How Do We Go About Singing a New Song About Migration?
Some Reflections from Action Research in the Padana Plain

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T his article provides an overview to the questions that emerged from a research project about music and migration in an area between Lombardy and Emilia Romagna, in the centre of the Padana Plain,[2] to which I, together with some students and former students,[3] have been committed since 2014. By studying musical practices of the migrant communities in Cremona in specific contexts such as that of religious rituals or within specific ages, like that of children between 10 and 13, this article addresses processes of re-culturation, trans-culturation or de-culturation (Bauman 1995) or simply the possibility to express one's own culture.

About 15% of the population of the Cremona Province, as in the surrounding provinces, is made up of "foreign residents", migrants that have been resettling in Cremona for many years. To this we have to add the growth of reception centres for asylum seekers in the same area. Fieldwork and consequent

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[2] From 2015 to 2018 it was part of Pavia University's three-year project *Towards a model of governance of international migrations: challenges and opportunities in an interdisciplinary perspective*, 22 projects in three different research areas: biomedical, social sciences and the humanities. The aim of the Pavia University project was to use an interdisciplinary approach to investigate the phenomenon of migration in the Mediterranean, from its historical roots to the contemporary biomedical, social and cultural implications. The hope was to provide a governance model of the migration phenomenon to manage the reality of a society that has now become an interethnic and intercultural one. See: http://www-wp.unipv.it/migrazione/?pageid=52, last accessed 15 February 2021.

[3] Coordinator: Fulvia Caruso. Participants till 2019: Maurizio Corda, Daniela Conzadori, Beatrice Di Mario, Andrea Fugatti, Beatrice Di Mario, Teresa Polizzotto, Mariangela Quaranta, Monica Serafini, Thea Tiramani, Francesca Vergani, Rouben Vitali, Andrea Rampin, Rouben Vitali (Schools); Clarissa Biscardi, Edoardo Boschetti, Monica Colella, Federica Colucci, Eleonora Carrucciu Francesco Dalla Libera, Sara De Bernardis, Giacomo Firpo, Clara Foglia, Gaianè Kevorkian, Gabriele Lazzerini, Giuseppe L'Erario, Roberta Licitra, Davide Pancetti, Angela Stella Tancredi, Margherita Tealdi, Thea Tiramani, Carla Turlà (Churches); Elisa Tartaglia, Rossella Calvia, Clara Fanelli, Mattia Singaroldi, Francesco Brianzi (Reception centre in Vigolzone); Gaiané Kevorkian, Massimiliano Caruso, Alba Cacchiani, Martina Drigo, Federica La Rocca, Simone Rude, Patrizia Vaccari (Reception centre in Cremona).

literature about the musical behaviour of migrants in Italy was at the time of our research very poor and nothing existed about asylum seekers. As an ethnomusicologist, I am convinced that the analysis of musical practices can give us unprecedented access to the knowledge of a cultural group or community and their sonic agency (LaBelle 2018). We observed the role of music in the migrants' lives through the understanding of their musical tastes and listening practices in everyday life, how this has changed in the process of having moved from one place to another and what this can tell us about the integration of migrants on Italian territory.

The aim of the article is thus a contribution to the contemporary debate about the impact of human migration on the formation, negotiation, and contestation of community and music. I will first describe the assumptions and motivations that led me to start this project and the consequent ways in which I organized it. Then I will move to a detailed description of the various parts in which the project is articulated and what is emerging from our fieldwork. In the conclusion I will reflect on this experience, with a specific focus on the issue of multiculturality.

The *Music and Migration* project: Some general pre-considerations

Starting from the assumption that music-making and music listening are essential tools to express individual, group, cultural, social and religious belonging, the project *Music and Migration* started in 2014 investigating self-representation and expression through the music of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Cremona and its neighbouring provinces (Mantua, Modena and Piacenza).

Cremona is a city that presents a meaningful quantity and percentage of foreign residents on a small scale.[4] Cremona also hosts 20 Extraordinary Reception Centres that manage hundreds of irregular migrants[5] and one S.I.P.R.O.I.M.I[6] that manages about 80 people. This means a significant commitment also with asylum seekers and refugees. It is the second Lombard city after Milan to host irregular migrants who are in the process of regularization or expulsion. For these reasons, Cremona is an excellent place to apply ethnographic research on multiculturality, in line with other urban ethnographies (Reyes Schramm 1979; Baumann 1999; Çağlar and Glick Schiller 2018) and experiment protocols of empowerment and dialogue between cultures.

To avoid any kind of essentialization or ethnicization, we took into consideration musical behaviours of communities and of single individuals, we likewise engaged with non-musicians and we also considered any kind of music present in the lives of migrants and asylum seekers, because the process

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[4] In 2019 12% of Cremona's population (43.097) came from abroad. Data published by the Istat, National Institute of Statistics (https://www.istat.it; last accessed 15 February 2021).

[5] Up till now (2021) we have been unable to get more detailed information from the Cremonese Public Prosecutor's Office about the complete situation. In particular women and unaccompanied minors are distributed in small structures and it is not easy to get more information.

[6] For an explanation of the differences between those processing centres see below *Music and asylum seekers*.

of belonging construction and self-representation may involve many different musics. Applying an active and participatory approach (Prévôt 2016; Frishkopf 2017) we carried out the research through musical practice, workshops, human exchanges and by organizing occasions of restitution to share the musics we came across with Italians. On the one hand, by co-constructing the knowledge about the realities of migrants and asylum seekers, we enabled processes of empowering the persons we were involved with in our research. On the other hand, by organizing or facilitating moments of public presentation of their musics, we likewise intended to give a critique of the contemporary discourses concerning immigration, nationhood, and religion in Europe, in which immigrants are mostly described as 'problematic.' In this regard music is a significant medium for intervening creatively to shape public opinion about cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity in contemporary Italy (Martiniello and Lafleur 2008).

From a practical perspective, we foresaw protocols of inclusion of the migrant communities through music along three axes of intervention: religion, multicultural education, and music making in reception centres. *Inclusion* for us means well-being and not homologation; people not only need to have their own place in society but also have to live their own way (Croom 2015) in a kind of multicultural riddle that we try to be aware of (Baumann 1999).

Levels of inclusion I: Music and religion

The first issue we began to deal with were the religious activities of resident foreigners, in order to understand the role of music in their religious life.[7] We were interested in knowing and spreading information about those realities, creating an archive of audio-visual recordings[8] of the religious rites in Cremona and its surroundings and of interviews with participants (musicians and individuals that have a leading role in the community and/ or rituals). This allowed us to gather a large amount of documentation about the music involved in rituals and the role it plays in migrants' religious and everyday life. An extremely rich plurality of faiths and many different religious realities have emerged from our investigation.

The related documentation intends to highlight in particular the language/s used in the ritual and in the musical performances, the role of the music in the ritual, configuration of the performance,

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[7] Some very interesting situations existed, and I was further inspired by the work started by Serena Facci and her team at Tor Vergata University for the National Research Project *Processi di trasformazione nelle musiche di tradizione orale dal 1900 a oggi. Ricerche storiche e indagini sulle pratiche contemporanee* (national coordinator Giovanni Giuriati), Unità di Roma "Tor Vergata," *Musica, festa, rito. Dinamiche di trasmissione e trasformazione di forma e comportamenti musicali in contesti di socializzazione e rapporto con il sacro* (coordinator Giorgio Adamo); see Facci (2017). The study of migrant liturgical music in Italy has a short history, except for the Greek and Albanian minorities in the South; see Garofalo and Troelsgård (2016) and Rizzuto (2015).

[8] The standard should be to document the events with an audio recorder and two cameras: one fixed as much as possible on the whole event, the other mobile, concentrated on the musical performances possibly with sequence-shots. We have two Canon LEGRIA HF G25 and one ZOOM Q6. An article about the question of visibility of foreign residents in Cremona is in Caruso (2019d).

participation of the believers in the ritual and in the music, as well as the use or not of writing or other technologies in the learning process and in the rendition. We combined this with interviews with officiants and music makers to better contextualize and understand what we were documenting, paying particular attention to possible differences between what is performed and how, both here and at home. Some churches or temples were the subject of degree dissertations,[9] others were the focus of short fieldwork experiences during Ethnomusicology courses. Some have yet to be documented and the documentation and analysis of documented events is still ongoing at the time of writing (even if the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted most of the activities). The largest amount of documentation came from the Theravada Buddhist Temple of the Sinhalese community of Spilamberto (Modena) and from the Temple of the Sikh of Pessina Cremonese and were gathered by Davide Pancetti and Thea Tiramani respectively between 2014 and 2015.[10] The rituals of the Senegalese Mourid Brotherhood which I have been documenting since 2018 are also becoming an important part of the archive. In summary, the documentation regarding the Christian churches, even if we only have a small segment of the respective rituals (one or two masses) in some cases, provides an important understanding of religious musical behaviours.

As could be observed, most of the migrants want to take part in a rite that reproduces the one at home as much as possible. Even when they are actually part of transnational religious, e. g. Christian, communities, they prefer to recreate a transnational community based on nationhood and/ or common language (French or English), even if this only happens once a month or with a priest who comes from far away and has a perfunctory relationship with them. It is a way to maintain a relationship – real or imaginary – with their places of origin.[11]

The rites in their full complexity depend on so many variables, such as musical competence, the presence of a dedicated religious and musical guide, and specific musical traditions, that it is difficult to draw a real conclusion. However, music undoubtedly plays a crucial role in the cohesion of the group, as was precisely explained by Don Agnero, the Congolese parish priest of the Ivorian community: "Our group is strong because we have a choir that gives us strength, stability and unity".[12]

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[9] Thea Tiramani on the Sikh Temple in Pessina Cremonese (CR) and Davide Pancetti on the Buddhist Temple of the Sri Lanka community of Spilamberto (MO) in 2014-2015; Margherita Tealdi on the Ukraine Orthodox community in Cremona in 2015; Sara De Bernardis on the Evangelical International Church of Bethel in 2016. Stella Tancredi on the Chorale S. Michel Archange and Ioana Hadarig on the Rumanian Catholic Church are still ongoing.

[10] See Thea Tiramani's contribution in this book.

[11] An analysis of the Sub-Saharan African Francophone Community transnational setting is in Caruso (2019c).

[12] My translation. Unknown author, "Messa del Vescovo Dante con i migranti cattolici 'Da rivedere il reato di clandestinità'," *La vita cattolica*, 19 January 2014. www.diocesidicremona.it/avvenire (last accessed 11 June 2017).

The documents also indicate that the larger a community is, the more complete the ritual and better performed the music. At the same time the study carried out by one of the project members, Margherita Tealdi, on the Ukrainian masses in Cremona added a different perspective: if it is true that it is difficult for a small community to obtain the proper conditions to perform a good rite, this cannot be specific to the migrants' conditions, because this also happens at home, in small villages in the countryside. In many cases, it also became evident that the media, such as television and the internet, play a strong role in the contemporary modifications of the musical participation of the devotees.

Further steps in the understanding of the dynamics of migrant communities' religious rites are offered by the Christian mass celebrated on the Day of Migrants and Refugees (every third Sunday in January), which we documented from 2014 to 2019 and which created a fruitful corpus for comparison. As became apparent during our research, a single religion, in this case the Christian faith, was, in fact, expressed in a plurality of chants with different languages, different performative attitudes and different musical systems. For example, we observed the stable participation of the choir of the Christian Romanian community and of the Choral of Saint Michael of the Ivorian community, which in 2014 took it in turns to sing during Mass. Other participation depended on which foreign communities were being hosted in the church where the Mass was celebrated. In 2015 the Romanian community was present, but its choir did not sing, and the Choral of Saint Michael alternated with the choir of the Ghanaian Christians who live in Casalmaggiore, the city hosting the celebration. In 2016 in Rivarolo Mantovano it was the turn of the Ghanaians (mostly from Casalmaggiore) and Nigerians (from the hosting city), and every group sang separately. In 2017 the Romanian Choir alternated with a unique choir made up of the various 'Francophone communities' of the Dioceses (using the words of one of the officiants, since, in actual fact, Ghanaians and Ivorians share some repertoires but not French ones!). In 2018 and 2019 all the groups sang separately. In these particular celebrations we witnessed a crescendo in musical commitment that emerged particularly in the involvement of professional musicians in every choir, adding colour and density to every performance.

The urgency to produce a better music transcends individual religious or national belonging. This was the case, for example, in the involvement of Bawa Salifu, a Ghanaian Muslim percussionist, with the Choral of Saint Michael in 2016 and 2017. He accompanied them with his djembe every time they needed to reinforce the sound of the Choral.[13]

However, even if these choirs were quite skilled, they did not mix together unless they were obliged, preferring to express their national and local belonging with their music. Kaufman Shelemay underlines the importance of dance in diaspora as a unique area of traditional ritual in which everyone

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[13] Bawa told me (informal conversation, 15 January 2017) that he often also went to play with Christian communities in Emilia Romagna to accompany their choirs.

can participate easily, regardless of their comprehension of the liturgical language or their musical skills (Kaufman Shelemay 2011). I am convinced that participation in music making can also be a useful indicator about migrants' behaviour that is not expressed in the ritual itself.

Moreover, we saw that most of the players involved in the rites were not professional musicians; they had just learned to play so as to participate in the success of the rite. Depending on the rite in question, this could sometimes be to add to its beauty, or sometimes to regulate the participation and the altered conditions of consciousness to be reached by the participants.

An applied outcome of this fieldwork has been a series of dissemination projects of the musics we encountered. I invited some Sikh musicians for two lesson-concerts at the Department of Musicology and Cultural Heritage in order to let all the students and all the participants get in touch with this music outside the Sunday rite. Furthermore, in 2018 I started a project with the Municipality of Cremona and with three civic museums to connect the cultural heritage of migrants to that conserved in the three museums. The project, which involved the Ivorian community in the Archaeological Museum, the Senegalese community in the Museum of Natural History and the Sikh Punjabi community at the Museum of Folklore, was a huge success and will be repeated. As for the open access archive, I have started to reflect together with the communities on how we can obtain a better understanding of whether and how to create it (for both, see Caruso 2019d).

Levels of inclusion II: A possible role of music in multicultural education

One relevant part of the *Music and Migration* action research project has been devoted to music education at school. Here, we were trying to develop patterns of musical transcultural education, starting from the music listening and practice of the students.[14] Our aim was not to work with migrants or descendants but to enlarge the musical horizon of each and every student and to introduce him/ her to the acceptance of cultural diversity and to the transcultural belonging we all experience.[15] At the same time, working in classrooms allowed us to investigate musical listening, musical tastes and the musical awareness of the young generations and collect sufficient material to understand the musical behaviours of young migrants or descendants compared with those of Italian descent.

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[14] The bibliography on ethnomusicology and musical education we read in preparation for the project is too vast to be quoted here. Crucial studies in helping us ideate our workshops were: Anderson and Shehan Campbell (2013); Shehan Campbell (2004); Shehan Campbell and Wiggins (2013); Schippers (2010); Facci and Santini (2011); Biamonte (2011); Nusbaum (1997); Facci (2002); Ferrari and Santini (2014); Keegan-Phipps (2007); Sakai (2011); Hancock (2008); Schonmann (2015).

[15] See Welsh (2017) and Amselle (2017). See also the project *Transcultural Music Education in Germany or how to manage boundaries in music classes*, at the Liszt School of Music Weimar, Institute of Transcultural Music Studies, conducted by Jörg Sapper.

In the first year (2015–2016), together with my former students Monica Serafini and Maurizio Corda who were actually teaching in the middle school, we developed a protocol that produced a model we then tested in the 2016–2017 academic year with three middle school music teachers (Laura Corona, Giusi Rancati, Stefania Piseri) in the curricular programme of 'musical education' (Serafini 2017; Corda 2017). I also asked many of my postgraduate students who were already teaching at nursery, primary and secondary schools, to experiment this model, adapting it to different situations. The more in-depth studies became a graduate dissertation (Conzadori 2017).

The model that resulted from this approach is articulated in three stages, and with the necessary adjustments seems to work at every kind of school level. The first stage of the work is intended to collect information about students' listenings and musical behaviours through a short questionnaire (mostly multiple choice). The answers we got in both academic years told us – inter alia – that the majority of students are influenced by mainstream musical systems and that they are not aware of the soundscape that surrounds them. Almost all the students listen to mainstream Italian and international pop music and rap, but the students – mostly African – who attend Evangelical masses cited *gospels* and *spirituals* as their favourite musical genres. We then discussed the results with the students and started to introduce concepts such as the functions of music in different musical traditions, mostly in Italian folk music.

The second stage is the realisation of a sonic diary, written over two weeks. Students have to note down in their diary their voluntary and involuntary listening to music and specify where, when and why they listen to a specific song. The diary is meant to make them more aware of the musics and sounds that surround them and at the same time collect additional information about family listening attitudes. In this case too, diaries were discussed in class and different types of musics were introduced to the students. Many of them found this task quite hard (primary school pupils were not asked to do this), and it needed prep-time in the classroom. The hardest parts for the students were the awareness of involuntary listening, the confusion – mostly in descendants – about what was folk or traditional music, and the difficulty they had in relating to their parents as regards the traditional/ folk or popular music of their countries of origin which they were 'forced' to listen to at home or when travelling by car. This is why we introduced a third step: to carry out research about family music (at home and in places of worship) and to present the results in the classroom, and wherever possible also inviting the parents to directly explain their music.

We then alternated listening lessons, linking the music with a specific context and use, and practical lessons where – if possible – students taught each other (or helped the teacher to teach) their musical traditions. In one case the class decided to produce three playlists (Biamonte 2011). The opportunities to go further are endless, depending on the class's response or attitude and on the teacher's ability and attitude.

Two issues have emerged that give us indications on how to proceed. One is the efficacy of the transcultural approach which does not stigmatise the difference of not being Italian and, starting our work from Italian folk music,[16] allows the internal differences we still have, or used to have, in Italy to emerge. The other issue is the need for teachers in general and music teachers in particular to receive specific training. Unfortunately, ethnomusicology is not included on most of the Italian University Musicological and Conservatory courses.[17]

Our work was inscribed in a more complex scenario: second generations in Italy live in an institutional limbo because they cannot have Italian Citizenship until they come of age.[18] At the same time they are engaged in an unforced and unprogrammed but extremely strong assimilation: although the Ministry of Education gives some advice about a school that is open and respectful of diversity,[19] school curricula are strongly based on Italian Cultivated Culture, and teachers receive little preparation in a transcultural or at least intercultural perspective. Sometimes the family wants complete inclusion of the children, disregarding their own traditions. Here, the same behaviour we witnessed in religious practices emerged once again: where there is a large community it is easier to live one's own culture thanks to a real or imagined shared common space. In my opinion, equal belonging can only be possible with a deep consciousness of our own origins. Teachers told me that even in the case of International Adoption, there comes a time (normally at puberty) when boys and girls – Italians, but who come from many different parts of the world – become extremely upset when they have not been informed about their origins.[20]

We thus came to the conclusion that all young generations must be introduced to and get a deeper understanding of the concept of transculturality or of multiple belonging: Italians have to understand that we all have multiple belongings and learn respect and acceptance, migrants have to deal with their reality. It is a task every teacher should consider. Within our project my task was to prepare teachers, introducing them to the vast amount of literature ethnomusicologists have written about music education and to provide them with good material to be used in the classroom, starting from Italian folk music, of which teachers have little or no knowledge.

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[16] The same conclusion was in the work of Facci and Santini (2011).

[17] See the new Italian Ministry for Education regulations: DPR 19-2016.

[18] In Italy this is at the age of 18, but red tape means citizenship takes years to achieve.

[19] *Linee guida per l'accoglienza e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri*, MiUR (Ministry of Education, Universities and Research 2014, https://www.istruzione.it/allegati/2014/linee_guida_integrazione_alunni_stranieri.pdf (last accessed 2 March 2021).

[20] Information given by schoolteachers during several meetings organised at the UST, the Local Education Office (Ufficio Scolastico Territoriale). The Italian Ministry of Education operated at a local level – Regional and Provincial – through these offices in 2016.

Most of the manuals still offer a diachronic viewpoint of music, presenting the music of the world as the music of primitives, conceptually considering non-Western cultures as equivalent to prehistoric ones. Also, when manuals present world music or ethnomusicological questions, the representation is however often extremely synthetic and strongly simplifies musical features.[21] Set against this background, the first applied outcome of the course of the research was a book for teachers that gives effective tools to understand and actually practice world music in the classrooms (Caruso et al. 2021). This is done without any celebration of differences or musical simplification (see Nettl 2010).

Levels of inclusion III: Music making in reception centres

As far as our commitment to asylum and international protection seekers was concerned, we were trying to develop models of social inclusion through music for those who are hosted in the C.A.S., Centres for Special Acceptance, using a PAR approach (Frishkopf 2017).

Due to the large number of irregular migrants, governmental facilities[22] are not sufficient to host all the asylum seekers, and Public Prosecutor's Offices identify places managed normally by cooperatives, dioceses, NGOs or accommodation facilities such as hotels or *agriturismos* ('holiday farms'). Since these centres were originally devised to respond to an emergency, they have fewer rules to follow as regards services for their guests and most are not under the control of the State. Foreigners live there for one or two years or more, waiting for their status to be assessed.[23] This can lead to several problems in what is already a critical situation. We started from the assumption that music can help, as it is an essential part of people's cultural and individual expression.

Stored in their personal memory and media, asylum seekers carry to Europe musics from their countries of origin and from the places they pass through to get here. As a result, they hold a transversal musical competence that interacts with their self-representations and current emotional/ psychological conditions (Schippers 2006). The experience of migration inevitably has consequences, such as traumatic feelings and emotions. Music can be a powerful means to elaborate these feelings and find a new path to follow. The aim of this specific project segment was thus to understand the role music has in their everyday lives and at the same time give something back to asylum seekers thorough our musical

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[21] For an in-depth analysis of how traditional music is presented in music manuals see Facci (2019).

[22] The reception of irregular migrants is based on several levels: Centres of first aid and reception (CPSA) that host the foreigners when they arrive (Lampedusa, Elmas, Otranto, Pozzallo), give medical aid, photo-identify everyone and collect requests for international protection; Reception Centres (CDA), only for acceptance during the identification procedure, and Processing Centres only for asylum seekers (CARA); System of Protection for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (SPRAR), processing centres mostly managed by Municipalities, with government money. The CAS are identified by the Public Prosecutor's Office.

[23] Mostly male, because women make up only 13% of irregular foreigners and are hosted only in SIPROIMI, in safe structures where they can receive better care or in apartments with their families. Unaccompanied minors follow a different protocol, because they are immediately accepted thanks to the 1989 New York Convention on Children's Rights.

workshops. The goal was, on the one hand, to showcase and co-create music to help refugees and migrants socialise and express themselves without necessarily speaking the language of the host country, and, on the other, to give Italian citizens the opportunity to discover, learn from and understand the values and cultures of refugees and migrants and rediscover and enrich their own.

We worked with two different CAS: one is in the Diocese of Cremona *Casa dell'accoglienza* and the other is the *C'era una volta* agritourism (holiday farm) in Zerbione (Piacenza). The two settings are quite different: the asylum seekers hosted in the *C'era una volta* agritourism in Zerbione (PC) are around 15 to 20 men between the ages of 18 and 31 from sub-Saharan west francophone Africa (Ivory Coast, Mali, Senegal, Togo, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, all western sub-Saharan African nations that speak French[24]); the Caritas Reception Home in Cremona hosts about 150 refugees from different parts of the world: Guinea Conakry, Niger, Nigeria, Sudan, Cameroun, Libya, Togo, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Tunisia, Ghana, Palestine, Pakistan, Syria, Mali, Senegal and Somalia. In both cases the refugees had almost no practical musical skills.

This was also the least classic kind of 'field experience' (Kisliuk 2008, 185) we were engaged in. It would have been impossible to just participate in their activities and gather information about their musical listening and performance practices. That is why my students created different kinds of interactions through music. Gaiané Kevorkian in Cremona and Elisa Tartaglia in Vigolzone were the principal actresses in this action-research, with the additional help of other students. Listening, playing (Baily 2008) or 'musicking' (Small 1998) at different levels with the participants, we tried in both settings to explore the wide range of meanings and the different roles that music plays in our personal lives.

In the diocese CAS we started to follow the activities of *Oghene Damba,*[25] a group which was created by Bawa Salifu in 2014, a Ghanaian cultural mediator and musician, with some young men aged between 18 and 25, who came from Ghana, Nigeria and Mali. At the beginning, they were not happy to have my students around, and for three months we were only allowed to attend their weekly meetings, just taking part, occasionally dancing or playing a little. This situation came about because they were quite wary of us on account of the marginalisation they had been experiencing every day. Fortunately, after a few months we got on friendly terms with them and the group gave Gaianè and Simone two djembes, so that they could play with them. After being accepted, Gaianè was able to deepen our knowledge about their musical previous experiences through short interviews reported in her dissertation.[26] Nevertheless, we could only video-document the public performances they held in Cremona, because they did not allow us to film their rehearsals or the interviews.

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[24] Public Prosecutor's Offices normally try to put people who come from the same geographical areas together.
[25] *Oghene* in Nigerian means 'music' (and is normally written *ogene*, but I prefer to use their way of writing it); *Damba* in Gahanian means 'dance.'
[26] For an in-depth analysis of the *Ogene Damba* experience see Kevorkian (2017) and Caruso (2019a).

What I wanted to understand was why they played music and what music they played. The texts of their songs were mostly in broken English and dealt with love, gratitude to Cremona for hosting them, hope for the future. They played African instruments (4 *djembes*, 1 *sangban* and 1 *shekeré*, sustained by 1 bottle) and their music maintained some African features such as the polyrhythmic organisation of parts, a strong presence of improvisation and the antiphonal organisation of vocal parts. But it was hard to recognise any particular specific tradition in their music. Even the dance styles had been processed to a unique style that had in itself parts of the different traditions of the dancers. As Bawa told us: "We try to form an African music, not Nigerian, Ghanaian or Malian, but a mixture of everything".[27] This was because they played music to stay together and to communicate with Italians. And this is still the case.

After this experience, thanks to an idea proposed by Gaianè Kevorkian, we moved on to a new stage: to involve asylum seekers in a radio programme where they present the music they listen to and explain the reasons for their choices to listeners. In this way we could collect information about their musical listenings and at the same time help them in communicating with Italians and be motivated to learn Italian. Gaianè, with Patrizia Vaccari and Martina Di Martino started the pilot experience with six sub-Saharan African people, starting from group improvisations with body and voice based on different role-plays and interactions and participatory listening, in a bottom-up approach. The positive outcome of this experience led us to propose the experience again, involving other nationalities and enlarging the distribution.

The action research in Zerbione was completely different. The migrants here were isolated from everything, at the beginning they had no psychological or educational support or even proper clothes. The first part of the work started in November 2015 with Elisa Tartaglia, who experimented with different ways of musical involvement with the asylum seekers. She mixed shared participatory listening with talking about themselves – their feelings, their opinions about the experience of migration – and learning Italian, and workshops in which they could explore their body and their voice as an instrument to develop musical skills and corporeal consciousness. It was not easy for Elisa to involve asylum seekers in workshops, seeing the difficult conditions in which they lived, but they quickly understood the power of musical communication and used it to denounce their bad situation to the Municipality and Prosecutor Office in a small performance over Christmas, which obtained some results: an Internet connection and an Italian teacher.

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[27] Interview conducted on 23 March 2016.

The second part started in March 2016, with three new students of mine,[28] and a new objective: to think about the future by creating new songs on different topics.[29] Only 8 to 10 of the agritourism refugees took part in the workshop. One of them, Bernard Malou, learnt to play the guitar, the others[30] to play different kinds of percussions (different-sized *djembés*, *cajones* and different rattles they made during the workshops with Elisa Tartaglia). By listening to different musics from their own countries and to Italian popular music and by improvising, they improved their musical skills and memorised some popular African songs, starting to compose some new songs all together. They held a concert in Piacenza in June 2016 and decided to call themselves *Viens Voire*, from the song by Tiken Jah Fakoly. In August 2016, some of them had to move from Vigolzone and others joined the project (see footnote 29). We followed the same path and the renewed *Viens Voire* held a concert in Cremona in March 2017. After few months the Centre was closed and the asylum seekers dispersed in various CAS, so we had to interrupt our workshops.

Musically speaking, they started from African traditional-popular music genres (reggae, rap, *mbalax*, etc.) which is what they normally listen to, and Italian popular and folk music proposed by my students, to then create their own music that mixes elements of all these musics. In composing they first started with the text, often immediately accompanied by a melody, then adding instruments, arranging the music so as to reflect the meaning of the words. It is impossible to give an in-depth account of this experience here, with such an inadequate bibliography on the subject at the time we were doing the workshop and probably still today (2021), due to the particularity of Italian reception structures.[31] Nevertheless, we can affirm that we reached some goals. First of all, and it is not rhetoric, we were the only Italians who had tried to provide help in their really uncomfortable situation, especially since they lived so far from the city making it extremely difficult to socialise with anyone outside the CAS. Due to our interactions they moved from a passive situation to one of social activity, developing not only musical skills, but also communicative abilities and linguistic competences in Italian. For sure, none of them has become a musician (I am still in contact with some of them) but in participating in the workshop, they learned to listen to each other, to express their feelings and developed skills in group work. All of them

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[28] Rossella Calvia, Clara Fanelli and Mattia Signaroldi.

[29] The first topic proposed was adventure, but it produced songs about the experience of crossing the Mediterranean. Then we suggested that they reflect on what they wanted to bring from their past into their future and to think about the jobs they wanted to do and the kind of life they wanted to have.

[30] Diaby Lacine, Malang Danfa, Mohamed Bah, Awali Bagnah, Bernard Malou, Awali Bagnah, Fode Noba till August 2016 and Ismaila Drame Moro, Abdourahim Djitte, Doudou Danfakha, Aliou Balde, Diaby. Bernard Malou, Fode Noba and Malang Danfà remained from the first group. The others either obtained regular documents or were expelled.

[31] Among the many readings we did, beyond the already quoted bibliography, these are the most inspiring ones: Koch Weidinger and von der Recke (2009); Lenette and Procopis (2016); Lenette and Sunderland (2016); Reyes Schramm (1990); Pilzer (2015); Reyes Schramm (1999); São José Côrte-Real de (2010); Storsve, Westby, Ruud (2010); Sweers (2015); Swijghuisen (2017).

became more aware of how to express their needs and the fact that music is a strong medium to explore our emotions.[32]

Music and migration: Looking for a new perspective

When I first decided to undertake a project involving migrants, it was clear to me that, first of all, I had to follow strict ethical rules and ask the people involved to do the same. I had a lot of questions in mind, especially about asylum seekers, and many of them are still waiting for an answer, because I first had to respond to their needs as far as possible, dealing with music. Nevertheless, we can envisage some specific issues that emerged during these years of investigation and readings.[33]

First of all, the musical behaviour of long-term migrants allows us to see how we still lack tools to understand and manage the double level that exists in every nation: the economy on the one hand and social and cultural life on the other. People are forcibly displaced by economic reasons, and they do not necessarily become totally involved in the social and cultural life of the place where they end up living. Even when a foreigner obtains citizenship, this does not mean that he/ she has the same place in society as the natives. The unequal status of people, especially in urban spaces, as attested by Çaglar and Glick Schiller (2018), makes it difficult for people to freely express their cultures. Much literature talks about multicultural nations, but what does this really mean?

Literature about migration normally distinguishes between economic migrants and forced migrants, assuming that the former will maintain a stronger connection with their homeland. We have effectively demonstrated that even when foreigners are perfectly integrated into a working environment, most of them need to express their own cultural traditions. The same happens to asylum seekers: they tend to create groups on linguistic or national bases, even in situations such as in the Cremona CAS, which mixes people of different nationhood. Both the *Oghene Damba* and the *Viens Voir* create a music linked to their African musics, even if mixed with other elements. On the one hand, it is a question of community-building, but even at an individual level there is a need for social and affective bonding, a need to express one's own memory and belonging. Doing this does not mean creating a specific music but needs to be read in a perspective of multiplicity (Slobin 2007). The two groups created a new kind of music that cannot be defined as hybridised, because all the members of the groups listen to and perform multiple musical repertoires and several kinds of musics.

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[32] A detailed description of the workshops and of the songs can be found in Signaroldi (2017), while a reflection on their musical listenings can be found in Fanelli (2018). Also see my contributions Caruso (2019a) and Caruso (2019b).

[33] A bibliography of references to music and migration in general is quite huge. Useful for us were: Baily and Collyer (2006); Davis Fischer, Hornung and Kardux (2011); Kiwan and Meinhof (2011); Clark and Kazak (2011); Hemetek (2015); Krüger and Trandafoiu (2014); Levi and Scheding (2011); Pistrick (2015); Toynbee and Dueck (2011).

Roger Rouse talks of 'bifocality' as "the capacity to see the world alternatively through quite different kinds of lenses" (Rouse 1992, 41). With the word bifocality he tends to polarise the cultural belonging of migrants in the place of origin and the place of settlement. But when we talk about music, migration cannot be represented as twofold, because every place produces several musics of different genres that have different origins; moreover, in a mediatised world the references are multiple and have no borders.

All these musics have one thing in common: they are widespread in their present or past everyday life. Even liturgical chants are composed over different kinds of music and genres, from folk to pop, in different places in Africa or in the United States. The real provenience of the music has little importance: what is important is where one meets this music. We witnessed how everyone would preferably sing or play chants that came from his/ her place of origin. The term 'origin' does not have a strict meaning: at first it is a village/ town, then the region, then the Nation, right up to the Continent, depending on the conditions of resettlement and the people migrants have to deal with: "Home is where your heart is" (Ahmed 1999).

This is also true for secular music. South Americans in Cremona created a cultural association, the *Associazione Latino Americana*, in 1991 to organise 'south American' events not only for themselves but also for all the Cremonese people, and they run a unique choir. National boundaries are still present in their activities, but they are totally shared in the name of a common geographical provenance[34] and language sharing.

With regard to future applied ethnomusicological work, two main features emerge here. On the one hand, the multiplicity of musical references, on the other, the flexibility of belonging. The kind of music is irrelevant, which is why I have used the term 'musics' in this article without any specification. At the centre of our work there were the people we met, with their musical listening that really is multi-fold. They did not look for 'authenticity' or for perfect executions. What created a bonding between them was the sharing of the musics of their heart, mostly from their personal past or *affective souvenirs* from their trips home for holidays. It was also possible to create new songs that can represent everyone (as for the *Oghene Damba*) or to mix different songs in an appropriate way (as happens during the Francophone masses or on the Associations of Volunteers Day organised in Cremona, in which several realities coexist).

As Mark Slobin remarked, "Musical actors think through a range of choices and select from a huge range of strategies, meta-eclectically" (Slobin 2007, 115). The same multiplicity is in the documented flexible belonging: far away from your land, borders are blurred more than strengthened:

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[34] This part of the research, which aims to map the activities of the Associations of foreigners in the Cremona area, is still in its first stages.

> Transnational migration studies has [sic] promoted a language of "transnational communities". Such a perspective confines migrants and their socialites within a nationalist or ethnicized framework in which transborder ties are confined within the parameters of the projection of a homogenous unitary culture. This approach both obscures the multiple and cross cutting identities and relationships that migrants have both with people who share a cultural identity – Pakistani, Malagasy, Polish – as well as with people with whom they share other identities (Glick Schiller and Meinhof (2011, 27)).

Glick Schiller and Meinhof (and also Kiwan and Meinhof 2011) propose a model of migration that insists on identity pluralism and multi-locality, in the name of a 'flexible citizenship' (Ong 1999). This emerges when we abandon the perspective of community studies, focusing on the movements and behaviours of the individual migrants and the diverse webs of interconnections in which they are involved. It is essential to distinguish between individual identity and collective identity (Fabietti and Matera 1999). As Hall underlined, the main challenge to identity theories in general is to conceive the relationships between individual subjectivity and the discursive formation of dominant cultural systems (Hall 1996).

This emerged particularly from our research about the multiple belongings of descendants. The Italian Education system, despite the publication of various indications to teachers about inclusion, tends to favour an extremely strong cultural homologation. Our research has demonstrated that inevitably, at a certain point, especially in their twenties, when descendants are beginning to think about starting their own family, they start to wonder about their origins and which culture they should transmit to their children. Often it is too late because they have lost the necessary memories.

The reality we are facing today, which is all the more evident in migratory fluxes of asylum seekers, puts the concept of nationality, society and even that of community into crisis, especially when considered as pure, authentic and monolithic. Wolfgang Welsh describes our contemporary condition as transcultural, Amselle talks about *branchements* ('connections'). Both reject a perspective of pure cultures that are somehow mixed: "All cultures result from a 'connection,' from a derivation based on a network of signifiers larger than itself; local culture does not therefore exist and has never existed" (Amselle 2017, 131). In any case, even for these scholars, it is still difficult to get away from the dualism of the homogenisation vs. ethnicisation of contemporary reality. The study of the musical behaviour of migrants provides us with a much more articulated and interconnected picture we still have to completely understand.

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