



Resenha

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EMPOWERING SONG

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According to the authors, *Empowering Song: music education from the margins* might be considered as a subversive pedagogy that embodies theories of resistance that address community music education and choral music (p. i). Professionals have been inspired by *Empowering Song* to revisit and reconsider the traditional pedagogical practices and approaches. The *Empowering Song* pedagogy has been applied in the Boston University project “Race, Prison, Justice Arts” in marginalized and justice-deprived people contexts: prisons, refugee shelters, detention facilities, and migrant encampments. *Empowering Song* presents an orientation towards healing the wounds of exclusion and explores the ways in which music education can address questions of cultural responsiveness within the context of justice. “*Empowering Song* is to music what *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (FREIRE, 1970/2000) is to education, and *Theater of the Oppressed* (BOAL, 1974) is to drama.” (p. xi). It is presented not as a method, but an approach that is always recreated according to reality, as a critical intervention in the educational industry reflecting on postcolonial theory, the decolonial turn and cosmologies of the Global South.

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The *Empowering Song* book is organized into two parts. Before the first part there is the *Foreword* by Bryonn Bain and the *Preface* by the authors. The first part is divided into three chapters and the second into four chapters. The first part gives the history of the *Empowering Song* approach. The second part brings the knowledges found in the work with *Empowering Song* approach applied in different contexts. After the second part, there is the *Afterword 1* by Wayland Coleman, the *Afterword 2* by Truth, the *Epilogue* by the authors, the *References*, and the *Index*, totaling 159 pages.

The Chapter 1, *Musicking people*, addresses the authors' stories to establish a relationship with readers and to show that they are whole people, with their own experiences. The chapter presents three subheadings. In the first subheading, *Empowering Song: Some Initial Thoughts*, the authors tell us about some concepts that *Empowering Song* embodies. In the second, *André's Story*, and in the third subheading, *Emilie's Story*, the authors tell us about themselves, their lives' histories, their experiences.

The Chapter 2, *Disrupting practice*, addresses normative practice and introduces us the *Empowering Song* approach as a paradigm of resistance. The chapter has three subheadings. The first subheading, *Communal Musicking, Sonic Excellence, and The Good*, tells us about the act of coming together to co-create and perform in communities that come together to make music, the pursuit of excellence in conventional ensemble music acknowledged by the production of a specific sonic aesthetic that excludes other voices, and the focus on being good rather than sounding good that changes the nature of the goals in the conventional ensemble. The second, *Conductors, Monologue, and Exclusion*, tells us about the conductor authority in conventional ensembles and the culture of monologue rather than dialogue, the dominance of Western paradigm in the conventional ensemble practice around the world that often ignore, exclude, or diminish the practice of participatory music-making. The third subheading, *On Coloniality and Carcerality*, tells us about educational and cultural institutions and the maintenance of coloniality, the symmetry between prison and school, the similarity between the conventional ensemble and the prison's panoptic design, and the hierarchical nature of the large ensemble paradigm.

The Chapter 3, *Empowering Song*, covers the history of the *Empowering Song*. The chapter has three subheadings. In the first subheading, *Behind Bars*, André de Quadros talks



about the beginning of the project within a Boston University Prison Education Program, the need for interdisciplinarity to teach music in prisons, and the importance of knowing and using prison culture to teach music in prisons. In the second, *Beyond Borders*, Emilie Amrein talks about the activities of *Common Ground Voices/La Frontera*, an event held on the border between the United States of America and Mexico. The third subheading, *In the Classroom*, Emilie Amrein tells us how to apply the *Empowering Song* approach in the classroom as regular practice in concert programs, as well virtual learning due the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chapter 4, *Sounding Bodies*, addresses mind-body integration through the *Empowering Song* approach. The chapter has four subheadings. The first subheading, *Healing Body, Mind, and Spirit*, tells us about the philosophy of wholism that includes the spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual domains of human development, bringing together heart, mind, body, and spirit for healing and interconnection and how embodied music can allow access to deep emotions and memories healing more than bodily traumas. The second, *From Disembodiment to Body Supremacy*, tells us about the violence found in the history of eugenics and its similarity to exclusion in the context of education, arts, and culture. The third, *The Body: Difference and Knowing*, tells us about the experiences of illness and gender nonconformity: the stigma and exclusion for those diagnosed with illnesses ranging from mental illness to epilepsy and HIV/AIDS, and gays, lesbian, transgender, and intersex people. The fourth subheading, *Embodying Race, Ethnicity, and Indigeneity*, tells us about the rooted institutional power that privileges Western musical practice as the center and places music from the rest of the world as peripheral and the history of music's role in projects linked to race, ethnicity, and indigeneity.

The Chapter 5, *Narrating Selves*, addresses the self in several ways. The chapter presents four subheadings. The first subheading, *Music-Making as Self-Creating*, tells us about how *Empowering Song* approach is a pedagogy that aims to equalize consensus and individuality within a group context and seeks to create opportunities for an individual instrumental or singing voice to be connected and valued through the creative act as a process in which people declare their individualities, identities, and presence. The second, *The Social Self and Subjectivity*, talks about the voice as a fundamental locus of identity and identification, starting from the “[...] procedures, processes, techniques, and structures of subjectivity or the



process of subjection.” (p. 77). The third, *Consciousness-Raising as a Springboard for Social Transformation*, tells us about the Paulo Freire's use of the term *conscientização*, meaning not just consciousness or awareness, but a critical understanding of material and political reality, driving direct action for social transformation, being applied to music education through valuing students' experiences as an essential part of classroom culture, including student creativity in rehearsal and performance. The fourth subheading, *Circle, Self, and Song*, tells us how music-making can be a means by which identity can be manifested, feelings can be found, and even one's existence can be acknowledged, made visible, through the phenomenon of community singing, a kind of circle singing, as a political-pedagogical intervention that is rooted in the aural/oral tradition of social song.

The Chapter 6, *Dancing Stories*, addresses stories that people may tell about themselves, creating meaning from their experiences in this world. The authors tell us that through dialogue people can listen to each other, listening in a non-extractive way, creating narratives through empowered music-making. The chapter has four subheadings. The first subheading, *Loving and Living by Stories*, tells us about storytelling as a way of positioning the past to have results in the future, with the imaginary, the utopian, being essential to the pedagogy and placing the imaginary as narrative and expression of vulnerability. The second, *Dialogue for Compassion in Musicking*, tells us that conviviality can be favorable to create the ideal conditions for dialogue that can happen during music-making itself, bringing hope and healing. The third, *Reflecting on Dialogue in Practice*, tells us how music and peacebuilding programs can facilitate dialogue among diverse peoples with restorative practices and relationship-building in the rehearsal and performance process. The fourth subheading, *Listening (But Not in the Way You Think)*, tells us about how *Empowering Song*'s expansive listening draws on traditions of empathic, generative, and indigenous listening, recognizing the complexity of multidimensional communication and placing music-making in the classroom or ensemble as a social place where people may expose their common humanity, responding to collective harm, and envisioning hope.

The Chapter 7, *Painting Dreams*, addresses dreams and imagination for a new pedagogy breaking down borders and exploring a new world. The chapter has five subheadings. The first subheading, *Anger and Yearning*, tells us about the discourse on issues of justice and race,



climate change, income inequality, LGBTQ+ discrimination, disability, and empire. The second, *For Integration to Instigation for Empowered Practice*, tells us about the vision that *Empowering Song* approach has on the integration between music and the other arts, considering music deeply connected to multiple forms of metaphorical creation, as a unified set of processes and not as simple objects of creative production. The third, *Visions of Nowhere and Everywhere*, tells us about utopia as an *Empowering Song* worldview and art as an unlimited human expression that can offer a path that allows people to name reality and imagine the "nowhere" of utopia, putting them into action, being an ideal means of encouraging utopian thinking. The fourth, *Transformational Resistance and Organizing for Change*, talks about how *Empowering Song* approach works with the five guiding themes for transformational resistance from Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino/a CRT developed by Solorzano and Delgado Bernal (2001). The fifth subheading, *Musicking for a Changed World – It's All About Movement*, tells us about how *Empowering Song* can be where the imagination might be released and where, through artistic making, visioning can occur, conducting workshops that allow participants to tell their stories through poetry, the body, masking, song, and more, taking care of the work that needs to be done.

The main idea defended by authors is that the art is for everyone, including the marginalized, and that its power can rescue values that have been lost. This idea is advocated by several authors around the world: by L. Tett, K. Anderson, F. Macneill, K. Overy, and R. Sparks, in Scotland²; by M. S. Barrett, in Australia³; by M. L. Cohen, also in the United States of America⁴; by J. Henley, in England⁵; by G. Mota and J. T. Lopes, in Portugal⁶; by P. Mullen

² TETT, L.; ANDERSON, K.; MACNEILL, F.; OVERY, K.; SPARKS, R. Learning, rehabilitation and the arts in prisons: a Scottish case study. **Studies in the Education of Adults**, v. 44, n. 2, p. 171-185, 2012.

³ BARRETT, M. S. Developing learning identities in and through music: a case study of the outcomes of a music programme in an Australian juvenile detention centre. **International Journal of Music Education**, v. 30, n. 3, p. 244-259, 2012..

⁴ COHEN, M. L. Choral Singing in prisons: evidence-based activities to support returning citizens. **Prison Journal: An International Forum on Incarceration and Alternative Sanctions**, v. 99, no. Supplement 4 Issue, p. 106S-117S, September 2019. HeinOnline.

⁵ HENLEY, J. Musical learning and desistance from crime: the case of a 'Good Vibrations' Javanese gamelan project with young offenders. **Music Education Research**, v. 17, n. 1, p. 103-120, 2015.

⁶ MOTA, G.; LOPES, J. T. (Eds.). **Growing while playing in Orquestra Geração**: contributions towards understanding the relationship between music and social inclusion. Porto: Edições Politema, 2017.



and K. Deane, in Ireland⁷; by J. J. Pastor Comín and C. Rodríguez Yagüe, in Spain⁸; by J. F. Fernandes, in Brazil⁹, and many other authors elsewhere.

The ideas are developed in the book by always presenting theory and practical examples. The idea that theory and practice are always together is defended by Freire who says that:

[...] theory is indispensable to the transformation of the world. In fact, there is no practice that does not have a certain theory embedded in it. And the better I know the rationale, not only of the process in which I find myself engaged in to change society, but also the rationale of the possible reactions I will face in transformative practice, the more effectively I can work¹⁰ (FREIRE, 1999, p. 135).

The language used is easy, clear, and well explained. Although the book addresses some aspects of different areas, such as music education, psychology, philosophy and sociology, these areas are not covered in such depth as to impede understanding. The idea of interdisciplinarity is advocated by Betancourt del Castillo (2021, p. 532) who considers it important to reach people in an integral way: “By means to these interdisciplinary bridges, it was possible to establish cultural ties that went beyond the merely corporal or physical, but also from the literary and philosophical, nurturing an intercultural dialogue [...]”¹¹.

The themes of the book are well organized, and it shows some pictures to exemplify them, making the reading more pleasant. Through this book we may have a panoramic view of the complexity in using music, and the arts in general, as a means of rescuing values that were lost by marginalized people, making them accepted and reinserted into society. Henley, Mota

⁷ MULLEN, P.; DEANE, K. Strategic working with children and young people in challenging circumstances. *In*: BARTLEET, B. L.; HIGGINS, L. (Eds.). **The Oxford Handbook of Community Music**. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. p. 177-194.

⁸ PASTOR COMÍN, J. J.; RODRÍGUEZ YAGÜE, C. Educación en prisión y reinserción social: la intervención musical desde um paradigma cognitivo-conductual. **Educatio Siglo XXI**, v. 31, n 2, p. 347-366, 2013.

⁹ FERNANDES, J. F. **Educação musical de adolescentes em cumprimento de medida socioeducativa através do canto coral**. Cuiabá: EdUFMT, 2016.

¹⁰ [...] a teoria é indispensável à transformação do mundo. Na verdade, não há prática que não tenha nela embutida uma certa teoria. E quanto melhor eu saiba a razão de ser, não apenas do processo em que me acho engajado para mudar a sociedade, mas também saiba melhor a razão de ser das possíveis reações com que me defrontarei na prática transformadora, tanto mais eficazmente posso trabalhar.

¹¹ Gracias a estos puentes interdisciplinarios se pudieron establecer lazos culturales que rebasaron lo meramente corporal o físico, sino también desde lo literario y filosófico, nutriendo un diálogo intercultural [...].



and Cohen support the idea that music programs can result in “positive contributions to society” and say that:

[...] there is a need to bring together the growing evidence base of the impact that music programs have on both musical development and personal identity change so as to demonstrate how they can support pathways into employment and ultimately enable people to make positive contributions to society (HENLEY; MOTA; COHEN, 2013, p.125).

Specifically, the target audience for this book is music educators who want to work with marginalized people, but in general, art educators can make good use of it. The authors' conclusions found in the book are based on their own experiences.

André de Quadros grew up in Bombay, India, and was educated in a school based on a British curriculum run by Spanish Jesuits. There he lived together with the British/Western education and the Portuguese colonialism. After that, he went to school for one year at the Christian Brother's College in Melbourne, Australia. There he experienced racism.

André was introduced to authority and centralized decision-making regarding the ways of conduct ensembles, but he was familiar with Orff-Schulwerk pedagogy and its possibilities of teaching music in Salzburg, Hungary, and experimented with teaching music by applying the knowledge about Orff-Schulwerk based on aurally/orally transmission of cultural materials. After that he engaged in composition, musicology, creative work, movement, and dance in Melbourne.

André developed his radical sociopolitical worldview influenced by the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, by the Brazilian writer Paulo Freire, and confronting three different contexts: the creative music classroom, the formalisms of the choir and orchestra, and the democratic dimensions of participatory and community music-making.

The first meetings in community music took place in Australia. He was involved in starting the organization Parents for Music: A Family Music Association. The community music practices happened without a basis in any theory, without much guidance, before the internet, without materials and guidebook.

He was drawn to community music and creative teaching even in the traditional academic environment. In 2008, while working in a health project in Peru, André discovered *Theatre of the Oppressed*, by the Brazilian theater practitioner Augusto Boal. He then began to



collaborate in music communities in the Arab world and Israel. So, he began working in Boston's prisons.

André de Quadros is currently a professor of music in the Music Education Department at Boston University, where he has affiliations in African, African American, American and New England, Asian, Jewish, and Muslim studies, at the Center Antiracist Research, and prison education. Among the books André wrote before *Empowering Song*, we can find *Poking the WASP Nest: Young People Challenge and Educate Race through Applied Theatre* (2021) in partnership with D. Kelman, J. White, C. Sonn, and A. Baker, and *My Body Was Left on the Street - Music Education and Displacement* (2020) in partnership with K. T. Vu.

Emilie Amrein sang in a Lutheran choir and in church services, concerts, and competitions. So, she got a full scholarship from the church to support her career. She was able to work with children living in poverty and at a shelter for people who had experienced domestic violence. Then came the confrontation between the college choir and the work choir: whiteness, class, circumstances, wounds. At that moment, the choir's hierarchical leadership structure was questioned.

Emilie had a quick and accurate sight-reading of music and was dedicated to the choral art form. She struggled to find a place in the choirs at her opera-oriented school but was excluded from the main ensembles. She was reprimanded when she had different ideas.

Emilie experimented with different leadership models and collaboration styles, wrote about a vision for music education, attended a black church, and participated in collectivist sonic art and theatrical installations. She has two children, one disabled and one not. As both children approached adolescence, she learned more about disability justice and the social model of disability. Emilie became involved in social justice movements, with community singing, collaborated with cultural organizers, activists, and peacebuilders, and observed choirs in Jordan and Palestine working for peace and reconciliation.

Her experience can be seen through observation at Common Ground Voices (Jerusalem), collaboration at Common Ground Voices/La Frontera, groundwork for a prison arts program at the University of San Diego, work with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and California Lawyers for the Arts, participation with 20 incarcerated men and other outside participants in the Alternatives to Violence Project at



Calipatria State Prison in Imperial County, California. Emilie Amrein is currently associate professor of music and the Director of Choral Studies at the University of San Diego where she directs the USD Choral Scholars and teaches courses on the intersection of music and social justice movements, community music, and transformation.

Despite differences, and among them those of generation and culture, André and Emilie found common cause and decided to collaborate with each other to write the book *Empowering Song*.

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