

THE ORCHESTRA AS A METAPHOR IN ILLUSTRATED CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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Abstract: Ethnic, social, cultural and linguistic diversity is a distinguishing feature of today's societies. Consequently, it is important to help children learn how to value diversity, interact successfully with others and appreciate different perspectives, while making clear that multiple influences shape their own perspectives and behaviours. Music is considered to be a universal language that allows people from different backgrounds to communicate successfully with each other and to gain a better understanding of different cultures. It is also important for orchestral musicians to have strong social and interpersonal skills, as well as to maintain good social relationships with colleagues, in order to achieve excellence on stage. Therefore, this article examines the ideological implications of illustrated children's books that present music as a creative and communicative art and draw on the metaphor of "the orchestra as society", aiming to enable readers to appreciate cross-cultural differences.

Keywords: children's literature, picturebook, multiculturalism, music, orchestra, metaphor

1. Introduction

Music¹ (including every dimension of it, such as History, identity, gender, and customs) in contemporary societies is associated with education, culture, the healthy development of the human personality, the formation of social identity, and people's smooth adaptation to the

¹ The term music derives from the Greek word "μουσική", signifying the "art of the muses", who were goddesses and companions of Apollo in Ancient Greece. Within the realm of ancient Greek culture, music held a significant position among the seven art forms, playing a crucial role in soul cultivation. It also served an essential function in education, possessing the ability to refine the souls of listeners and performers alike (Koivunen 62).

society from a young age (Gabrielsson and Lindström 369; Stokes 123, 132). Additionally, it is considered to be an alternative way of communicating with other people, as well as an important means of expressing and disseminating the folk and cultural heritage of a nation or an ethnic group, through which cultural pluralism is highlighted and the knowledge and acceptance of the Self and Others is achieved, regardless of their origin, gender, age, religion, profession, lifestyle, etc. (Le Roux 54, 65).

The aforementioned becomes evident when observing orchestral musicians: To ensure success, each one must comprehend their individual role and responsibilities within the ensemble, as well as the collective skills of the team. It is vital that orchestral musicians have strong social and interpersonal skills and maintain good relationships with colleagues, in order to achieve excellence on stage. They also need to remain adaptable, as they may encounter a different conductor each week, and should be prepared to adjust to varying interpretations of the same symphony, tolerating these differences (Logie 31).

Orchestra is a neologism, and its interpretations as a term, a concept, and an institution within the European culture have evolved throughout history². Today, the term is used as a metonym for instrumentalists who perform under centralized control and discipline. Orchestras encompass various types of ensembles, with a symphony orchestra being the most complex kind and comprising over 100 musicians (Spitzer and Zaslav 14-23). The factual aspects of the orchestra, such as the number of players, the instruments used, and its arrangement, can be comprehended through literal language. However, the significance of the orchestra is grasped through figurative language, encompassing the descriptive terms people employ to characterize orchestras, the analogies drawn between orchestras and other entities, and the similes and metaphors utilized to express what the orchestra signifies to individuals.

² The term also derives from the Greek word “ορχήστρα”, originally referring to a space designated for dancing (Koivunen 63). In ancient Greek theaters, the orchestra was the area in front of the stage reserved for the choir. With the emergence of opera in the 17th century, this concept was adopted and adapted accordingly by Renaissance humanists to designate the area in the theater between the stage and the audience. Later that century, when the instrumental ensemble was moved out in front of the stage, the orchestra began to refer to the place where the musicians played. By the early 18th century, the meaning of orchestra began to extend itself to the large musical ensemble, which consisted of a diverse group of musicians, proficient in various instruments.

More specifically, as orchestra and its concept became entrenched during the 18th and 19th centuries, and as people became familiar with its structure and operation, the orchestra itself emerged as a rich source of metaphorical inspiration, with governance, economy, hierarchies, and labor being central to these metaphors (Ramnarine 330; Spitzer 243). According to Lakoff and Turner's terminology (23), the target domain is the orchestra, while society is the metaphor's source domain. Lakoff and Johnson revolutionized metaphor studies when, in 1980, they introduced Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which dictates that most abstract concepts (target domains) are understood thanks to metaphors using concrete concepts (source domains), forming conceptual metaphors that dominate our everyday thinking, speaking, and acting (142); structure the way we think about something and "may be internalized by children from their mostly unmarked presence in picturebooks" (Stephens 138).

While in the early 17th century some opted for metaphors with negative implications when describing orchestras, highlighting whether the sensory and social chaos resulting from the amalgamation of numerous instrumentalists into a single ensemble or the fact that, under the direction of a single leader, the orchestras mirrored autocratic styles of governance (Ramnarine 330), others perceived the disorder of the massed instrumentalists as akin to celestial harmony (Spitzer 239). In the 18th century, people began to employ the metaphoric conceptualization "orchestra as a society" on the grounds that, just as the interests and actions of individuals are merged and regulated within society, the orchestra combines instrumentalists to create music (Ramnarine 327; Spitzer 204)³. The "orchestra as a society" metaphor falls into the category of structural metaphors that are "grounded in systematic correlations within our experience". That is, they are based on certain aspects of our cultural and physical experience (Lakoff and Johnson 14).

2. Orchestras' metaphoric conceptualizations in children's texts

Texts created for children uphold and sometimes redefine societal values, operating within ideologies assumed to be shared between the

³ During the second half of 19th century, the term orchestration was also employed metaphorically, referring to the purposeful manipulation with a particular goal in mind, drawing inspiration from the composer who skillfully arranges the instruments of the orchestra and considers the nature of the different parts, relationships and connections of the musical work, to fulfill his musical goals (Spitzer 252).

text and its audience. These texts also fulfill a cognitive function by organizing social attitudes and relationships within narrative plots (Stephens 137). One of their main goals is to raise young readers' awareness and social awakening and to introduce them to the idea of the intercultural dialogue and acceptance of Others while at the same time recognizing them as a part of the Self (Angelaki 2023a, 161). Given that:

- (i) music as a concept can provide avenues for cross-cultural comprehension and societal unity (Volk 5) and remains a preferred method of communication between diverse cultural groups;
- (ii) learning the language of music teaches someone to listen (Barenboim 65), which is essential to communication and the basis of harmonious co-existence;
- (iii) symphony orchestras are viewed by many as socio-political actors; and;
- (iv) orchestral interaction signifies social values such as harmony, organization, dedication, and control (Ramnarine 2017),

it would be, thus, interesting to examine how illustrated books for children⁴ consider the role of music in relation to cultural diversity, as well as whether music making within an orchestra, when presented in children's texts, can be regarded as a symbol that encompasses multiculturalism, diversity, harmony, and search for one's identity, whether overtly or implicitly.

3. Starting points and purpose of the study

The starting points in my entry is, on the one hand, Lakoff's and Johnson's argument that metaphors used in everyday language are conceptual devices; have a cognitive basis; and are deeply intertwined with the way we understand the world (3–4). On the other hand, Stephens claims that "all aspects of textual discourse, from story outcomes to the expressive forms of language and pictorial representation, are informed and shaped by ideology" (Stephens 317). Particularly, Stephens claims that ideologies play a crucial role in maintaining social order, as they provide the structure necessary for the functioning of society; that, in order for children to effectively integrate into society, they must understand and adhere to the various social and linguistic norms present within it. He also underlines that ideologies,

⁴ This article adopts Elizabeth Bird's and Junko Yokota's argument (281) that picturebooks should be considered as a subset within the broader category of illustrated books, based on the assertion that illustrated books "are any that have at least one illustration".

being composed of commonly held beliefs and ingrained within textual elements, can often go unnoticed, functioning at a deeper level than mere thematic interpretations typically reach. He cites scholars who studied how picturebooks reflect ideologies of multiculturalism and mentions García González's study (2015) that focuses on the depictions of migration and adoption in contemporary Spanish children's books. Her analysis relied on Lakoff's metaphor, the "nation-as-family", which implies "that citizens are like children whom the government needs to care for" (86) and suggests that politics in the U.S.A. are built upon the nurturant parent model for the liberals, and the strict father model for the conservatives.

Additionally, Stephens refers to scripts (139), mentioning that, just as conceptual metaphors are integrated into everyday cognition, they can possess ideological significance through their implicit teleological assumptions, while also representing a common pattern of actions that underpins many everyday activities. He adds that scripts encompass standard actions, situations, or familiar narrative structures, allowing readers to anticipate a sequence of events based on key components or schemas. Image schemas are used as source domains and lie at the basis of numerous metaphorical constructions. A schema, meaning the cognitive framework or concept that helps organize and interpret information (Angelaki 2023a, 163), consists of several components and is activated in illustration by visual representation of key components (Stephens 141).

In this article I chose three illustrated children's books that deploy the "orchestra as a society" metaphor and imply that music education can make a contribution to self-actualization and a positive self-image (Le Roux 84). While two of the books —specifically, Dan Brown's *Wild Symphony* (2020) and Eliseo García's *La orquesta de mis amigos* (2021)⁵ —are characterized by an equal relationship between pictures and words, in Angeliki Darlasi's *To paliopaido*⁶, which means the drifter in Greek, (2014), the illustrations become an extension of the text, yet the narrative does not rely on their presence (Bird and Yokota 281).

Considering that social relations within orchestras are found to be useful in conceptualizing the relational dynamics within society and in understanding the interplay between the individual and the collective, I

⁵ The particular book was studied by the author in Greek. Therefore, extracts of the book have been translated in English by the author herself, who has taken as a reference the Greek published translation.

⁶ The book was originally written in the Greek language and its original title is *To παλιόπαιδο*.

examine how the books consider the role of music in relation to cultural diversity and individual identity; how the metaphor of the “orchestra as society” and its positive connotations is implied both in the visual and the verbal text of the selected books, promoting a vision of a well-integrated society based on the notions of collaboration, liberalism, pluralism and mutual respect; if the works have the capacity to instill to children social values, enabling them to develop listening and communication skills, to appreciate themselves and the Others, as well as to accept cross-cultural differences.

I analyze the selected books by adopting an interdisciplinary approach informed by scholarship on illustrated books for children and ideology (Stephens *ibid*), musicianship, and the key concepts of music education in multicultural societies. I also rely on Ryan’s concept of “storyworld” (34), which is “the mental representation of a virtual world a text must evoke in order to qualify as narrative” (Narančić Kovač 416), and examine how its most prominent components (meaning the characters and their actions, the events and the setting) convey the ideological message that orchestras function as “the social world in miniature” (Ramnanine 329), and can be regarded as socio-political actors that address issues around community, identity, and multiculturalism.

4. The research material

4.1. *Wild Symphony*

This is the work of renowned author and son of music teachers, Dan Brown. Confirming Blacking’s argument that language and music are characteristic features of communication for human beings (11), Brown wrote a book for preschoolers and primary school students, “whose instrumental parts, together with the lyrics and illustrations, also tell a story”. Readers can enjoy it as a traditional read-along or can opt to enhance their experience by listening to original music composed by the author himself—one for each animal— through a free interactive smartphone application (app). This app utilizes augmented reality to play the corresponding song for each page when the phone’s camera is positioned over it.

At first glance, Brown’s book appears to lack a central plot. However, with a closer look, it becomes apparent that the book’s story world is presented in a traditional symphonic format, and the book is a celebration of community and affirmation of individuality. These are suggested by the book’s title, which is complementary to its textual meanings and offers readers the opportunity to form an opinion about the book even before reading it (Genette and Crampé 693). The term

“symphony” is used to describe grandiose orchestral works. To compose them, composers must concentrate on merging a multitude of stylistic elements, showcasing the potential of various musical instruments, and orchestrating the talents of different musicians

Brown emphasizes the dynamics between individuals and the collective by building the plot around the metaphorical conceptualization of the “orchestra as society” —or, as one could claim, on the “orchestra as a humane and animal society”—, thus motivating readers to respect not only themselves and Others, but also animals. This approach aims to foster an appreciation of social cohesion by highlighting the individuality present within orchestral musicians, ultimately suggesting the essential balance required between diversity and coherence in contemporary societies. Readers are prompted to experience the importance of the individual contribution to the social whole through safe distance, as the author attributes human-specific characteristics to the animals that constitute form the orchestra (Cunningham et al. 17). They are also encouraged to feel as artistic entities themselves, since being different, they are called upon to consciously combine heterogeneous views in order to live together in harmony (Lowe 56; Forney and Machlis 245).

The story unfolds in the jungle. In the book, there appear different kind of animals, such as birds, kangaroos, cats, boars, frogs, spiders, fish, armadillos, ponies, elephants, etc., divided into five distinct groups: mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, and amphibians, in correspondence with a symphony orchestra’s organization into five sections, based on instrument families: strings, woodwinds, brass, keyboards and percussion. This division facilitates the conductor in achieving a balanced and cohesive sound. All animals parade at the book’s colorful pages, while a third-person narrator reveals their traits through delightful verses. The pictures are symmetrical to the text (Nikolajeva and Scott 12). Similar to the orchestral musicians, each specializing in different instruments, each animal family group learns a different kind of instrument to constitute a musical ensemble, where different types of collectives and social relationships are forming. As the musicians are divided into discrete instrumental sections within which they are supposed to play different parts, although from the same score, the animals are presented into distinct doublespreads that simulate the instrumental sections where musicians perform different parts. At the penultimate spread, they contribute to a whole that surpasses what any single individual could achieve by attempting to master all the instruments of the orchestra (Image 1).



Image 1. *Wild Symphony*

Notably, the author draws a parallel between the animals' social groups and the orchestras, emphasizing the Maestro Mouse's role, who holds such diversity together and coordinates their complementary efforts. Specifically, both the visual and the verbal discourse imply the importance of the orchestras' inner workings, systems of control, and negotiations over authority between musicians and conductor, indicating his crucial role and responsibility for holding together such diversity. In orchestras, it is important that conductors evaluate the sound all the time, form aesthetic judgments about the playing and understand music, as well as communicate all the aforementioned with the musicians (Hunt, Stelluto, and Hooijberg 151-2). Conductors should also be aware of their behavior since it significantly impacts instrumentalists and shapes the outcome of their conducting endeavors, paying attention to treating them as collaborators rather than subordinates (Logie 33). Additionally, it is essential that they encourage the members of the orchestra so that the latter can endure the creative process and be completely involved in the playing (Spitzer 242).

Accordingly, the Maestro Mouse in *Wild Symphony* is always present on the setting, holding his baton, showing tempo and dynamics, and reminding the animals that, in order to communicate in a positive and cooperative environment, just like the orchestral one, they must all respect and accept one another, be completely involved in their in-between communication, endure tension and acquire interpersonal skills. The mouse's body language, as depicted in the illustrations, is encouraging to the animals; he acts as a facilitator dealing with conflicts, as an innovator who thinks creatively; as a mentor to them, just like conductors do (Lebrecht 17-9), sharing his advice for group dynamics and harmonious living in everyday life's "jungle". Maestro Mouse's recommendations are carved on wooden signboards and are written in capital letters, probably because the typography of written language

serves as a conduit of verbal narrative, as a visual element, and as a semiotic resource with its meaning potentials (Serafini and Clausen, 2012). For example, he suggests animals to “BE QUIET AND GRACEFUL” as “A LOT OF NOISE IS NOT THE BEST WAY TO GET ATTENTION” thus introducing to readers the value of discretion, perhaps recalling the composer’s argument that silence is as important as music and has its own interpretation; hence, the discernible pauses in many orchestral pieces.

Orchestral musicians need to have patience and practice often, as well as to understand and appreciate their colleagues’ skills as much as their own, to mitigate performance anxiety, feelings of dissatisfaction and lack of control, fear of losing skills, and internal conflicts of self-esteem and personal limitations so as to deliver an enjoyable performance for the audience (Logie 31, 61). Maestro Mouse advises animals –and, thus, readers– to “ADMIRE THE SKILLS OF OTHERS, BUT NOT TO FORGET THAT THEY HAVE TALENTS, TOO”, reminding them that “FALLING DOWN IS A PART OF LIFE. THE BEST THING TO DO IS TO GET BACK ON THEIR FEET”. Also, since symphony orchestras may also be competitive organizational environments, just as contemporary societies are dominated by competition, with the musician’s emotional intensity sometimes interpreted as an irritable behavior, overreactions, and even aggression among musicians, may happen just like in real life, (Koivunen, *ibid*, 68-75). For this, the cheerful Maestro Mouse advises: “WHEN YOU FEEL OVERWHELMED, IT’S GOOD TO TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF” and “BLOCK OUT BAD THINGS”, being careful not to become isolated and “OPEN UP AND INVITE THE GOOD THINGS IN”. The ideological messages of the text are supported by the illustrations, which depict an “anxious ostrich”, that “when she’s stressed or feeling hurt, she sticks her head down in the dirt”, as well as an armadillo, “who’s got his shell when days are bad, to keep out things that make him sad”.

The relationships among orchestra members who might be from different ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, are crucial for achieving collective excellence. This involves active listening, adjusting individual volume,

and taking into account various musical parameters and rhythms with distinct boundaries, in order to produce melodies in harmonious sequence. Accordingly, in order to successfully navigate the globalized society, people in their daily lives should become culturally aware and try to listen and communicate effectively with others, by accepting alternative viewpoints alongside those of the prevailing majorities. The aforementioned are implied in the double spread where the “woodland



Image 3. "Frogs in a bog" in *Wild Symphony*

4.2. *La orquesta de mis amigos [My Friends' Orchestra]*

This book encourages readers to be creative, to play music and listen to it. Its pages are not numbered, yet many have acoustic symbols next to the musical instruments presented each time, all of which appear lined up with their exact names in the next-to-last full spread. In the final full spread, these icons can reproduce the sound of an orchestra and each instrument previously presented, as long as readers click on them, with the book being battery-operated. In the same full spread, children can also see a list of musical pieces for piano, violin, flute, etc., written by famous composers. However, apart from acquainting preschoolers with music, this book also promotes music as a means of communication in multicultural environments and contributes both to the understanding and acceptance of the Other, as well as to the recognition of the Self through the acceptance of cultural diversity (Cabedo-Mas & Díaz-Gómez 387; Hebert and Karlsen 6). The ideological meanings of the verbal discourse are enhanced and expanded by colorful illustrations (Nikolajeva and Scott 68).

The book's story world stages the description of the symphony orchestra as a "microcosm of society" (Gillinson and Vaughan 194), idyllically reflecting the ethnic diversity of the world and presenting music as an opportunity to elaborate on expressions of cultural diversity. According to the narrator, the plot unfolds as follows: Martha's family "owns a musical instrument shop. Her friends, who want to make up an orchestra, decide to visit her and try them out" to find those that suit them. Martha and her friends are all trying to explore a number of musical procedures, to develop their innate musical potentials, and to apply their musical skills to new musical experiences so that to make up an orchestra, which they perceive as a collective in

which everybody is different, but they all manage to maintain unity while engaging with each other's ideas (Oehrle 76); Martha's friends come from diverse cultural backgrounds and Martha herself is depicted as a girl with disabilities, seated on a wheelchair (Image 4)⁷.

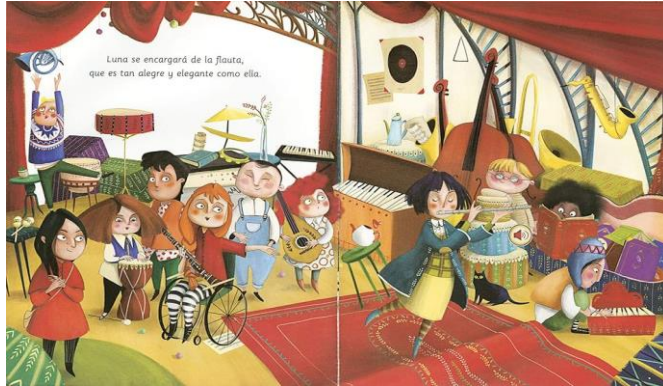


Image 4. Picture from *La orquesta de mis amigos* (original version)

Perhaps the author, in an attempt to deploy the basic principles of multicultural music education in his book and to combine music and diversity, chooses to implicitly refer to physical disability via the visual discourse, probably intending to show that physically disabled persons need not necessarily live in obscurity. However, it may be considered too pretentious that the disabled girl is projected as unique and widely accepted.

According to Le Roux, “children who hear and appreciate a wide variety of music will gain a world view that encompasses humanity as a whole and music past and present - a perspective that is both positive and critical to the future of one's country and our world” (147). While it is impossible to know what real readers will obtain while reading the book, since Martha and her friends are depicted as individuals from different origins, readers are possibly prompted to assume that the

⁷ The inclusion of images from both the Spanish, the Greek and the English editions of the same book is a conscious scholarly choice. Firstly, these were the editions that were publicly accessible and legally available online, which allowed for ethical and accurate use of visual material. Secondly, and more importantly, this selection supports the multicultural and transnational perspective of the study. By drawing from different linguistic and cultural editions, the analysis highlights the book's international reception, circulation, and adaptation across diverse cultural contexts. This approach also reinforces the argument that literary works are not only national but also transnational cultural artifacts, shaped by and contributing to multiple cultural narratives.

characters would want to make their cultural backgrounds visible and, therefore, integrate their music culture into the performance. This claim is supported by the interaction of the dual semiotic codes, for example, when Jack is depicted playing the guitar happily (Image 5). He “shouts excited at the sight of it,” announcing that he wants it because “his grandfather taught him to play it.” It is thus implied that Jack would play the music his grandfather taught him, which would enable his friends to gain a deeper understanding of him as a person and of his musical heritage. This way, the prevailing colonial perception of “West is the best” (Nethsinghe 2) is discarded, and readers can gain a heightened sensitivity towards their musical heritage, acknowledging the contributions of that heritage within the broader realm of music (Le Roux 158).



Image 5. Picture from *My friend's orchestra* (English version)

It could also be argued that the dual semiotic codes interact to present children's music education as a means of refining themselves, implying that music can afford opportunities for fostering inclusion and mutual understanding: For example, we read that Peter “most of the time he just makes noise, but now that he is joining the orchestra, he is determined to play the notes properly” (Image 6).



Image 6. Picture from *Η ορχήστρα των φίλων μου* (Greek version)

Peter's friends are depicted as rather annoyed by his play, but no one discourages him. Given that later on in the book Peter is depicted taking part in what appears to be the orchestra's final rehearsal (Image 7), it is implied that social groups, just as youth orchestras, can offer a climate free from pressure and competition, allowing individuals to believe in their competence (Le Roux 76). Also, readers are prompted to understand that disciplined engagement with music can transform noise into subtle melody, as well as that mutual respect among musicians and a commitment to improving individual and group performance are essential, that just as instrumentalists should appreciate their colleagues' dynamics and foster collaboration to deliver an enjoyable performance, correspondingly members of a social group should encourage one another, be receptive to difference and exchange cultural elements with others to achieve harmonious coexistence.

The book, apart from deploying the metaphor of "the orchestra as society", also interrogates readers' schemas or "mental structures of preconceived ideas" (Stephens 141) regarding conductors: By reading that "the conductor is petite Yvonne", children who would have already internalized a schema for conductors derived from gender norms in patriarchy may develop a new cognitive map that disputes such stereotypes. Cassandra's illustration supports the author's attempt to present music as a way of reducing prejudice and producing intercultural cohesion instead: The picture that complements the text depicts Yvonne as a small and short person who is obviously accepted as a figure of power (Image 7) by all of Martha's friends, who appear to be fully concentrated and happy with their coordinator. The fact that in the previous pictures they were all wearing clothing somewhat reminiscent of traditional attires (for example, Martha's friend, whose eyes are slightly slanted upwards, wears a blouse that resembles a Japanese kimono), but in this particular picture, they are all depicted

wearing the same costume, is indicative that the illustrator attempts to highlight diversity within coherence.



Image 7. Picture from *Η ορχήστρα των φίλων μου* (Greek version)

4.3. *To paliopaïdo* [The Drifter]

Darlasí's illustrated book is a discourse about "the power of art and culture against poverty and social exclusion"⁸, aiming to enable children to look at youth orchestras in terms of social action and to connect them with the promotion of ideals around socio-ethical concerns, which is a way of orchestrating civil society (Ramnarine 333). The story world emphasizes music education's contribution to self-actualization and social inclusion, which stems from the fact that it helps individuals organize and express their emotions and ideas in a manner that is reconcilable with the society in which they live. Additionally, it highlights the orchestras' capacities for acquiring a positive self-image and obtaining social interaction.

The author draws inspiration from José Antonio Abreu's example of the civic functions of a youth orchestra: In the 1970's, the economist and musician envisioned helping the poor children in his country, Venezuela. Building on a group of eleven children, he created El Sistema, a music education system and social change/youth development program offering alternative societal visions. Thanks to the transformative power of music, starting in Caracas, Abreu managed to integrate into society many children and adolescents who "formed gangs" so as "to entertain their sadness and face their poverty" (Darlasí

⁸ As the author declares on the book's back cover. The book was awarded in 2015 in the National Literature Awards in the category of Illustrated books for children and was mentioned the same year at the IBBY Honour List.

17). Through music education, he removed thousands of children from spiritual poverty and crime, transforming their lives by imparting values of solidarity, cooperation, harmony, and humanism. He made these children “the stars of an orchestra,” and, as a result, they gained “self-esteem and pride” (59).

The story’s main character is Felix (Image 8): a poor child who lives in the slums of Venezuela, deprived of rest, play, education, friends, warm food, and parental affection since his father “was always away looking for work”, while his mother “was very ill” and therefore helpless (9). He is the drifter that others marginalize “because once, when he was hungry, he stole a loaf of bread from the bakery, and when he was cold, he took a pair of socks from a neighbor’s clothesline. Because sometimes, being exhausted, he fell asleep on the stairs of strangers. Because many times he played with the abandoned toys of other children, and everybody thought he had stolen them (17).



Image 8. Felix, the main character of the book *To Paliopaido* [The Drifter]

According to the third-person narrator, Felix is induced by gang membership as a way to cure loneliness and gain peer respect. Following his leader’s orders, he steals from a man, threatening him with a revolver. This man happens to be the founder of El Sistema. In their second random encounter, Abreu unveils the greatness of his soul and manages to wrest the revolver from Felix, exchanging it for a violin, which proved to be “a powerful weapon against child and juvenile delinquency”⁹ alongside music. Abreu approaches Felix with warmth and acceptance and even offers to play music for him (Image 9) - something that allows the protagonist to “let the beauty of music

⁹ As it is also stated on the book’s back cover.

embrace him as a consolation or a promise” until his eyes are filled with tears.



Image 9. Abreu plays music for Felix

Abreu, who is not preoccupied with Felix, as soon as he realizes the effect of music on the young boy’s soul, offers to give him violin lessons. According to the text, his approach filled Felix with such joy that he felt “as if the stars had spoken to him and the sky had embraced him” (44). Abreu proposed Felix join the group of kids to whom he provided free music education. Felix accepted his offer, and then his life changed entirely as he learned to be authentic and proud of his background, since the youth orchestra he joined proved to be a supportive and stimulating environment, a highly valued institution, as well as a social union of pluralism, where music served as a catalyst for communication, fostering appreciation and new behavioral patterns.

Felix’s engagement with music and his confidence after joining the orchestra also expanded his neighbors’ understanding of him. Since the narrator informs readers that Felix’s neighbors “remembered his name again”, stopped calling him “a drifter”, and “felt happy and lucky to have him around” (52), readers are prompted to perceive music as a unifying force with significant social benefits that functions as a tool for dismantling barriers and biases that separate individuals, promoting a culture of tolerance and inclusivity (Oehrle 99). The aforementioned is implied in the picture where Felix is depicted playing the violin (Image 10), wearing red clothes instead of the grey garments he was depicted to wear in the previous pictures of the book. His two neighbors, a young girl and an old lady, are depicted smiling at him as they listen to his

playing, with the musical notes suggesting the positive effect of music on the girl's mood as they rise up to her window.



Image 10. Felix's neighbors "stopped calling him "a drifter", and "felt happy and lucky to have him around" (52)

Since colors prove to be an essential source of meaning in an illustration (Kress & van Leeuwen, *ibid*), Samartzi, in order to clarify that music was a source of joy that added color to Felix's colourless, grey life, uses the bright red color, which is associated with power, passion, revolution, and extroversion (Angelaki 2023b, 88). This is also evident in the picture where Abreu plays his violin (Image 9), which is rendered in fiery red, just like each musical note above his head. Arguably, readers are encouraged to conclude that, as the red musical notes lead to heaven, so does everyone's soul through music. The positive effect of music on Felix's soul is also indicated by the different colors with which the illustrator chose to shade the slum where the protagonist lived. While initially, Samartzi chose the grey color to depict the slum (Image 11), after Felix joined the orchestra and "felt happy again," she chose fiery red as the dominant color of the sketch (Image 12).

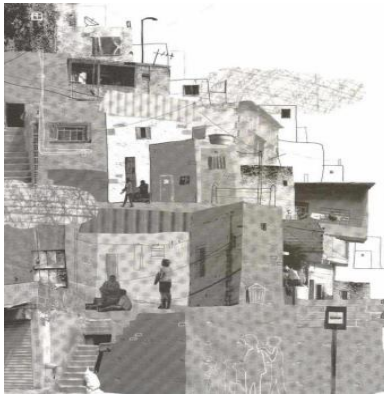


Image 11.



Image 12.

5. Conclusion

This article examined whether “typical” illustrated books about music that conceptualize the metaphor of the “orchestra as society” can cultivate intercultural respect in young readers, laying the foundations for their smooth introduction to today’s multicultural society. The analysis focused on the verbal and visual representations of prominent story elements of the selected books. It examined whether they projected orchestral interaction as a mode of civic collaboration that helps individuals expand beyond their cultural confines and attain the necessary attitudes to actively participate in public discussions with people of diverse backgrounds.

The analysis indicated that the selected books both verbally and visually conceptualize the orchestra as a broader set of harmonious social relationships; perceive diversity as a unifying force; advocate the notion that engaging in shared performances can provide children with enjoyment and boost their self-esteem; and promote music as an expressive medium and a communicative art that enables children to comprehend the significance of cultural distinctions. While Brown and Garcia present orchestras as the metaphorical equivalent of democratic, multicultural societies, Darlasi emphasizes the positive societal impacts of orchestral initiatives that provide marginalized children with a sanctuary through action-oriented forms of creative engagement (Ramnarine, 333), implying that music can foster various aspects of a child’s self-actualization. All three books invite children to decode the relationship between the visual and verbal texts to understand the ideological messages of the two tropes and to produce the final meaning, which lies in the fact that the harmony that dominates the world of music, conceived as a dynamic process of integrating diverse

elements into a whole, should pave the way for obtaining harmony in life and in the world.

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L'ORCHESTRA COME CAMPO SORGENTE PER LA METAFORA NEI LIBRI ILLUSTRATI PER BAMBINI

La diversità etnica, sociale, culturale e linguistica contraddistingue le società odierne. Di conseguenza, è importante aiutare i bambini a imparare a valorizzare la diversità, a interagire con successo con gli altri e ad apprezzare i diversi punti di vista, chiarendo al contempo che le proprie prospettive e i propri comportamenti sono modellati da molteplici influenze. La musica è considerata un linguaggio universale che permette a persone di diversa estrazione di comunicare con successo tra loro e di comprendere meglio le diverse culture. Considerando che per i musicisti d'orchestra è importante non solo avere forti capacità sociali e interpersonali, ma anche mantenere buone relazioni sociali con i colleghi per raggiungere l'eccellenza sul palcoscenico, questo articolo esamina gli albi illustrati per bambini che presentano la musica come un'arte creativa e comunicativa e attinge alla metafora dell' "orchestra come società" per consentire ai lettori di apprezzare le differenze interculturali.

Keywords: Letteratura per ragazzi, libro illustrato, multiculturalismo, musica, orchestra, metafora