

Resonances in the Realm of Intercultural Music Education: Insights from Multi-sited Fieldwork

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Resonance is a vibrational phenomenon that arises when an object is excited by an external drive matching its natural frequency.⁴ According to sociologist Hartmut Rosa, resonance is an alternative responsive relationship to the world, one that is often oppressed or deviated, but that should contribute to a “good life”.⁵ This short article by the RESONANCES project⁶ research team explores the starting point of how, based on the first insights from multi-sited fieldwork, intercultural encounters through music education may create connectivity and meaningful shared experiences.⁷ For eighteen months, this research project, funded by the Haute école de musique de Genève (HEM) and the Portuguese Instituto de Etnomusicologia - Centro de Estudos em Música e Dança (INET-md), is led by Ricardo Castro, with Alix Didier Sarrouy as scientific coordinator, and Maria Peres as research assistant.

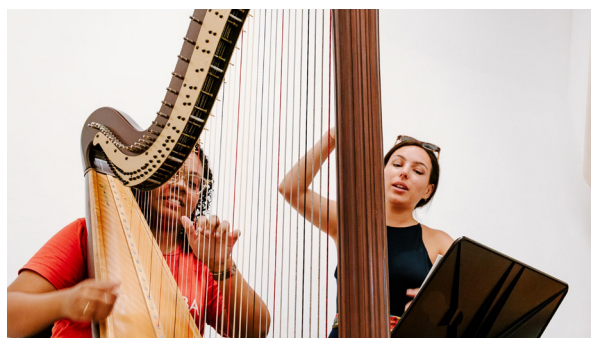


Fig. 1–2: Project's logo and HEM student on exchange at NEOJIBA (Salvador da Bahia, Brazil), Logo by Maria Peres and photograph by Fran Marrocos, August 2024.

Education in the field of “classical music” is perceived by some of its practitioners and researchers as being based on Eurocentric methods, emphasizing the individual to the detriment of constructive group

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4 AUGOYARD and TORGUE 2011: 99.

5 ROSA 2019.

6 For a more detailed overview of RESONANCES research project, please visit <https://www.hesge.ch/hem/en/recherche/projets/resonances-des-echanges-interculturels>.

7 GARCIA 2020: 13.

interactions.⁸ Moreover, in the age of globalization and larger migration flows, there is a need to integrate multicultural perspectives, particularly concerning the relationships between teachers and students, but also considering repertoires, to foster intercultural understanding in the practice and teaching of music.⁹ Most young musicians are attentive, connected and increasingly well-informed about these issues and the lack of adapted responses in music education. Furthermore, in a multicultural musical world that is growing ever more intercultural, the context of exchange in music education could reveal the common ground within diversity – the transcultural.¹⁰

RESONANCES is an in-depth exploration of the impact of international educational exchanges on music teaching. Its ethnographic multi-sited research is focused on the current and future directions of intercultural exchanges in music education. Through a qualitative methodology, it seeks to better understand the role of sharing experiences and information between young multicultural musicians on their practice and teaching methods.

By January 2025 and before our last stage of fieldwork at HEM in Geneva (February 2025), two international music education programmes served as case-studies for our research. Firstly, the Academy for Impact Through Music (AIM),¹¹ which develops a programme that brings together forty young music teachers from all over the world for fifteen months and focuses on training to enhance their ability to contribute to the personal and collective development of students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. During the academic break, AIM organizes a residency, a face-to-face meeting over two weeks. Carcavelos, a city on the coast of Portugal, was the chosen place for the AIM residency in August 2024. The RESONANCES research team spent the two weeks on site applying ethnographic research methods on a daily basis. Secondly, the exchange programme between HEM and NEOJIBA¹² in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil. For a decade now, this educational exchange programme has enabled students and young music teachers from both institutions to spend an intensive month in the city where the partner organization is based, taking part in classes, master classes, performances and all the social life that goes with it. Between August and September 2024, eight students from HEM went to Brazil to participate in this exchange. Our research team spent the whole exchange term in Salvador da Bahia with a regular day-to-day presence in nine *núcleos* (“schools”).

Concerning methodology, in addition to the field notes gathered through daily ethnographic observation, we recorded audio interviews on the immediate impact of the exchange period. Participants were encouraged to share thoughts on the experience and their teaching practice. The study involved seven voluntary participants from the AIM fellowship from six different countries and standpoints; eight HEM students of four different nationalities; five NEOJIBA music instructors from different ages and regions of Bahia, and various people involved in the programmes, such as coaches and educational managers, participated in these individual interviews. In the months following the encounters, we also organized focus-group interviews with all the exchange students from each programme and their respective directors.

In the first structured interviews, the young music teachers were encouraged to reflect on their classroom experiences through six interrelated topics: (1) their personal and musical backgrounds; (2) their current teaching contexts and pedagogical approaches; (3) the challenges and rewards of music teaching; (4) their evaluation of the exchange programmes; (5) the new opportunities for exchange created by these programmes; and (6) the broader significance of repertoire in music education.¹³

8 BAKER 2016; BOND 2017.

9 BARTON and RIDDLE 2022; HESS 2015; THUMLERT and NOLAN 2019.

10 RINKER 2011.

11 For a more detailed overview of AIM, please visit <https://www.aimpowers.com/>.

12 For a more detailed overview of NEOJIBA, please visit <https://neojiba.org/index.php?lang=en>.

13 YOUNG MUSIC TEACHERS 2024.

Multiculturality in shared spaces can become a crucial part of how we comprehend the field of music education, both on a global level and in a more neighbouring one. The process of understanding the resonance of experiences is not uniform, so how does that manifest in collective moments of dialogue? By sharing their experiences, young music teachers are given the chance to reflect on their commitment to a more inclusive and relational approach that music education is being called upon to fulfil.

Taking all this into consideration, one of the initiatives of our research was to include the young music teachers' perceptions in the process of data collection and analysis as we progressed through the different stages of our project, aligning with the Youth Participatory Action Research approach.¹⁴ By bringing them together to discuss and deepen our pre-conclusions and by organizing seminars as a moment of discussion with the community, we opened up the space for contributions from everyone involved.

Our first seminar entitled “*RESSONÂNCIAS - O encontro entre culturas na educação musical*” took place on 17 August 2024, at NEOJIBA (Brazil). Then the second seminar followed on 25 February 2025 at the Haute école de musique de Genève, entitled “*RÉSONANCES - La rencontre des cultures dans l'éducation musicale*”, with the presence of ethnomusicologists Talia Bachir-Loopuyt and Angela Mancipe. Both seminars presented a unique opportunity to tackle the main concepts structuring this research, such as music education, inclusion, interculturality, and resonance.



Fig. 3–4: RESONANCES seminars' posters, made by NEOJIBA and HEM communication teams, August 2024 and February 2025.

At the conclusion of the 18-month multi-sited research project conducted in Portugal, Brazil, and Switzerland, the release and presentation of the RESONANCES Final Report were held at the Haute École de Musique de Genève on 3 December 2025. The event featured Dr Ailbhe Kenny, an internationally renowned researcher from Mary Immaculate College, Ireland, who delivered an expert review of the report.

¹⁴ For a more detailed overview of this approach, please visit <https://yparhub.berkeley.edu/why-ypar>.

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