

We are able to make music together! Workshops with musicians with severe disabilities

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Abstract

Social isolation, inequality and poverty are frequently understood as secondary consequences of different disabilities. People with severe disabilities usually experience various direct and indirect forms of social exclusion that also affect their family-members. Their participation is extremely challenging since it seems difficult to involve them in any kind of social activity. The present article describes the methodology of disability-awareness workshops in which musicians with severe disabilities play together with other workshop participants. The aim of these workshops is to involve participants without disabilities in fruitful mutual cooperation with adults with severe disabilities. It is essential to prepare people when they first meet individuals with severe disabilities. During the workshops participants are prepared for the encounter as it is crucial to overcome the embarrassment that many experience when meeting people with disabilities. The Consonante Method allows individuals with limited intellectual and motor skills as well as people without previous musical training to experience the joy of active participation in a music performance. Shared music can be a platform for socialization through a joyful activity. The community building power of music allows participants to experience joy, community, equality and mutuality. These well-prepared encounters promote mutual understanding and thus can serve as a positive model for inclusion.

Keywords: social inclusion, methodology, workshop, people with severe disabilities, music

Musical performances of a minority group facilitate social actions and promote social recognition and empowerment. Consequently, they enhance the participants' status through the valued activity of music. People with severe disabilities are frequently regarded as voiceless people or a minority within a minority group. (Faivre, Meeus, Menzel & Parent, 2000). Shared music can be a powerful tool for social inclusion. Firstly, the responsibility associated with being a part of a performing group develops the social skills of the participants. Secondly, the concerts have a deep impact on the audience, thus having the power to break down psychological, attitudinal and social barriers. The workshops based on shared music support positive personal encounters in which members can share a common and joyful activity. Participants can experience a new sense of equality and mutuality as a starting point for social inclusion.

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People with severe disabilities

The definition of severe disabilities is not homogeneous in the literature. The present study uses the term *people with severe disabilities* and focuses on individuals requiring extensive ongoing support in more than one major life activity in order to participate in integrated community settings. Most of these people are limited in their ability to communicate and they often have medical conditions or physical limitations that affect their movement, vision or hearing. They can also be described as people with profound and multiple disabilities. By focusing on the complex, ongoing support needs they have in every aspect of their lives – including health, physical and social care and educational services – they can be seen as persons with major dependency needs or with complex needs.

The common characteristics of the core members of the described project are the following: innate severe intellectual disability, lack of verbal communication and dysfunction in motor skills. In addition, some also have additional sensory impairments, complex health needs or mental health conditions and they need support in all the essential activities of daily living.

The basic concept behind this model of social inclusion is based on the theory of Universal Design (UD), which is a paradigm and also a practical approach, in which “people of all abilities are included in the intended population of users of a product or environment” (Joines, 2009).

Correlation between severe disabilities, social exclusion, poverty and powerlessness

Social isolation, inequality and poverty are frequently mentioned as secondary consequences of different disabilities. People with severe disabilities, as the most vulnerable members of this minority group, usually experience a variety of direct and indirect forms of social exclusion. The inter-relational dynamics of disability, poverty and inequality are worldwide reported regardless of social, economic and cultural differences (Mencap, 2001; Bass, 2008; Kálmán 2004; Grut & Ingstad, 2006; Van Kampen, Van Zijverden, & Emmett, 2008; Groce et. Al., 2011). The two main causes that lead to poverty are the reduced income of the family and the increased consumption level of the household caused by the special needs of the family member with disabilities. The direct costs involve medical treatment, travel expenses, special nutrition or dietary supplements and a wide range of special equipment. Furthermore, many of these families have to pay for social or support services. The majority of indirect costs are associated with the provision of care. People with severe disabilities need assistance in almost every aspect of their lives, which usually means 24-hour intensive support and care. Research shows that only a minority of these families chooses institutional care or pay for different nursing services at home. The overall trend is that the mother stops working and stays at home with the child. (Mencap, 2001; Bass, 2008; Kálmán, 2004; Dobson, Middleton, & Beardsworth, 2001; Reichman, Corman, & Noonan, 2008; Schädler, Rohrmann, & Schür, 2008; Stabile & Allin, 2012). The tasks of housekeeping and providing personal care are estimated to be equal to the work of 4.5 full time paid employees (Brown, 2004).

In addition to the lower income, this situation leads to social isolation, which restructures the life of the whole family, having an impact on relationships within the family, with friends, and within the community. The family members have to cope with the continuous responsibility of care, so they have less time for socializing. Friends usually

stop visiting, which reinforces their isolation and they remain locked away in their homes. Moreover, it is always a serious decision to go out with the disabled child. The organization *Contact a Family* (2011) conducted an on-line survey involving families caring for children with any kind of disability. The final document based on the collected data states that:

Families with disabled children experience isolation in different ways: a lack of social interaction due to difficulties in work and not having time or money to do family activities others take for granted; a fear of how people will react when they go out with their child; and a feeling of being alone, even when they are surrounded by people, because no one else shares their experience. The results of our survey show that social isolation is having a devastating impact on the mental health of many families with disabled children. It is also causing family breakdown and restricting access to employment opportunities. (Contact a Family, 2011)

This closed form of life worsens the disadvantages of the physical disability causing secondary behavioural and psychiatric problems at an individual level and affecting the personal lives of family members and the physical and mental health as well as the day-to-day life of the family as a whole (Brown, 2004). Society offers more possibilities and community services show sympathy towards these individuals in their childhood, but as they grow up, social tolerance decreases and the family receives less support from their environment. By the time they children reach adulthood their families become isolated and poor.

These multidimensional factors of poverty and isolation are multiplied and accumulated in the case of people with severe disabilities and their families. The devastating consequences of social exclusion are experienced at individual, household and community levels. In the light of international research it is clearly proved that people with disabilities are the poorest and most marginalized subpopulation in low and middle-income countries. (WHO & World Bank, 2011; Groce et. al., 2011; Palmer, 2013). A comparative study in a representative sample of twelve European countries summarizes that “people with severe disabilities and/or with complex needs and their families are at risk of discrimination in almost all areas of life. They are mostly not considered in policy development and implementation at local, regional, national and European level.” (Schädler, Rohrmann, & Schür. 2008, p. 134).

The result of the social marginalization and radical decrease in the socio-economic status of these families is vulnerability and powerlessness. Parents perceive and interpret society's attitude as one of low esteem for them and their children. As the results of a survey show, “negative remarks from people that reflect society's apparently rather punitive response to people with profound and multiple learning disabilities and their families” are frequently a part of their life-experiences. (Mencap, 2001, p.7)

The members of the focus group are reported as an invisible or voiceless minority group (Faivre, Meeus, Menzel, Parent, 2000; Mencap, 2001). The lack of money, power, and prestige weakens their ability to cope with the institutional, environmental and attitudinal barriers they meet. The well-being of these families depends on the quality of the support they receive from different educational, health and social services. However, these services belong to different administrative sectors. Because of the lack of cooperation and shared case-management between these sectors and services the

support provided rarely meets the diverse and complex needs of individuals with severe disabilities. In other words a vicious circle exists between the reduced ability to represent themselves and the lack of accessible, available and affordable services and appropriate social protection (Mencap, 2001; Inclusion Europe, 2008).

The need for positive examples

Despite the fact that social inclusion is a fundamental principle of social policy and any modern theory of human rights protection emphasizes the right of participation, this concept is rarely put into practice in the everyday lives of people with major support needs. One of the main causes of this isolation and rejection is the lack of knowledge and understanding of the special life-situation of these people and their families. Although wide ranges of case studies, reports, qualitative and quantitative research are available about the group in question, positive personal experience would be crucial to promote real social and attitudinal changes. The studies about the life of people with major support needs, which elaborate the difficulties and challenges of these families without reporting the positive aspects of their lives, rather lead to attitudes of pity and hopelessness instead of tolerance and acceptance. Furthermore, these reports tend to instil the misconception that the daily life of people with severe disabilities and their caregivers is tragic and burdensome.

The Consonante Method

The consonante method has been developed for people with severe disabilities. These individuals live with many physical limitations. Therefore, their participation in a musical performance is possible only through an oversimplified approach of common musical activities. The simplicity of the method allows people without previous musical training to experience the joy of active participation in a musical performance without the danger of being embarrassed.

The method has been developed in Szent Erzsébet care home in Ipolytölgyes, Hungary, since 2007. During the musical sessions it became obvious that common shared music gives various opportunities for personal development. An orchestra called *Nádizumzum* was formed with the purpose of giving public performances where these musicians can experience success and appreciation. The orchestra consists of nine residents of the institution. They have rehearsals twice a week and they give workshops and concerts. In contrast to their everyday experience of dependence, they become aware of their ability to give. Interactive concerts or dance-house events, in which the audience is more involved in the shared music, are even more effective for creating an atmosphere of equality and mutuality.

The consonante method is based on two basic principles. First, instead of teaching new movements to make the instruments work, the instruments themselves or the way of using them are transformed in order to suit the already existing movement patterns of the musicians. This gives a meaning to the movements often repeated in a stereotypical way. Second, the custom-built music instruments, such as the Bagpipe-bass, are based on the special characteristics of Hungarian folk music, which accompany a melody with the Fundamental Tone and the Perfect Fifth. These instruments are easy to handle and encouraging for participation because no one can play them wrongly. It enables people to participate in common musical activities without the fear of being ashamed or laughed at.

Consonante: an example of universal design

In contrast with the preconception that fulfilling the special needs of people with severe disabilities is difficult and expensive, the Universal Design (UD) approach emphasizes that “(when) mainstream products are universally designed it means a larger market for manufacturers, less cost for adaptations, and reduced risks of misuse or accidents” (Björk, 2009). Universally designed physical spheres and social environments are beneficial for all members of society. Similarly, the method worked out to suit the limited ability of individuals with cognitive and motor impairment offers positive experiences as an initial motivation for musical participation for a wide range of people with different musical backgrounds. Due to its flexibility, it serves as a tool for rebuilding broken relationships through music, while trained musicians may also enjoy exploring the possibilities of these unusual instruments. Introducing the methodology to our guests we found that the simplicity of the method encouraged many of our visitors to participate. People who cannot play any musical instruments also wanted to take part after seeing and hearing our orchestra. Considering the positive effects of this common musical experience on the occasional participants’ overall opinion, a workshop was planned to exploit the possibilities of the setting. The first part of the workshop served as an introduction to the focus group and the second part for gaining personal experience of the method. The last part aimed at sharing music together with the members of the Nádizumzum orchestra.

Difficulties in personal encounter: subconscious factors of rejection

The most important reason for rejection is not lack of compassion but the emotional disturbance of meeting something unexpected, unusual, something that we are not prepared for. This is a normal human reaction to something not usually seen or experienced, but people often feel guilty because of their emotions. Abnormal physical features have a profound stigmatizing impact on social encounters. The human mind works with oversimplified schemata of the face or the human body. The first impression of these individuals usually disrupts the familiar image or *Gestalt* about the human face and body. Rimmerman (2013, p. 50) identifies this common experience saying that, “when people are confronted by something other than themselves, their initial response is one of discomfort and rejection”. Therefore obvious physical anomalies potentially produce negative social interactions. Oaten, Stevenson & Case (2011) argue that “perceptions of difference and deviance are sufficient to arouse existential anxiety, however, it is especially likely to occur when such differences generate concerns in people about their own vulnerability, such as when faced with physical disability and disfigurement”.

Thus, individuals with visible signs of human vulnerability pose a potential danger to the self-esteem of others (Martens, Goldenberg, & Greenberg 2005). In order to avoid facing their own vulnerability people tend to establish strict categories of “us” excluding the potentially dangerous “them”. Therefore, actions of charity towards these individuals or even benevolent efforts made for their overall well-being possibly reinforce the boundaries between *the professional* and *the patient, the care-taker* and *the person with major support needs* or simply *the giver* and *the receiver*. Scanlon & Adlam (2011, p. 241) describe the contradictory effect of the social care systems of welfare states, which “excludes whilst simultaneously seeking to include.”

In addition to the challenging external characteristics, people’s interpretation of the often astonishing behaviour of individuals with severe disabilities also leads to negative pre-judgments. For example, constantly repeated bizarre automatic hand movements or

involuntary changes in facial expression lead to uncertainty because the recipient of the communication cannot decode the communicative intention behind these strong behavioural signs. As a result, the human brain labels the person unpredictable, and thus dangerous.

Limited ability to communicate is a characteristic feature of people with severe disabilities. All human societies possess their own social patterns, usually verbal expressions, to facilitate communication. The lack of these induces frustration, insecurity and a sense of incompetence for those who are not prepared for an encounter with these individuals.

Due to the aforementioned multifaceted barriers, the social inclusion of individuals with major support needs is commonly labelled as a unilateral, expensive and generous action on the part of society without any mutuality or advantage for the community. A positive personal encounter is critical in order to reduce the sense of otherness and build an inclusive society, where individuals with severe disabilities are not only tolerated, but also important and equal members of the community. In order to cope with the sense of difference, it is essential to offer common shared joyful activities in which participants experience equality and mutuality and the comprehensive benefits of cooperation with individuals with severe disabilities.

Inclusion is a manifestation of mutual development

Building an inclusive society is a mutual responsibility and a continual process of learning from human diversity. In order to break down barriers between in-groups and out-groups, members of the society should make efforts to understand and accept the limitations of individuals with severe disabilities. However, the right amount of help and support is essential. Undervaluing their ability of social learning and accepting all kinds of childish, disturbing or antisocial behaviour is a misunderstanding of tolerance. It is a lack of respect and equal treatment towards these individuals to deprive them of opportunities for personal, social and emotional growth that represent a consequence of learning the appropriate behaviour of a particular culture. Learning social development skills is essential for marginalized people, because from their side, socially acceptable behaviour is a key for participation in social life.

The isolation of people with severe disabilities causes them to have no opportunity to be a part of any kind of social community, so they cannot learn to adapt themselves to the norms of society. The fact that many of these individuals are not able to behave in a socially acceptable way is to some extent a consequence of the lack of challenges and expectations towards them. Being a part of an inclusive community reduces future problems regarding socialization because real acceptance helps these individuals experience the effects of their behaviour. The practice of orchestral work shows that being a part of a musical community motivates them to overcome many of their challenging behaviours and inappropriate habits. Furthermore, they are able to learn new cognitive, social and musical skills.

It needs time, patience and creativity to establish norms and provide a relevant, balanced set of aims for these individuals to achieve social goals while always considering them as people who are able to learn and change. Both are important, accepting their real limitations, and giving them new challenges and opportunities for growth. Each and every case is different, so the purpose and condition of this ongoing learning process of community building is one of continuous and mutual collaboration.

The worldview of the workshop

The workshop as a symbol and model of a well-functioning, inclusive society introduces a new approach to social inclusion and helps people rethink the contribution of the participation of people with severe disabilities. Moreover, the community that offers respect, opportunity and participation for its most disabled members declares its commitment to the overall value of human life. The quality of life for people with severe disabilities can be a guarantee for a lifelong social security and dignity for all its members regardless of what they own or accomplish. The motto of the Universal Design “Necessary for some but good for all” is true for the attitudinal and environmental changes that are needed to provide support and equal opportunities for individuals with severe disabilities. From this point of view the complex needs of these individuals should be identified in order to reduce the inefficiencies of the multiple systems of education, social services or healthcare.

The overall benefits of inclusion are well documented in the area of education and human resource management. The UNESCO document *Guidelines for Inclusion* highlights the positive impacts of inclusion on the whole education system emphasizing that flexibility in the curricula and teaching-learning methodology are not just a necessary support for students with special needs but also enhancing the overall quality of education. It is also reported that the practice of inclusion helps a society overcome discrimination and prejudice, which are serious barriers to learning. The document argues that “inclusion has important benefits for all children as it produces schools with more enriching learning environments that view diversity as a positive force which must be acknowledged and celebrated” (UNESCO, p.23). The findings of research conducted in the field of supported employment have shown the positive effects of inclusion on the whole organization. (Csányi, 2009; Leathem-Vég, 2009). When a company accepts a less productive member into the team, ironically the whole organization becomes more productive. The presence of these members increases productivity, creativity and cooperation instead of rivalry. These values are mentioned as attributes of the most productive organizations (Nadkarni, Lovey, & Erdelyi, 2003; Pfeffer, 1993; Solomon, 2003). The organizational culture and the atmosphere of a company changes: the team learns new ways of problem solving, new values occur as increasing morals, loyalty and good personal relations among workers. Miller and Katz (2002) reinforce these findings, saying that such an inclusive value system raises the level of support and commitment among the members of the team, thus fostering the synergy of the whole organization since the feeling of being appreciated and valued is the best motivation for workers using their full capacities to strive for the goals of their team.

Community music therapy: pathways towards social inclusion

The approach of community music therapy is a response to the social model of disability. When disability is considered to be the result of social, environmental and attitudinal barriers, one of the most important aims of music therapy is to strive for changes in a community. As Ruud (2008) explains:

Community music therapy is a way of doing and thinking about music therapy where the larger cultural, institutional and social context is taken into consideration. The approach involves an awareness of the system music therapists are working within, it means that music therapy is not only directed towards the individual, but often aimed at changing the system that is sometimes part of the situation of the client.

According to the theory and practice of music therapy, shared music is a natural platform for social integration, thus strengthening interpersonal relationships, reducing the sense of difference and facilitating acceptance, respect and togetherness. (Kaufman & Source, 2011; Pavlicevic & Ansdell, 2004; Stige, 2010; Young & Nicol, 2011; Welch et. Al., 2014). Community Music Therapy considers music as a social activity that promotes participation and has a power to make changes in social status. There have been many successful programs in which individuals with disabilities or serious health conditions are empowered by being a part of a performing group. The following examples are particularly worth mention: the Coro Arcadia in Spain, a choir of psychiatric inpatients (Martín, 2013); the CeleBRation Choir, a group for a people with neurological conditions (Talmage, Ludlam, Leão, Rogers, & Purdy, 2011); the ACTIVE Music Project for young adults with intellectual disabilities in New-Zealand (Rickson, 2104), or the two groups in Israel, the Idud choir whose members have intellectual disabilities and the Reanim choir, whose members have quadriplegia (Elefant, 2010).

Method

The workshop has three important aims. In addition to introducing a method that allows individuals with severe disabilities to play music as an orchestra, it is also important to emphasize the yet undiscovered potential of their personal development, which offers a new and positive view for therapists and educators. These goals could be achieved without the participation of the musicians. Nevertheless, another important intention of the workshop is to support the first encounter between volunteer participants and musicians with severe disabilities, providing positive first-hand experience of the community-building power of music.

The general structure of the workshop

The methodology of the workshop was developed for art therapy congresses and was successfully implemented in the 2013 SIPE “Techniques of Art Therapy”, Budapest, and in the 2014 “Áramlásban [In Flow] IV” National Art Therapy Congress in Budapest. The same methodology is used to introduce the orchestra to the visitors of the institution. The former workshops were strictly limited to 90 minutes, while the latter can be more flexible depending on the previous experience of the group visiting the institution. For example, a group of professionals from the same field are more likely to be interested in methodological questions while adolescent visitors may need a more detailed introduction in order to feel prepared for their encounter with the musicians. The participants of different art therapy congresses are usually students or practitioners in the field and they can sign up for various parallel activities. Therefore, it is a more homogenous and predictable audience with a significant interest in the topic.

The workshop has four subsequent parts. The aim of the first section is to introduce the focus group to the participants, while the second part serves for trying out the special instruments and understanding the Consonante Method. The third part is for the encounter, and the workshop is closed with a brief social gathering for the participants. Because of the marginalized social situation of people with severe disabilities, there are participants who have never met an individual belonging to the focus group. Unfortunately, it is believed, it is difficult to involve people with severe disabilities in any kind of meaningful activity, regardless of the dyadic interactions with the therapist. Hence, the workshop briefly introduces the common features of people with severe

disabilities, emphasizing their abilities and opportunities for educators and therapists. In addition to the general introduction, it is also essential to explain the above-mentioned psychological background because of the feelings of disturbance usually caused by the first encounter. Meeting a person with severe disabilities is initially challenging, even for professional art therapists. Therefore, the audience of the workshops also needs help in coming to terms with their own feelings, because it is through understanding them that they can be overcome. Closing the first section and introducing the second part, the participants watch a short video about the method, filmed with the participation of the orchestra members. This is important for the reinforcement of the theory about their abilities as well as preparing them for the personal encounter. People seeing the members of the orchestra do not focus on their disabilities or any unusual external characteristics but on how they are able to use the instruments, how orchestral work motivates them and how they communicate through music.

The second part allows participants to try the instruments and play accompaniment for well-known folk songs. As a strong example for the Universal Design approach, participants gain first-hand experience that the modified instruments worked out responding to the needs of the musicians with physical and intellectual limitations are helpful for ordinary people. With regard to the Consonante Method, people are able to play as an orchestra for a few minutes regardless of their musical backgrounds. Despite the fact that no one can play badly on these instruments, participants without any previous musical training usually find it difficult to familiarize themselves with the situation.

The core of the workshop is when the musicians of the orchestra and the participants make music together. The members of the orchestra represent an experienced musical community, so their participation brings power, unity and joy to the shared musical activity. Furthermore, the presence of the orchestra musicians encourages participants to explore the many possibilities that these situations offer, which often serves to maintain their motivation. The common shared music creates an opportunity to interact musically, bridging any gap caused by the lack of verbal communication or other patterns of socialization.

In the closing session participants are encouraged to share their experiences in the absence of the Nádizumzum Orchestra. The evaluation of the workshop is simply based on the feed-back of the participants. These reflections are more about the sharing of emotions or making comments about the experience of the common shared music with the orchestra members than rational methodological discussions. These narrative feed-backs report the positive and surprising impressions of the participants about the focus group. The limited timeframe of a workshop in a conference is not enough to reflect all of the aforementioned aspects benefits of inclusion. Although these shared experiences provide some insights for future reflection, it would be better to give more time for sharing and reflecting.

Discussion

The Community-Building Power of Music

The community-building power of music is based on different interconnections created by music. Thus, the experience can be described as a complex form of communication (Miell, MacDonald, & Hargreaves, 2005). This is essential in the case of such a

marginalized minority as adults with severe disabilities, because their social isolation is usually based on the fact that they are unable to use the most common forms of human communication. As a result of their challenges in communication and their marginalized status, they are voiceless people at a physical as well as at a social level. The symbolic act of giving them a “voice” through music may be considered an act of empowerment. Ruud explains musical performance as “a way to gain access to symbolic resources often highly regarded within a society” (Ruud, 2008).

Common shared music has a power to alleviate the tension caused by the initial challenges of the encounter by providing joy and the sense of common achievement. The simplicity of the instruments encourages people to be active participants in this joint activity, whether they are professional musicians or people who describe themselves as tone-deaf. While trained musicians usually enjoy trying new rhythm patterns and tone-colors using the instruments in new creative ways, musically untrained people make simple rhythms or metric accompaniments, adjusting to the orchestra. The well-known folk songs guarantee the unity of the performance. The experience may be seen as an example of the Universal Design paradigm, particularly for the first three principles, such as equal use, flexibility of use and simple and intuitive use. Indeed, a product should be “useful to people with diverse abilities”, “accommodate a wide range of individual preferences providing choice in methods of use”, and be “easy to use regardless of the user’s previous experience, knowledge or current concentration level” (Connel et. al., 1997).

Reframing social interaction

In contrast to the first impression of the dependence and powerlessness of people with severe disabilities, the workshop creates an unusual situation with a different form of social interaction. Being part of a performing group is a new and challenging situation for participants without previous musical training, while a familiar experience for the musicians with severe disabilities. A group of musicians with severe disabilities, who are characterized by their “extensive and ongoing support need”, became an inclusive musical community sharing their joy and music with those who are less experienced or skilled in the field of instrumental music and creative improvisation. (TASH, p.19) Many people have broken relationships with music, usually labeling themselves as unmusical or tone-deaf (Ruddock & Leong, 2005). Many were inhibited and lost their appetite for active musical participation usually in their childhood due to negative comments or other adverse experiences. The feeling of shame can have lifelong consequences. The workshop offers treatment and a profound change in these people’s perception of their musical abilities. Although they are usually too cautious to try the instruments, after seeing and hearing the orchestra’s performance they also want to take part. The key to this change is the presence of musicians with severe disabilities. The occasional musical collaboration allows people to feel that they can easily become part of a whole: a community in which they can participate and achieve common goals. Common shared music builds a new inclusive social field where people with severe disabilities gain access to participating in a social community while people with negative musical experiences gain access to participating in a musical community. Turino (2004, p. 1-2) argues that “musical participation and experience are valuable for the processes of personal and social integration that make us whole”. This mutual empowerment makes the experience of equality even more effective.

Experiencing the benefits of an inclusive community

The joyful and active performance of the musicians with obvious challenges helps people immerse themselves in the commonly shared music regardless of their less visible inabilities and weaknesses. Their presence allows participants to make mistakes, thus creating a joyful and secure environment. As a result, the quality of the musical performance of the whole group is enhanced. The main reason of the change is that the presence of individuals with disabilities allows for the acceptance of personal limitations, thus alleviating any feeling of shame. Thus, both orchestra members and guest musicians clearly enjoy the event due to the increased musical communication, mutual respect and creativity. This experience resonates with the results of research into organizational culture and the fifth principle of the Universal Design, which is "tolerance for error". The Universal Design approach stresses that "the design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions" (Connel et. Al., 1997). The same principle appears in organizational culture when a team considers error as an opportunity for learning and a source of innovation. If workers are expected to be productive and successful without making mistakes, the result is an atmosphere of fear and rivalry. As Dyck, Frese, Baer & Sonnentag, (2005) explains, "(In) the long run, organizations that have an effective approach to errors may be more profitable because these organizations learn from errors, are more apt to experiment, and are more likely to innovate". They also state that "Unfortunately, much of the evidence for using a positive organizational approach to errors is still anecdotal". The presence of people with severe disabilities usually breaks through the strict norms that scarcely tolerate mistakes and brings about this desirable shift of values.

The workshop provides a new vision of inclusion as joyful, continual and mutual growth in learning and understanding. Musicians with severe disabilities experience a distinct level of competence through interaction with participants, while participants learn from the experience that the presence of these musicians increases productivity, creativity and cooperation within the group.

Perspectives

The normal duration of a workshop in a conference is 90 minutes. This is a short time for introducing the focus group to the participants, demonstrating the method, giving time to explore the special instruments, creating a positive encounter and receiving valuable feedback. Because of the strong emotional involvement, it is difficult to conduct a rational and detailed evaluation of the experiences of the participants. Therefore, longer workshops and disability awareness projects are planned based on the positive and yet unexploited potential of this prepared and supported collaboration. Future work is planned to connect these workshops with other disability awareness projects, providing positive encounters for other people as well. The longer period offers more opportunity for measurement, evaluation and progress in methodology.

In order to evaluate these workshops, the main criterion would be an analysis of the quality of the musical performance. Experience has shown that the musical quality of the inclusive performance exceeded the quality of the previous performance of the non-disabled group. As a first step, both should be recorded. After careful analysis differences could be identified. Presumably, the second performance will show a higher level of unity and temporal accuracy. The second recording may have a definite increase in the creative use of the instruments and a better tonal quality in singing and other positive changes. We would expect these results both in the common performance and in most of the individual music productions. Having obtained these initial results, the

participants should meet again, to study and interpret the results, as well as having loosely-structured individual and/or group interviews conducted with them. In addition to measuring the effectiveness of this form of inclusion, refreshing the participants' impressions a few weeks after the experience would be beneficial in deepening the positive experience. Presentation of the expected positive results of the cooperation could provide a new understanding of the role of these individuals regarding the productivity of the community.

Projects with adolescent musicians

As a practical outcome, based on the experience of these workshops, another long-term project was started. The Nádizumzum Orchestra and a number of adolescent musicians together prepared a common musical performance, so establishing cooperation between the members of the orchestra and the students. The main goal of this long-term project was to work together on musical productions as equal musicians. Striving to reach commonly shared musical goals is a natural situation in which these young musicians can encounter adults with severe disabilities. Moreover, in one of the most sensitive stages of life they face basic questions as to the meaning of life, and the value of human life. They face questions regarding their inner motivation and drive, as well as being encouraged to re-evaluate expectations, life satisfaction and value systems. The project started in November 2014, with two successful concerts for the World Day of Music Therapy, and continued with a flash-mob, which was used as the overture of the Ars Sacra Festival in 2015. In the following year we celebrated the World Day with another performance with a different group of music students.

These common performances are also worthy of more detailed research. In contrast with the participants without previous musical training, in the case of music students the quality of the performance would not be so informative. In this case the long-time effect of the experience is the most important factor, so it should be measured after a project of at least one year, with regular common performances by the two groups. Instead of asking direct questions about the experience, the possible changes in their preferences or orientation should be measured with in-depth interviews, Swartz-value scales, prosocial behaviour tests and projective drawing tests.

Conclusion

People with severe disabilities and their families usually face social exclusion. The lack of inclusion impacts the quality of life of the whole family. The social inclusion of people with severe and multiple disabilities is usually considered as representing a one-sided act of humanity or charity. This is an unequal relationship, in which society is the *active* player and these individuals are passive *objects* of charity, without any reciprocity. This position is rooted in the challenges of the first encounter: many are completely distraught when they come into contact with individuals with severe disabilities. Thus, the main reason for the marginalized social situation of these people and their families is not due to any lack of benevolence but to the misgivings, powerlessness and embarrassment that many experience on meeting them. "People did not react with deliberate unkindness, but lacked insight and understanding" (Mencap, 2001, p. 18). In order to increase the quality of life for these individuals and their families, it is essential to create opportunities for personal encounters that promote mutual understanding. It is important to help people when they first meet individuals with severe disabilities. As a first step, people have to understand and accept their own disturbing feelings without judging and

being scandalized. Rejection should be accepted as a completely normal and human reaction to such an encounter, but it has to be elaborated. Professionals have to become bridge-builders, imparting information about the difficulties faced by these individuals and their families, preparing both parties for the encounter and providing a positive context. Workshops based on the Consonante method allow participants to experience music as a community building activity. The most important purpose of this project is to provide a new perspective for social inclusion. Participants perceive that an inclusive community benefits not only people with severe disabilities but all. The presence of people with disabilities increases cooperation and decreases rivalry, thus empowering people to use their creativity and strengthening personal relationships within the community. As one of the participants of a workshop said in conclusion, "I enjoyed it so much, it was a lot of fun. But if I had met these people on the tram, I wouldn't have known what to do".

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