,
<https://iep.utm.edu/socrates/#SSH2ci>

Euripides. *The Complete Greek Drama*, edited by Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr. in two volumes. 2. *Electra, The Phoenissae*, translated by E. P. Coleridge. New York. Random House. 1938

- Fiala, A. (2021), “Pacifism”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/pacifism/>
- Flynn, Molly Brigid. “Socratism as a Vocation”. *Society*, 54, 2017, 64–68. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-016-0101-x>
- Gajewski, B. (1885), Le langage universelle de Sudre, In: *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'Anthropologie de Paris*, Issue No. 3, Vol. 8, available at <https://doi.org/10.3406/bmsap.1885.6405>
- Globethics Principles on Sharing Values across Cultures and Religions* (2012), Texts Series No. 1, Geneva: Globethics Publications, available at <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/216700>
- Guterres, A., “Music Represents Diversity, Brings People Together, Says Secretary-General Music Represents Diversity, Brings People Together, Says Secretary-General at Day of Action Event with United Nations Peace Messenger” (27 May 2019), *Day of Action with United Nations Messenger of Peace Yo-Yo Ma Event*, United Nations Vienna, available at <https://press.un.org/en/2019/sgsm19601.doc.htm>
- Haaz, Ignace (2006), *Nietzsche et la métaphore cognitive*, Paris : L’Harmattan, collection Epistémologie et Philosophie des Sciences, un essai basé sur la thèse de doctorat, dirigée par Angèle Kremer Marietti.
- Hobbes, Thomas, 1651. *Leviathan*, Edited by J. C. A. Gaskin, Oxford: UP. 2008.
- Houlgate, S. (2021), “Hegel’s Aesthetics”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/hegel-aesthetics>
- Ike, Obiora (2020), *Applied Ethics To Issues of Development, Culture, Religion and Education*, 2nd edition, Geneva: Globethics, available at <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/3863577>

- Jäncke, L. (2012), "The relationship between music and language", In: *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol.3, available at <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2012.00123>
- Kant, E. (1999), *Critique of Pure Reason*, Cambridge: University Press.
- Kelly, P. (2003), "The Social Contract from Hobbes to Rawls", Routledge, 1st edition (September 2, 2003)
- Leyvraz, Jean-Pierre « Variations sur Schopenhauer et la musique », *Revue de théologie et de philosophie*, 121, 1989, 377-89.
- Long, C. P. (2007). "Socrates and the Politics of Music: Preludes of the Republic", *Polis: The Journal for Ancient Greek and Roman Political Thought*, 24(1), 70-90. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/20512996-90000108>
- Konstan, D. (2022), "Epicurus", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta Uri Nodelman (Eds.), available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/epicurus>
- Pennebaker, James W. & Chung, C.K. "Expressive Writing, Emotional Upheavals, and Health", In: H.S. Friedman (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Health Psychology*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Plato, *Republic*, Book III, 401D-E, 402A, translation by Jowett, Benjamin, Oxford: UP, 1888, 2017. <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/55201>
- Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 9, *Phaedrus*, sect. 227a-279c, translated by Harold N. Fowler. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1925.
- Rabbani, N.S., Azami, N., Makka, S.A., Sodeifian, F., Mohamed, K., Rezaei, N. (2023). "Art Therapy: An Innovative Approach to the Treatment of Cancer". In: Rezaei, N. (Eds.) *Handbook of Cancer and Immunology*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-80962-1_283-1

- Reeve, C. D. C., “Plato on Friendship and Eros”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (Ed.), available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/plato-friendship/>
- Ryan, S. (2020), “Wisdom”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (Ed.), available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/wisdom/>
- Schopenhauer, Arthur (1818). *The World as Will and Idea*, Vol. 1 of 3. Everyman Paperbacks; 1995, Abridged edition
- Singh, Divya, “Reflections on the Vision of Obiora Ike”, In: *Journal of Ethics in Higher Education*, No. 1 (2022): Transformative Ethics and Education: A Tribute to Obiora Ike’s Contributions to Ethics in Higher Education, Globethics, available at <https://doi.org/10.26034/fr.jehe.2022.3375>
- Thompson, M. (2019), “Spinoza and musical power”, *Taylor & Francis Online*, Issue 5: *Spinoza’s Artes*, Vol. 33, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2019.1581686>
- Vincenzo, Joseph. “Socrates and Rhetoric: The Problem of Nietzsche’s Socrates.” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 25, no. 2 (1992): 162–82. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40237716>

8. Short biography

Originally from Madagascar, Anja Andriamasy works at Globethics as the Online Library Assistant, with a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from the Institute of Finance and Management in Geneva, Switzerland and a Master of Arts in Applied and Professional Ethics from the University of Leeds, United Kingdom. She also has a great interest in music and all type of arts that are related to it.

Email: andriamasy@globethics.net