

Editorial

Welcome to the fourth volume of *Music and Arts in Action* (MAiA), and MAiA's fifth year of publication from the Sociology of the Arts (SocArts) research group at the University of Exeter, UK. In this general issue, we are pleased to present a host of articles that present an array of case studies and terrains for examining the active role of music and the arts in individual and social life. These contributions span four countries, three continents, and a variety of art forms involving classical and amateur levels of musical and theatrical engagement.

First, Michael Sy Uy, in *Venezuela's National Music Education Program El Sistema: Its Interactions with Society and Its Participants' Engagement in Praxis*, sets out to describe and analyse Venezuela's flagship music program, oft-cited for its benefits in combating poverty, promoting social inclusion and spreading educational attainment throughout the nation. Drawing on perspectives from sociology, education, and psychology, Uy demonstrates that the success of El Sistema is due in great part to its multilevel focus on the context of music-making involving parents, program alumni and local authorities who together reflect upon and improve the program in an on-going manner.

Kira Marie Leck brings research in psychology to bear on individual motivations for and reported benefits of *Playing Traditional Folk Music in Rural America*. Similar to the outcomes of school-based music education programs, Leck discovers that amateur music-making is a space for adults to engage in emotion management, build community, and construct and maintain larger cultural identities and belief systems. Through comparisons with the autobiographical reflections of well-known folk musicians, Leck demonstrates important similarities between the work of amateur and commercial folk music-making.

In *Theatre of the Oppressed: Empowering Homeless Women*, Elizabeth Woodson recounts her personal journey to bring Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed techniques to a woman's shelter in New Haven, Connecticut (USA). Woodson discusses how improvisation, acting and playwriting can be a means to help homeless women recognize and act upon their innate abilities to empower themselves. In particular, she highlights the real, transformation work that can take place through the often-overlooked power of humour.

This focus on the roles and meanings of performance is shared by Andra McCartney and Marta McCarthy, who together reflect upon *Choral, Public and Private Listener Responses to Hildegard Westerkamp's École Polytechnique*. *École Polytechnique* is a compositional response to the 1989 shooting massacre of fourteen female students at

the *École Polytechnique de Montréal*. By examining the lived experience of trauma as mediated through the choral performance, McCartney and McCarthy demonstrate that the compositional elements of performance – breath, chimes, gesture, physical interaction – are themselves the elements through which affinities and identities are constituted and new connections made. As in Woodson's article, the notion of 'rehearsal' becomes not simply a rehearsal of an artistic performance, but also the rehearsal of healing.

Concluding the issue with *How People Who Are Dying or Mourning Engage With the Arts*, Tony Walter, Professor of Death Studies at Bath University (UK), summarizes the vast literature on mourning and the arts and identifies ethnography of lay practice as an overlooked research area. In particular, Walter describes important research questions and nuances in end-of-life care concerning how individual patients and their loved ones engage with popular and fine artistic forms, the difference between these lay practices and formal arts therapies, and the differences between consuming and making art when dying or mourning. Such research will complement existing policy and medical practitioner work around end-of-life care, and may shed important light on how individuals seek personal fulfilment, beauty, happiness and community at the end of their lives.

Taken together, the articles above reveal several tensions core to the social study of the arts: how many people are being served by an arts program, versus what is the quality of this engagement; how can we supply the arts to those in need, versus how can we support people's own on-going artistic practices; and what are the external impacts of art, versus how can we study artistic impact as a process of engagement unfolding in space and time? For raising these and other provocative questions, we thank the authors in this issue for their hard work and creativity in producing exciting articles for us all to share.

FUTURE PUBLICATIONS

MAiA's next issues will feature general, thematic and special article contributions as detailed in our forthcoming articles page. Next to appear is a second special issue refereeing and documenting work presented at an international conference at the University of Exeter examining: "Improvisation in Performance", guest edited by Dr. Jesse Stewart of Carleton University. This will be followed by a theme issue on "Musical and Artistic Mediations", guest edited by Dr. Eduardo de la Fuente of Flinders University, Australia. As always, MAiA maintains an open call for general article submissions and welcomes inquiries for guest-edited special issues. We also welcome interest in translating relevant out-of-copyright work that is under-served in the English-language literature.

As always, you can follow MAiA on [Twitter @musicartsaction](https://twitter.com/musicartsaction) to stay up-to-date through our tweets!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Most importantly, Music and Arts in Action would not be possible without the generous help and support of a number of individuals. Below, we would like to present our first public acknowledgement of the extensive work done by our Editorial and Advisory Board Members and anonymous reviewers (to continue on a biannual basis). MAiA now has over 500 subscribed readers, and receives an average of 3,000 visitors per month to the full text articles. We currently have a 30% acceptance rate of all submissions, receiving over 30 manuscripts a year. While this may not be many compared to some larger journals, we pride ourselves on the unsurpassed time and energy of MAiA's reviewers, Advisory Board, and Editorial Board to shepherd significant pieces of interest to publication. It is gratifying that so many of our colleagues are willing to share their time and expertise to aid authors in improving their work, and to assisting authors in reaching across disciplinary communities. In addition, their excellent work to assist the MAiA Editorial Team with copyediting, proofreading and other less 'glamorous' aspects of publication enables MAiA to maintain its existence as an open-access publication which reaches individuals and communities with Internet access around the world. Your great efforts are recognized by many of MAiA's authors in their acknowledgements sections.

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Finally, to our esteemed reviewers and board members, please accept our gratitude for your service and contributions:

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THE EDITORIAL TEAM, *MUSIC AND ARTS IN ACTION***