

# Instrumental practice to shape character: Educational possibilities from a perspective of musical craftsmanship

## *La práctica instrumental para formar el carácter: posibilidades educativas desde una perspectiva artesanal de la música*

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### Abstract:

Music has been present in education for centuries, expressed differently in societies in different times and places, among which it is worth mentioning Classical Greece. Some of its philosophers and pedagogues emphasised the positive effect of musical education on human character. The objective of this article is to demonstrate the educational potential of music, as well as the relationship that exists between learning to play an instrument and character education. Based on the analysis of two key works from the Aristotelian corpus, the *Politics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, a viable virtue ethic can be created that focuses on craftsmanship. The idea of the craftsman proposed by Richard Sennett provides a guide for finding a method for musical practice where instrumental proficiency is at the heart of learning and the educational process. This shows how music education, in general, and learning an instrument, in particular, share a goal with character education: the comprehensive education of human beings. Learning music has the capacity to influence character by creating and reinforcing habits and virtues with a view to excellence and human flourishing. Through a concept of music practice based on craftsmanship, music and education can be used to influence the individual positively. In this way, certain practices and behaviours present in the Western tradition of music education can be redirected. Despite the fact that there are numerous ways to experience music, instrumental practice is recommended as the main one given the organological condition of music. As Aristotle's practical philosophy emphasises *praxis* and music is essentially a human activity, it can be concluded that music education using instrumental practice has an influence on the multiple dimensions of an individual's education and

in constructing a community that shares the ultimate goal: flourishing.

**Keywords:** character education, music education, specialised instrumental practice, virtue, craftsman.

### Resumen:

La música ha estado presente en la educación desde hace siglos, con expresiones diversas en sociedades de distintos tiempos y espacios, de entre las que sobresale la Grecia clásica. Algunos de sus filósofos y pedagogos destacaron la repercusión positiva que la formación musical tiene sobre el carácter humano. El objetivo de este artículo es mostrar el potencial educativo de la música, además de la relación existente entre la formación instrumental y la educación del carácter. A partir del análisis de dos obras clave del corpus aristotélico, la *Política* y la *Ética a Nicómaco*, se elabora una posible ética de la virtud centrada en la artesanía. La idea del artesano propuesta por Richard Sennett sirve de guía para encontrar un modo de práctica musical en el que el dominio instrumental sea el núcleo del aprendizaje y del proceso educativo. Se muestra cómo la educación musical, en general, y la formación instrumental, en particular, comparten un fin con la educación del carácter: la formación integral del ser humano. El aprendizaje musical tiene la capacidad de incidir en el carácter y crear y reforzar hábitos y virtudes con vistas a la excelencia y al florecimiento humano. Por medio de una concepción artesanal de la práctica musical, la música y la educación se pueden cruzarse para incidir de forma positiva en el individuo. De este modo, es posible reorientar ciertas prácticas y conductas de la formación musical presentes en

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la tradición occidental. A pesar de que existen multitud de modos de experimentar la música, la práctica instrumental es considerada la principal por la condición organológica de la música. Puesto que la filosofía práctica de Aristóteles incide en la *praxis* y que la música es, en esencia, una actividad humana, se puede concluir que la educación musical a tra-

vés de la práctica instrumental incide en la formación de las múltiples dimensiones del individuo y en la construcción de una comunidad que comparta un fin último: el florecimiento.

**Palabras clave:** educación del carácter, educación musical, práctica instrumental especializada, virtud, artesano.

## 1. Introduction

The following statement is by the philosopher and pedagogue John Dewey (2014): “No one can escape them if he wants to. He cannot escape the problem of how to engage in life, since in any case he must engage in it in some way or other— or else quit and get out” (p. 95). Music is an essential part of a human being’s life and how we engage with it can determine the course of our lives. Thus, music education has a commitment to educating human beings as such and transforming society (Jorgensen, 2003).

In this respect, Fernández and Casas (2019) present the confusion and lack of consensus surrounding the word *education* in the context of music teaching. They reach the conclusion that it is not possible to discuss education without including moral components that explain the *why* and the *what for*, as it constitutes an ethical activity. Along these lines, we find Aróstegui (2011), who describes educational music as a moral and political activity; or Bowman (2012), who insists that making music can be a way to reflect on the sort of *good person that I can be* and that music can help with this.

Nevertheless, in music education in Spain, Touriñán and Longueira (2010) make the distinction between education *for* music, located in conservatories or music schools with the aim of professionalisation, mainly involving instrumental specialities; and education *through* music, belonging to the context of general education. In this case, “as an educational area, music helps each learner to use and form valuable experience for their own lives and comprehensive education, based on their musical, artistic experience (Touriñán & Longueira, 2010, p. 157).

In consideration of the above, this article aims to analyse the educational possibilities of specialised instrumental practice. To this effect, it will propose an ethical and practical structure, originating in the con-

cept of character education and focusing on the notion of craftsmanship, and will reflect on the educational repercussions of this approach.

## 2. Character education: An Aristotelian approach to the educational needs of today

Defining character education (CE) is a complex task (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). It is an *umbrella* term which encompasses a great number of initiatives, such as virtue education, values education or citizenship education (Bernal et al., 2015; Fuentes, 2018). Duckworth and Meindl (2018) even question the relevance of defining it, as this involves excessive reductionism and a simplification of its scope. Although they claim that it is preferable to target educational action intentionally and deliberately, they do not consider that it needs to be structured and limited to the school. For these reasons, it is also complicated to establish a definition that is valid for all contexts (Lickona, 2018).

However, in short, this way of understanding education could be summarised as “knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good” (Lickona, 1999, p. 140). CE aims for the community *ethos* to commit to a series of moral values, virtues and ethical conduct that everyone observes for the common good. The educational community is fully involved and educators play a crucial role in developing virtuous character (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005), in that the teacher figure should set a moral example through their actions, both in and out of the classroom (McGrath, 2018). Thus, the community and its care are of the utmost importance and, therefore, individual responsibility is required to support a common good (The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2017; Lickona, 1999).

Furthermore, the traits that define the current view of CE are ethical aspects that derive from Aristotle’s philosophy (Kristjánsson, 2015), from which different

concepts and fundamental meanings stem, such as character, virtue, prudence, happiness or flourishing (Vargas & González-Torres, 2009). In this manner, from an Aristotelian perspective, it can be claimed that human activity tends to seek a purpose that is in keeping with its nature, the ultimate good (Höffe, 2008). It is “an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, or if there are several virtues, in accordance with the best and most perfect kind, and, moreover, in a complete life” (Aristotle, 2010, p. 36). This ultimate good goes beyond an individual’s life when they accept that it is inseparable from the common good; according to the Stagirite, the ultimate good “is more beautiful and divine when it is secured for a nation and cities” (Aristotle, 2010, p. 25).

But what is this higher good that is stable and enduring throughout life? *Eudaimonia*. MacIntyre (1987) defines it as bliss, happiness, prosperity, delight in human life, and Barnes (1999) identifies it as a process, that of flourishing, “making a success of our own lives” (p. 130). This process is renewed through virtues and is supported by the concept of good embraced by the individual and their community. This approach is distinguished by excellence, by doing what will produce pleasure through its sublime degree of goodness (Barnes, 1999; MacIntyre, 1987). In conclusion, the highest good is not a possession, but rather a way of life: “the happy man lives well and does well” (Aristotle, 2010, p. 37).

Moreover, character is composed of numerous, interdependent virtues that serve the individual and the common good. Virtue, or *arete*, for Aristotle, holds a similar meaning to that of *goodness* or *excellence* (Barnes, 1999). They are positive and stable habits that improve meaning and the perception of who one is and who one can become (McGrath, 2018). Sanderse (2015) describes virtuous life as a type of self-sufficient life in which habit acquires a normative dimension. However, as a habit, the virtue ethic could be limited to a mechanistic view (Jiménez, 2016); so, for this reason, the regulatory meta-virtue of prudence (*phronesis*) is decisive (Burbules, 2019). In this way, virtues are dispositions and ways of behaving that allow the individual to reach *eudaimonia*, which requires judgement to decide on the means “in the right place, at the right time and in the right way” (MacIntyre, 1987, p. 190).

Therefore, the forming of good character is understood to be a type of comprehensive human development, a condition it shares with modern music education (Fernández & Casas, 2019; Castro, 2014; Cuscó, 2013; Touriñán & Longueira, 2010; Jorquera, 2006;

Vilar, 2004). It involves learning to live in a community for a shared ultimate good, based on individual activity guided by reason and prudence. The question that arises from the above is whether the teaching of specialised instrumental practice can adopt these ethical principles and how it could do so.

### 3. Proposal for an ethic of praxis regarding specialised instrumental practice

As has been shown, Aristotle’s ethics is essential for the development of CE and, at the same time, it is compatible with music education. Nevertheless, it is necessary to clarify how specialised instrumental practice may acquire educational status. For this reason, in the following section, the focus will be on an ethical, practical view of the connections between character and practising an instrument. Along with this analysis, there will be a reflection on the situation of music in Aristotelian times and the present. The section will conclude with a proposal for a code of ethics focusing on Richard Sennett’s idea of craftsmanship, applicable to instrumental practice and which may serve as a guide in the musical teaching/learning process.

#### 3.1. How music affects character: A discussion between the Aristotelian view and the current situation of music

Aristotle, in book VIII of *Politics*, analyses music from three dimensions: as a game or relaxation, as leisure or a means to virtue (in that it helps education to form character). The philosopher claims that “music instils character with certain qualities, accustoming them to enjoying themselves in a proper way” (Aristotle, 2015, p. 464). This custom or habit looks to the future, to adulthood, considering that music as leisure is among the most noble activities. In other words, it brings free men (citizens) closer to the ultimate goal of being human: *eudaimonia*. He also mentions different types of melodies, rhythms and instruments that would be suitable for influencing good character. Nonetheless, the most important aspect for this research is that, according to the Greek, students should learn music by playing it. Aristotle (2015) stated that it is not beneath the free man to do things for himself or for friends or with a view to excellence” (p. 458). Manual activity is acceptable if it is for the purpose of leisure and virtue, “as it is difficult or impossible to become good judges without participating in these activities” (p. 470).

The Stagirite’s words pose a semantic problem and, ultimately, one that is ontological, which music is still



affected by as a phenomenon that occurs in almost all cultures over time and space. As Cook indicates (2001), “*music* is a very small word to encompass something that takes as many forms as there are cultural or sub-cultural identities. [...] When we speak of music we are really talking about a multiplicity of activities and experiences” (p. 21).

Apart from this persistent problem, there are some crucial differences compared to Ancient Greece concerning the relationship that people now have with music. The technology developed since the twentieth century has endowed music with the gift of ubiquity and allows any individual to consume it wherever and whenever they wish. Until just over a century ago it was inconceivable that music could be chosen and played without the need for other people to perform it live (Matthews, 2020). Mobile digital devices and internet, with streaming or social media, have encouraged a consumption that is increasingly adapted to each person, as it is atomised and adjusted to their *preferences*, leading to *infinite personalised opportunities* to experience music (Surós, 2020). In consequence, people are less and less engaged in the process of creating music.

Harold (2016) also sheds light on the idea that in Aristotelian Greece music was contemporary in the widest sense of the word. It was a product of its time and culture (historical time) and it was created in the moment, live (subjective time). Therefore, not only was the sound dimension shared collectively but also the visual, social (rituals, leisure,) material or linguistic dimensions, for example. These days, space, time and meanings have become blurred and, above all, they are not simultaneously shared in physical reality.

Furthermore, ethics did not deal exclusively with a moral project, but rather one’s way of life, as Harold (2016) himself explains. Ethics included customs such as gestures, forms of expression, knowledge of governance or leisure practices. Thus, emotional, ethical/moral and political components all held the same meaning in the community, they were part of a common project, music included (García, 2013). Consequently, music was considered good in ethical terms if it contributed to this culture of virtue. In view of the social fragmentation and specialisation evident in modern societies, it is almost impossible for every citizen to share the same single cosmovision as they did in the times of Aristotle.

Despite the foregoing, there is a fundamental idea that has remained intact over time. According to Aris-

totelian thought, music has a multimodal effect on the human being and a positive influence on character development from the perspective of emotions and habits (Zagal, 2019; Estrela, 2018; Suñol, 2018; García, 2013). Bearing in mind that good character cannot be established if it is not through acquiring good habits (Suñol, 2021; Harold, 2016), this brings us to a point where learning to practise an instrument plays a significant role in education.

In this respect, Dewey (2014) emphasises that habits are not exclusively mechanical nor are they separate from the person, but rather they are one’s own will, they are subject to the individual’s desires and tastes. In his opinion, will is associated with action, movement and change, it drives us to act: “the right disposition will produce the right deed” (p. 59). Continuing with Dewey’s ideas, customs are habits that involve social conditions, habits that last over time and transcend the individual. In this sense, intelligent habits are effective in combatting a certain social inactivity that customs have produced. The expression of reason, reflection, criticism or *phronesis* can confront stifling customs in a way that is flexible and open to change, providing a glimpse of a better future.

This could be one of the ways to achieve the social transformation that, for example, critical music education intentionally seeks (Marín-Liébana et al., 2021), and which can also include specialised instrumental practice. In summary, the development of good character may be achieved through learning an instrument, with an impact both at an individual and social level, by means of active, thoughtful and critical participation in the creative processes.

### 3.2. Craftsmanship as the guiding principle for musical endeavours: Ethics for specialised instrumental practice

It has been shown that learning an instrument is pertinent to building character and that specialised instrumental practice can lead to personal and collective development. However, there has been criticism for decades now about the teaching method used in music conservatories (specialist, professional, formal teaching). The reason is that it focuses on technical expertise that is based on theoretical subjects far removed from practice, where the repertoire list is sacred, all of which stems from a tradition rooted in reading and writing and from a fixation with the past that impeded social change (Fernández & Casas, 2019; Casas-Mas, 2016;

Hemsey, 2011; Touriñán & Longueira, 2010; Pozo et al., 2008; Jorquera, 2006; Small, 1989).

To that effect, an alternative can be proposed regarding how to behave as a musician, and as a teacher, that may be beneficial to those engaged in the teaching/learning process in relation to music and mastery of an instrument. It involves the *ethics of doing*, based on craftsmanship and founded on virtue, a code which guides specialised instrumental practice like an educational process.

Both in music and other areas of life, confrontation persists between art and technique. There is no reason for the conflict; the combination of both areas goes back to the Greek word *tekne*, which, in a way, encompasses the meanings of different terms (technology, art, craftsmanship) and involves activities which originally had in common the use of the body to perform them (Mumford, 2014). Sennett (2021) mentions the dichotomies that have been created throughout history: the theory-practice, technique-expression, artist-craftsman... And he explains that “there is nothing inevitable about acquiring a skill, just as there is nothing thoughtlessly mechanical about technique itself” (p. 21). Moreover, the primary goal with reference to music teaching would be to maintain the balance of power between the objectivity of technique and the subjectivity of human activity (art, praxis).

The guiding principle of craftsmanship is the desire to do the job well for the simple fact of doing it well, a concept of quality that is closely related to virtue, excellence, or *arete* (Sennett, 2021). This is intrinsic motivation that needs to be aroused in those who are beginning to practice an instrument, with a view to activating and consolidating certain virtues, primarily *commitment*. It concentrates on the obligation that one sets oneself regarding playing music, on assuming the responsibility for the possible effects produced by practicing. This can take one of three directions depending on those involved: commitment to the sound material (as a musician), to the learning process (as a student) and to the teaching method (as a teacher). The consequences of this link to the activity lead to satisfaction arising from the action of doing something well and give the practice meaning (Lochmann, 2020).

Commitment, combined with striving for excellence, results in another essential virtue, *care*. This concerns care for the material aspect, whether it is the sound or the people that the action is aimed at, and the result.

That is to say, the care taken throughout the whole process of choosing the necessary means to achieve the desired excellence. Since craftsmanship is a process of investigation, as is musical interpretation, this idea of care merges with two other virtues: curiosity and patience. These are decisive in striving to do things well for their own sake.

In fact, one of the characteristics of craftsmanship that is highly significant in educational terms is controlling the process. Operations requiring craftsmanship are controlled at all times by the actual operator (Sennett, 2021). The time taken is that which the craftsperson/musician needs. They follow the dictates of their body, its movements and its rhythm, tiredness, reflection about the material, the particular use of their tools. More time is spent on what is truly important, a time that is lived, “a great satisfaction and a support of personal dignity” (Mumford, 2014, p. 100). In this way, students should become aware of their learning, of how their bodies respond, of how to apply the knowledge that they have acquired. However, above all, as far as teachers are concerned, they should care for their students’ special characteristics whilst remaining committed in their attitude towards these learners.

The craftsperson’s relationship with their artisanal experience is based on the physical, the relational, the incomplete, the difficult, the experimental, hard work and healthy failure. These experiences lead to the creation of habits that are exclusive to craftsmanship. This involves a tacit knowledge that comes from the direct relationship with the materials, motivated by curiosity and the craftsman’s dialogue with them (Sennett, 2021). In this sense, the craftsman/musician “should embrace his own imperfection [...] [and] preference should be shown towards what one is capable of doing by oneself, what is limited and specific and, therefore, what is human” (Sennett, 2021, p. 133). This means humbly accepting one’s personal limitations whilst making the most of the opportunities provided by musical experiences to grow, in both musical and human terms.

Regarding technique, this provides the individual with skills to develop excellence in their activity and thereby reach the dimension of expression in their work: “the belief in technical mastery and the search for this create expression” (Sennett, 2021, p. 197). To this effect, one needs to understand that the process of technical development results in expression, it is not an end in itself. This very relationship (technique-expression) relates to the concept of *whole gesture* proposed

by Lochmann (2020), who advocates that a technical movement is not only produced by the main movement that is observed, but that others are also involved that, in turn, use other parts of the body and activate cognitive skills (the dimension of expression).

Internalising these movements, as with those of an instrumentalist, requires sustained repetition to consciously shape them and combine them with the other movements belonging to the craft. The result is a *savoir faire* (excellence) that evolves through experience and that “thereby consists of a process of appropriating life experiences” (Lochmann, 2020, p. 75). Furthermore, an artisanal action does not actually end at the technical point where a problem is solved, but rather the mark made by the craftsman (expression), the collective (trade-community), and, ultimately, the contribution to the common good (*telos*) are all involved in the activity.

Lastly, as a practice *for* and *in* a community, co-operation can be an essential value to achieve the goals of craftsmanship. Teamwork is strengthened during the transmission: despite the team members having different levels of experience and know-how, they all work together to co-produce or co-create something for the community. In such situations, where individuals can see their own contribution, both failure and success are shared in the same way (Lochmann, 2020). As this author explains, the activity is organised around *supportive responsibility*, where everybody participates in organising the task. In conclusion, community is the social and cultural context that provides the knowledge of what any craft is (Sennett, 2021).

#### 4. Practising an instrument, a prerequisite for music

The foregoing has all been related to *how* specialised instrumental practice can be educational. Having said that, education has become a universal right, and, in connection with this, research offers a *why* specialised instrumental learning should be considered education.

Although the teaching/learning processes are different for music depending on the social and educational context, one characteristic that applies to all cultures is the organologic condition of music (Sève, 2018). Music and instruments are constituent elements of cultures everywhere around the world and throughout the ages: “total coexistence in a musical work is coexistence subject to the use of the instrument” (p. 109); this leads to the conclusion that “the instrument implies the (onto-

logical) condition of music [...] in that it is always participatory and active” (p. 136). Music is instrumental, even when it is vocal, as instruments are the basis for the construction of sound universes in all cultures. Moreover, a primary characteristic of instrumental music is mediation. The instrumental nature of music requires skills that cannot be acquired either mediately, vicariously or spontaneously, nor without training, and it involves the person who handles the instrument. As in craftsmanship, it is not possible to exclude the body of the person who is performing the rendition. It leads to the acquisition of habits that are internalised and superimposed on the human being’s natural abilities, the creation of a *musical body* as a *second nature* (an Aristotelian concept). For this reason, corporeality is *essential* to music, the ‘instrumental movement’, which is solely facilitated by the instrument and which “embeds music in the body” (Sève, 2018, p. 136). This thereby joins the ideas of art-craftsmanship, technique-expression, dichotomies that are merely parts of a whole, of a human practice.

In the same way, the instrumentalist’s sensory experience varies depending on the type of instrument. As Sève (2018) describes very clearly, “the image of the instrument as an extension of the hand [body] indicates in this case an intimacy between the musician’s movements and the instrument’s responses, built over time, acquired as a result of effort and patience” (p. 87). In the subject-object relationship, which is created through musical activity, a state of continuity is produced that is inherent in the phenomenon of music. Continuity from the transfer of energy that enables music to flow through time.

Lastly, Sève (2018) proposes two musical categories that may be useful in specialised instrumental teaching, which are as follows: *works for action* and *works for listening*. Works for action are those that “tend to produce certain extramusical effects and are interpreted by the listeners’ extensive engagement” and works for listening are those that “are designed to please enthusiasts’ aesthetic tastes..., they simply enjoy them, seeking nothing more” (p. 119). The essential difference is that the former fulfil a function, they are located in a place and social time; the others are not. These categories are not fixed and movement between them depends on how they are used.

In this way, practising an instrument is universally present, whether by means of an instrument or the voice, with procedures that are culturally widespread all around the world. Furthermore, by placing the focus



of musical activity on *action*, the tasks of education and social transformation can both be accomplished; these objectives have been outlined above and are necessary in all societies. Musical experiences through producing sound have an educational value that, although it is not the only one, is vital.

## 5. Implications for music education

This essay is confined to the assumptions of practical philosophy, in keeping with Aristotelian ethics. It shows a marked emphasis on a type of knowledge that could be described as a sketch, with particular interest in the specifics and details of human activity. Höffe (2008) highlights that “knowledge is not an end in itself. It represents an intermediate goal on the way towards the definitive main goal: *praxis*” (p. 42). Ethics as *praxis* is different from *poiesis*, which is not a knowledge intended to produce but rather to transform the agent (Zagal, 2008). This premise of transformative action forms the basis for an outline regarding specialised instrumental practice, focusing on virtue and character to affirm its educational value.

Music should be approached as a human and cultural practice using musical instruments. This means that the presence of instrumentalists and their instruments, their bodies and their materiality, are all necessary for music to exist *per se*. The aim of such an idea is to dispel the hegemonic tradition of classical music, prevalent in many conservatories and music schools, which has focused blindly on the score and the composer, whilst ignoring the performers, the musicians that enable what is on paper *to come to life* (Baricco, 2016).

Although it may be an end in itself (though not the ultimate one), this mechanical exercise, both physical and cognitive, affects the way human beings behave, beyond the world of music. Formalising any kind of musical practice requires automation and technical mastery as part of the learning process. Technique is a medium for expression and this, in terms of virtue, is a higher goal. The relationship with the instrument and its mastery should be understood as a possibility. According to Sève (2018), “the material becomes a source of inspiration. Behind the physical reality of materials, we need to distinguish, or invent, the musical potential that it conceals” (p. 67). A chance to be educated.

These days, there are other specialities, styles, musical genres that are taught in conservatories or music schools that are not prone to elitism or ethnocentrism

(jazz, flamenco, modern music, traditional music, ancient music, etc.). These offer us new ways to understand music and, above all, new ways to use instruments and experience it. Therefore, they can be a source of enrichment for the whole educational community. However, not everything in this sense is positive. As demonstrated by Casas-Mas (2016), formalising the learning of music from other cultures involves practices specific to these institutions, such as literacy and standardisation. The question raised by this situation is whether it is possible, in this process of institutional formalisation, to prevent musical practices involving the very practices that research aims to avoid (automation, technique, music for listening, masterworks).

For example, one possible opening could be to promote musical hybrids, creating and experimenting with different types of music, which would represent a way of encouraging shared ethics, providing knowledge and understanding of others in the community (Higgins, 2018). In recent years, music education has emphasised the concept of interculturality (Bermell et al., 2014; Bernabé, 2012; Marrero, 2018; Olcina-Sempere & Ferreira, 2020; Porta, 2017; Rojas et al., 2018), and CE may be used to promote the civil virtue ethics underpinning its educational value (coexistence, diversity, inclusion) by using practices of hybridisation. These activities may be feasible in specialised instrumental practice as a result of solid instrumental skills.

Focusing on the teacher, Fernández-Morante (2018) illustrates how the existing teacher-student relationship in specialised instrumental teaching is an unequal relationship. There is a major power imbalance, where the teacher is the factor that most influences musical education. This figure is the sole judge of the student’s musical quality, a judgement that decides the student’s musical future. This is an approach based on *natural selection*, where many fall by the wayside for lack of talent. Here discipline, efficiency, compliance and competitiveness feature prominently among general behaviours. Likewise, educational work can also provide an example of *mala praxis*. Bautista and Fernández (2020) explain that this is revealed by mistakes, produced by inadequate training or egotistical errors. With reference to the latter, egocentricity is a variable that is linked to the individualism that dominates musical practice, as well as to competitiveness and the key figure in learning, the teacher. Another variable is narcissistic behaviour, which stems from musical demands, talent, excellence or survival in selective and competitive environments. As a result of all

this, a biased way of thinking prevails, where the only thing of value, that is valid, is what the teacher knows and controls.

In contrast, it has been demonstrated how ethics involving virtuous activity, craftsmanship, and care for the material aspect, can increase a passion for music and for doing things well, for the pleasure this produces. Here the educator plays a decisive role, as their relationship with the student needs to be the same as with the material (musical) aspect; their ultimate goal is no longer music, but the learner. In this learning process, the teacher should bear in mind the limitations of each individual, leaving enough time for each to give the best of themselves, always with a view to human flourishing. Teaching is a caring profession, based on commitment, respect, the common good, doing good. A responsibility that is assumed by the educator who understands musical excellence as a means to achieving human excellence, virtue (Regelski, 2012). There has been discussion about the professional identities of music teachers, in which, mostly, musical identity is superimposed on pedagogical identity as a result of training or professional experiences (Carrillo et al., 2015; Aróstegui, 2013; Ballantyne et al., 2012; Jorquera, 2008). However, this article advocates for commitment and responsibility by those who teach students, who have to accept the consequences of their actions and employ prudence in the Aristotelian sense.

Teachers should not act alone; they need their peers, which means that they cannot work in isolation, that teamwork and collaboration should be encouraged and implemented. The musician-teacher is not alone in their work. Music education needs, above all else, a musical community that shares the same aim. Communities where human beings are motivated by the same drivers of learning and enjoyment of music. As an example, what is known as *community music* shows features of this code of virtue ethics in non-formal environments, which could be suitable. For example, the participation of the elderly and children with different levels of expertise, everyone being completely engaged, a show of *committed solidarity* or community spirit (Lee et al., 2017; Chong et al., 2013; Karlsen et al., 2013). Musical activity throughout one's life where striving for excellence is not seen as a result but rather as a process (Henley & Higgins, 2020), as well as serving a purpose for the future, reaching beyond the time at school (Westerlund, 2019). Music as part of daily life (Oehrle et al., 2013), a type of active leisure that eschews overtones of privilege and reinforces the idea

of the good life through music (Mantie, 2015). In the case of Spain, it has also been shown that specialised instrumental teaching (formal) that is included in centres for the mandatory, basic stages of education, can have a positive effect in academic terms and, what is more significant, on skills and social competencies in accordance with virtues (Barrientos-Fernández et al., 2019; Andreu, 2012).

## 6. Conclusions

The main objective of this article has been to show that the teaching of specialised instrumental practice can be educational. Moreover, it should be educational in the ethical terms described throughout the text for two reasons. Firstly, when the issue concerned is the concept of education *in* and *through* music, it is taken for granted that they are included in the same legislative framework; in this sense, they share principles, purposes and objectives originating in the shared, public concept of education. Additionally, still in a formal context, the great majority of students who receive specialised musical education are, at the same time, students in the general stage of education; therefore, if only out of coherence and common sense, it is essential for processes to be consistent with each other. This is what Touriñán (2016) terms *education through music*, where the two educational spheres are involved.

Secondly, from the perspective of ethical/moral engagement, if *mala praxis* has been the subject of criticism for decades and there have been reports of attitudes that are not appropriate in educating human beings, this has not been due to a lack of an ethical approach, but rather because it was not suitable in educational terms. Therefore, specialised instrumental practice and the teaching/learning processes have to shoulder the responsibility for caring for the students' human needs, despite the fact that the goal is to educate *future professionals* (human beings).

Lastly, there is a second objective underlying the whole research: placing a value on music and learning it as a medium for character education, a way to achieve human flourishing and excellence. This involves building musical communities, in line with the indications made by Regelski (2017) when he speaks of the *sociability* (the power of socialisation) that is inherent in music, a condition that gathers a group of people together around their ultimate goal through human practices such as music.



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