

Kairos, Psychic creativity Musical creativity

Interview with Paola Carbone

By Stefania Marinelli

Introduction to dialogue

Having unexpectedly to edit a new issue of *Funzione Gamma*, inherent in music and in music by correlating with the psychoanalytic point of view, I was found myself, not being an expert in the field, to make use of various memories and some predilections, such as the one for Mozart's works.

In the recent conference "In Music, between Adolescence and Psychoanalysis", organized by the ARPAD Association of which you are President, last October at the Salesian University, dedicated to temporality and music in the era of adolescent development, I have been very interested in your Presentation. In particular because your introductory speech seemed to both contain and harmonize the three perspectives - adolescence, music, psychoanalysis - in a masterly and original way. Above all, it impressed me for some active factors of your communication with the audience, which was certainly trained in part, or also not acculturated, given that many of them were still specializing at the beginning of training. Yet communication circulated in a nutritious and equal way for all and seemed to have touched, as the French guest François Marty noted, all the elements of the configuration.

The two factors that I could see at work in communicating with the group were above all two, most important to me:

- a) one, recourse to the myth, in particular the myth of Orpheus, poet and musician, which you presented briefly, but with all its suggestive values
- b) two, the listening that you offered to the group, of a piece of music taken from a Mozart opera, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, The Marriage of Figaro, which you had called, appropriately and in an original way, an "adolescent" opera. This opera in fact equally well exemplifies the propositions that you had put in connection with it.

It is these if you agree with me the two elements that I would like to recall in this Interview.

This edition of the journal *Funzione Gamma*, as befits an edition originating from an artistic theme, was born as a free whole that can take on different perspectives and evoke different experiences. The texts of this issue begin from psychoanalytic research on the human relationship with sound, its meanings and the value of emotional experience and contact in the relationship inside the group - these are the researches conducted by *Édith Lecourt*, present within the edition in her contribution

about the musical associative process and of the sound into the group; but also in the article by *M.-F. Castarède*, dealing the primary re-enactment value of the listening to music; in the contribution by *I.Orrado and J.-M. Vives*, exemplifying the autistic contact with music, which is perceived more free and not as “addressed” as the word is, with a suggestive example of a Canadian musician’s life. Moreover the consideration of the value of the group psychoanalytic music therapy particularly is referred by *A.Brault* to the adolescence, because it resonating the puberty irruption and the sound envelopes; and the psychoanalytic interpretation of organized musical structures, as seen in the comparison between Bion’s thought and Gould’s music, is proposed by *Maurizio Bucca*. And finally, the edition is related to the sense of *thirdness* that the association of music and image creates, as seen also in the cover of this edition, by *Federico Dazzi*; or which is generated by the meeting of the verbal text with music, as happens in lyrical works. The latter point of view is taken into consideration in the article on Wagner’s *Die Nürnberger Meister*, The Master Singers of Nurembergin, in which the author *Gianni Nebbiosi* represents some themes of Relational Psychoanalysis, exemplifying them in the father-son relationship and between generations, which is present in the Opera and animating it.

Just from a point of view parallel to this, among other things, I recently dealt with another work by Mozart, the *Don Giovanni*. I would like to return later on this point if possible, possibly with a question to ask you, in order to extend the scene of Mozart's inspiration to the theme of adolescent sexuality.

But let’s go back to your work with the conference’s group and to your precious *notes* on the myth, on the one hand, and on listening to music, on the other.

Both of them appeared to me as found syntonic and effective with the group’s need to *tuning* to the initial *LA*, the primary note of the meeting and of the group itself: to be accompanied to have an experience and to think together. On the one hand, the myth: myth, Francesco Corrao, has transmitted it to all of us, I would say it is in the very DNA of group psychoanalytic learning, and its polysemantic values, its containing capacity and its narrative suggestions. On the other hand, listening to music, which within the Conference and its setting and within the re-enactments of your Introduction to the theme, took on values of meaning and connection that brought together the motivation and harmonizing cohesion of the meeting for the conference.

We know that various French authors in particular, I remember here above all the work of Claudine Vacheret, have been interested in the theme of what she calls the group's mediating object. We can define the mediator object as an event that is part of the group process (such as the circulation of the photograph or other concrete object brought within the group through a procedure defined by rules): it is included in the plural device of care or training , with the aim of promoting the circulation, cohesion and expansion of the psychic work of the participants, and of the common mental field. The multiple work apparatus, grouped as we know from experience and the theoretical model, favors, if well conducted, the group's communication and exchange activity. Even more so if the process can rely on the concrete object and its mediating function, it seems that it is facilitated in bringing out more formless and

less suitable psychic elements for verbal expression, which could be neglected in the verbal exchange field for their immaturity, diversity, or would take a long time to appear on a symbolizing scene.

Here is also if I apologize for the digression, I feel well because I can better express what I think about your Introduction to the group/Conference. This, I think, did all the work of the group together, as a unique voice: the group, its mediating object, evocation of the myth connected to music; and listening to music.

So my memory is still very alive of that listening to the air of Cherubino, “I don't know more what I am what I do”, from *Figaros Hochzeit, The Marriage of Figaro*, launched by you in the silence of the arising setting, after the verbal introduction, rapidly for the participants, eager for knowledge and to match the adolescent content - I repeat it seemed masterful to me. As the work of the orchestra at the time of its realization, the emotions and skills developed during the rehearsals are brought together and relived once again, so the group harmonized.

So these are my impressions. Now I kindly ask you to tell if possible for you, yours.

My first question might sound like this:

Interview

Question

Do you think that listening to music shared within a training, or therapeutic group, of teenagers or operators who take care of them, has, compared to speech, some greater value to facilitate the process of sharing deep emotions and trust to be able to transform them?

Reply

Dear Stefania, thank you for inviting me to this psychoanalytic-musical 'duet' that intrigues and stimulates me, especially since your sensitivity to the group dimension and your musical culture enrich my perspective.

In the “Introduction” you present our dialogue starting from the meeting at the conference “IN MUSIC. Between adolescence and psychoanalysis” (1); ARPAd has worked extensively on this exciting topic and has also produced, for our magazine AeP-Adolescence and Psychoanalysis, a monographic edition (2) that seems to us to have two merits: the first is that of having highlighted the importance of music in adolescence; the second of having tried to explain from a clinical-psychoanalytic point of view, the reason for this importance.

Having a broad and systematic monograph on the subject behind it (to which I refer for those who wanted to deepen) allows me today to respond to your observations immediately and somewhat improvising, given that both in psychoanalysis and in music a vital and creative share of ours “acts” arises precisely from that glimpse of the preconscious to which improvisation gives us access.

Music is certainly the most complex of the arts; the sensorimotor, emotional, cognitive, cultural and intersubjective processes that music brings into play, touch,

move and bind the composer, the performer and the listener in an always current and powerful communicative circularity.

I do not think there are doubts about the fact that sharing group music listening, at any age but especially in adolescence, generates a certain degree of emotional harmony and that this harmony is a relational facilitator which in turn facilitates expressive possibilities.

The research of the musicologist and psychologist Michel Imberty (3) (1981) indicates very clearly the basis of this “harmony” in the analogical relationship that links music and psychological experiences; it is an analogy - says Imberty- which relies on the intrinsically symbolic nature of music, given that the symbol, unlike the verbal sign which is readable in semiotics, has two fundamental properties: always linking the symbolizing to the symbolized through analogical relationships, and stimulating a resonance in the relationship between text and user that roots the perception and understanding of the text in the unconscious.

As for the use of these tuning potentials of music for training or therapeutic purposes with a group of teenagers, or with operators, the question is complex: I think music is still an instrument (albeit in some cases very noble) and - like any tool - can be used and used with different results.

It is starting from the awareness of this special “socializing” potential of music that the Venezuelan musician José Antonio Abreu created El Sistema in 1975, a foundation for the social promotion of marginalized youth; for Abreu the orchestra represents that ideal society that can allow anyone personal and social development and in fact its foundation has offered thousands of marginalized children the opportunity to change their destiny.

However, the famous fable of the “*Magical Piper*” also comes to mind which - strong of its musical ability - drags all the children of the city of Hamelin into the abyss; and on the other hand the military marches are composed in order to predispose to collective attitudes of “audacity” and “challenge”, towards which each of us, taken individually or tuned to a Beatles song, would not adhere with such momentum; and then, how can we fail to mention one of Kubrik’s greatest masterpieces: *A Clockwork Orange*? A film in which the soundtrack is literally the backbone of meanings, given that the gang of young thugs unleashes its violence on the notes of Beethoven and Rossini; and it is very interesting -in the end of the film- how the "reeducation" program to which Alex undergoes, is a real torture in which Beethoven's ninth puts to music the heinous images of Nazi violence.

I have made these divergent and extreme examples to say two things: the first is that an account is the emotion from which we are caught, an account is the feeling with which we represent it, one account is still the use we make of that feeling and therefore the structural analogy between a certain music and a certain emotional configuration does not necessarily trigger the same attitudes (and in fact in 'The Magic Flute' Pamina meets with his beloved Tamina thanks to the common use of the flute, while the children of Hamelin also led by a flute fall into the abyss of death). The second reflection is that both the training and the therapeutic processes, in order to unfold, need to fuel the spark of subjectivity of the other (operator, teenager,

patient ...) and that - because this can happen - it is necessary that every risk of "suggestion" is contained.

Question

A second question, this time related to the myth you recalled in the group, the myth of Orpheus musician and poet of all time, could be formulated as follows:

Do you think that teenagers are able to take advantage of the literary and narrative structure of the ancient myth within the group? Or is their productive need for modern myths, always new and proper (4), felt by them as exclusive? (Ferro, 2006)

Reply

Sallustio says that 'myths are facts that never were and always are'; it is a brilliant definition that highlights how the power of myth is its timelessness. The great myths cannot be 'modern', I think they would be offended if they felt defined as such.

But you rightly observe that teenagers need to 'produce' their myths (and perhaps not just teenagers ...): so what? Can the great myths, in their timeless universality, support this need? I would say yes, because I believe that the power of the myth lies in the ability to facilitate the expression of one's own narrative in everyone.

In my experience, I meet young people hungry for the opportunity for truth that the 'true' myth, the 'great' myth, can offer; young people need great truths, truths about the issues of life and death that press them, all the more so in a historical phase that transformed eros into sex and concealed tanatos elsewhere.

Myths are always 'current' and always 'young': Oedipus is just a boy when he escapes from incest and parricide in his ruin and Narcissus is just a boy when in desperate search for himself he falls into the stream. And the two oedipal and narcissistic configurations are still the two founding poles of the psychopathological understanding of adolescent suffering.

And isn't Telemachus one of the many teenagers today? A father too idealized and too absent, a mother too desirable and too present and then Ithaca, those four stones burned by the sun and surrounded by the sea, a world too isolated and too narrow to dream. The Proci who infest the palace give shape to a petty, gray current affairs; the dictatorship of the present, then as today, is fully staged by those greedy and incapable 'notables' who devour and squander the future of Ithaca.

Heroism - in the eyes of Telemachus, just as it is for today's and teenagers ever - is just a myth from the past. But a dream, Homer tells us, you can always dream and a special meeting, the appearance in a dream of Athena, gives Telemaco -yesterday as today- the urge to fantasize a way out (Carbone, 2014) (5) .

And to conclude (big word), I would say that basically it is not at all necessary that the boys know the story of Oedipus or the myth of Narcissus, they may also not 'know' the myth on a cognitive level; provided that there are 'singers' who continue to have a voice to sing them (that there are real teachers, real parents, real 'psi', in short: 'fulfilled adults') these great myths will continue to renew and help us.

Question

Do you think that the suggestion of the myth of Orpheus, or others that contain musical temporality, is suitable for creating space between making music and thinking - for example, thinking about the present of listening; to think about the music, the word, their meeting?

Reply

It is a very interesting question, which helps us to develop the relationship between myth and adolescence, because the myth of Orpheus brilliantly stages that double experience of human temporality that afflicts us so much and that is configured precisely in adolescence, when we humans discover that not only 'you die', but that 'I, me, will die'.

Orpheus with his music on one side creates a circular, idyllic and pacified space-time; a 'still' space-time as eternity is firm. But the myth of Orpheus is also a myth of death, it is the myth of Eurydice's death: an irreversible death against which Orpheus fought uselessly. The myth - like any great myth - does not want to 'deceive us', it does not tell us that in everything else everything will work out, but at the same time it does not leave us alone (and - let's not forget - young people are tragically alone in front of the discovery of their mortality!). The myth of Orpheus, while telling us that we will die, tries to help us hold together the two painfully antithetical temporal experiences. And it is brilliant that the myth - to keep these two antithetical temporalities together - entrusted itself to a musician: because music opens man access to an indefinitely unfinished temporality, without obliging him to carry out defensive processes of denial or negation.

In this regard, the thought of Michel Imberty is very interesting: Imberty (ibidem, 1981) explains that music, in the face of the difficult awareness of our mortality, has the great power to rewrite human time: "musical art allows man to overcome the anguish of the irreversible and of death, replacing the destructive time with a closed space in which the dream of an ever new and indefinitely unfinished existence looms "(p.155).

I believe, dear Stefania, that Imberty's reference (ibidem) to the 'closed space' will be particularly dear to you, in the light of your book "The space summit in psychoanalytic work".

Music, as "writing of time", reveals all its power for teenagers: it is not sought after as a simple 'entertainment', but young people need music so much because - if we do not want to escape into the religious illusion of beyond - music is what can help us face the fundamental problem that imposes itself with adolescence on every human being: to look for one's own way to reconcile continuity and the instant, life and death, the two large temporal vectors of Eros and Thanatos (Carbone P., 2019, AeP-Adolescence and Psychoanalysis; 'Queuing Towards a provisional conclusion').

Question

Do you think it is important during the treatment, or even more generally, to be able to accompany the different temporal rhythm of adolescent development, which presents itself (as in many works you have had the opportunity to affirm) unique and

differentiated from the temporality of the development processes of the others life stages?

Reply

As you rightly propose, it is very important to try to tune in to the temporal rhythms of our patients, to try to resonate as a 'well-tempered' instrument on the rhythm of their music in order to help them - through our means - to listen. It is important for them, and it is very important for us, for the occasion that adolescence gives us to open up to other rhythms and other time horizons. So I close referring to the work that we have been doing for almost 20 years in a Roman Emergency Room, where many boys 'dock' who through the body's injuries (accidents, fights, risky behaviors, substance abuse ...) seek help for soul wounds to which they cannot give voice.

What do we hope to achieve through a single interview in a Hospital Emergency Room? We, who trained in the school of psychoanalysis, have learned that the journey into our unconscious is an infinite journey?

Yet, paradoxically, not only do we believe we are useful even with a single meeting, but we have the presumption of being “psychoanalytically” useful.

I don't want to weigh down our duet with an “a solo” too long and therefore I refer, those who wanted to know more about 'The wings of Icarus. Understanding and preventing youth accidents' (Carbone, 2009) but I am pleased to mention this in our dialogue the interesting qualities of the special “space-time” of the P.S.

On the one hand the crisis (the trauma of the event, the physical pain, the fright, the anonymous place ...) on the other the surprise of the encounter with an “Other” who really wants to listen to you, can generate in the boys we meet powerful evolutionary occasions: “But what hospital is it? Luca asks in amazement: Because I know them all, I have had many accidents; I'm one like that, always in a hurry, I don't want to suffer, I can't think. But in this interview ... it is as if I had done a somersault, today speaking here I have done things 360 °!”.

Young people who would never go to ask a 'psi' for help gratefully accept an interview in that special space-time which is the P.S. in which the promise of “ready' rescue is suddenly revealed. And we too, like Luca, do a nice “somersault” every time in the commitment to give life to a “complex moment”, because a single meeting does not necessarily mean little time. Classical Greek culture has taught us that there is a quantitative time that flows regularly and measurably (kronos) and a qualitative one, the right and opportune moment, the supreme moment (kairos) and this is the challenge that every time, in every meeting we want to face: transform a single meeting into a single meeting.

Thank you, dear Stefania, for this beautiful opportunity for dialogue that you offered me, ours was a moment of authentic “kairos”. And now I am happy to listen to your closing words.

Conclusive note

In a final thank you note, and apologies for taking up so much space and time! I would like to resume, as I had anticipated at the beginning, my book chapter (*Il vertice spazio nel lavoro psicoanalitico*, The space/vertex in psychoanalytic work) dedicated to Don Giovanni's "right to joy". The figure of Don Giovanni, rich in literary tradition, is expressed in Da Ponte's libretto for the work set to music by Mozart, in particularly vivid and synthesizing ways. So I liked to imagine that even the right to unleash emotions until their extreme is once again an extraordinary "adolescent" right, staged by an author like Mozart who with great and wise expertise has underlined in all his works the living value sexual identity, its extremes and risks, its vitality, its mysteries and its pain (I learned from the research of a German musicologist, Johanna Joudas, who was interested in reconstructing some data of Mozart's personality, that he particularly loved, in an era and in a traditional and formal environment, to make use in his private correspondence of scurrilous languages linked to corporeality and to different forms of sexuality).

Thank you for this excellent opportunity and meeting.

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Notes

- 1) The conference was organized by ARPAd (Roman Association Of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy of Adolescent and Young Adult) on 26 October last 2019.
- 2) Issue: MUSIC. N.2 / 2018, Magi publisher, Rome.
- 3) *Le scritture del tempo. Semantica psicologica della musica*. The scriptures of the time. Psychological semantics of music. Le Sfere-Global Print srl, Gorgonzola, 2016.
- 4) See the idea of A.Ferro (2006), on the analysts' need to produce alongside the ancient myths, even new myths at each session: Preliminary reflections on psychoanalysis and narratology. In: Time and Narration, *Funzione Gamma*, 17, edited by M.Bernabei e S.Marinelli. www.funzionegamma.it
- 5) Carbone P. 2014. Heros et adolescentes; question de vie et de mort, Heroes and adolescents; question of life and death. *Adolescence*, vol. 31, p. 345-366.

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