

DREAM ORCHESTRA

Gothenburg – Sweden

Report
2023



Alix Didier Sarrouy

YouSound Research Project

‘Music education as an inclusive tool for underage refugees in Europe’

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This is a report about the Dream Orchestra, a non-profit association based in Gothenburg, Sweden, that supports vulnerable children and young refugees by helping them learn music together.

The report documents the results obtained from a month-long ethnographic study held on site, which was led by social scientists from the research project **'YouSound – Music education as an inclusive tool for underage refugees in Europe'** (2022–2023).

The research team is based at the **Institute of Ethnomusicology – Music & Dance**, Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, Lisbon Nova University. This project is financed by the **Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology** (grant agreement EXPL/SOC-SOC/0504/2021), guaranteeing research independence and no conflict of interest. **GDPR** and ethical research concerns have been approved by the **Data Protection Office** of the University. For further information, please visit the research project website: www.yousound.



The **Dream Orchestra** has been welcoming, caring for and educating young migrants and refugees by providing music education since **2016**. As this report makes clear, this educational context is particularly demanding, especially with regard to **social skills, pedagogical knowledge, emotion management and resilience**.

We find this to be true for all social actors involved, including students, teachers, parents and caretakers, volunteers, directors, institutional partners and financiers.

We hope this report is **inclusive, accessible and useful** to all social actors interested in **comprehensive art education programmes**, from **policy-makers to teachers and students**.

Our objective is to present the data we have collected straightforwardly and effectively, and to ensure that it is accessible to a broad readership. We hope that it elicits **curiosity, awareness and critical thinking**, and that every reader further develops the ideas presented in thought and action.

In parallel with this information report, we are engaging in a deeper analysis which will be the backbone for future scientific outputs by the **YouSound research team**.

Gothenburg



North Sea

Rosa Hus
in Lövgårdet

Betlehems kyrkan

Tynnered
Community
School



SUMMARY

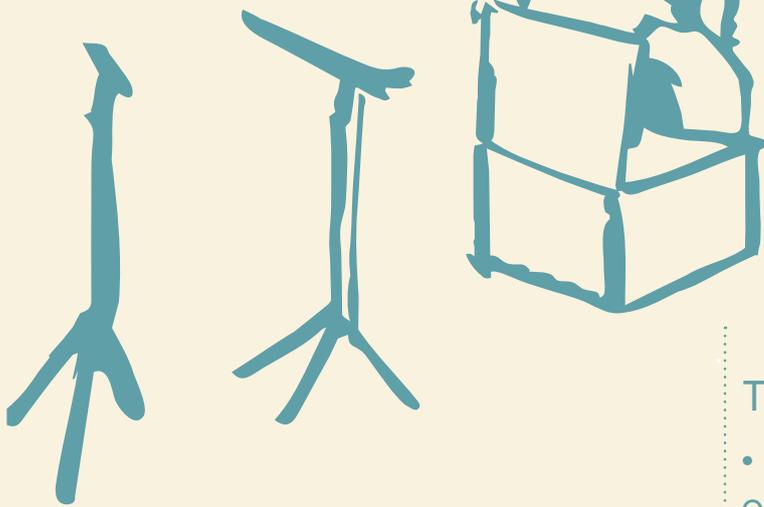
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GENERAL INFORMATION

on Dream Orchestra, Sweden



Dream Orchestra is a non-profit association based in Gothenburg, Sweden, that supports vulnerable children and young refugees, helping them learn how to make music, dream, aspire and create the conditions they need for a better life.

www.dreamorchestra.se

Date established

April 2016

Location

Gothenburg, Sweden

Founders

Ron Davis Alvarez and
Camilla Sarner

Board members

- Camilla Sarner,
- Ron Davis Alvarez,
- Dubraska Falcón,
- Ulrika Henkelman,
- Maria Larsson,
- Malin Clausson,
- Franka Verhagen

Pedagogical direction

Ron Davis Alvarez

Artistic direction

Ron Davis Alvarez

Teachers in 2022–2023

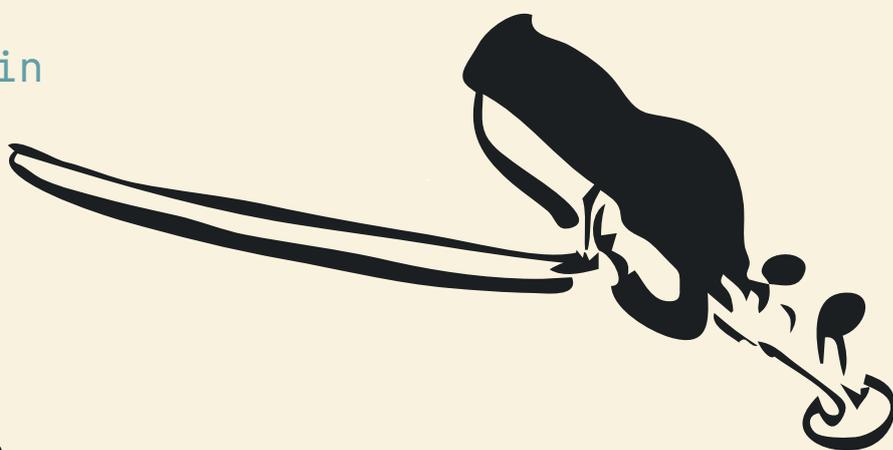
- Ron Davis Alvarez (Venezuela): violin, orchestral playing all levels.
- Misuzu Cassegård (Japan/Sweden): violin, percussion, introduction to the orchestra for young children
- Daniel González (Colombia): trumpet, brass ensemble.
- Freddie Swedén (Sweden): clarinet, wind ensemble, introduction to the orchestra for beginners
- Lisa Moberg (Sweden): violin, introduction to the orchestra for beginners
- Manuela Ferrão (Portugal): cello, chamber music
- Jeremija Bundalo (Croatia): violin
- Pedro Pablo Vasques (Chile): viola
- Vanessa Ritchie (UK): trombone
- Georgiana Hughes (UK): flute
- Caroline Laland (Canada): oboe

Number of students in 2022–2023

168

Countries of origin (students)

- Afghanistan,
- Iran,
- Iraq,
- Lebanon,
- Syria,
- Palestine,
- Eritrea,
- Egypt,
- Turkey,
- Bosnia,
- Kurdistan,
- Serbia,
- China,
- Japan,
- Colombia,
- Uruguay,
- Chile,
- Dominican Republic,
- Venezuela,
- Vietnam,
- Spain,
- Sweden.



Instruments taught

- Violin,
- Viola,
- Cello,
- Double bass,
- Flute,
- Clarinet,
- Oboe,
- Trumpet,
- Trombone,
- Percussion.

Levels taught

From beginners to advanced

Institutional partners

- Ecumenical churches in Gothenburg and Alingsås;
- Räddningsmissionen, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and Concert Hall, University of Gothenburg.

Cost for students and parents

Free classes and free instruments (donations are welcome)

Financers

Philanthropic family foundations that sponsor one- or two-year projects

Student age range

3 to 55+

Locations of schools:

- Central Gothenburg (Betlehems kyrkan);
- North of Gothenburg (Rosa Hus in Lövgårdet);
- Southwest of Gothenburg (Tynnered Community School).

Ready?



A.

Participants of Music Education

In the first section of this report on the Dream Orchestra (DO) project, we focus on some of the data collected by observing and interviewing students and teachers.

Given the emotive context of the migrant-refugee experience, we believe it is also useful to share some of their psychological concerns.





A.1. Dream Orchestra Students

Students are at the core of DO.

Most are migrants and refugees. The majority of those who started in 2016, at the project's inception, were unaccompanied minors.

Today, there are more migrant students from second-generation contexts, as well as new members fleeing the Ukrainian conflict that began in 2022.

A.1.1 Overview

Since the project began, the music classes have been held in a group format, mixing different cultures, ages, genders, religions, instruments, knowledge and learning abilities.

DO is also a very important setting for learning Swedish and English, both for students and teachers. These two languages are essential for inclusion and integration in Sweden and Europe.

It is most effective for the children to begin as young as possible for optimal results in terms of both inclusion and pedagogy. Children aged between 11 and 14 are most likely to quit. In order to minimise the number of dropouts, the organisation is pragmatic and inclusive, with clearly defined objectives. This leads to tangible results for every class.

A.1.2

Student Migration Experiences and Cultural Adjustment

Most of the refugees who arrived in 2015 and 2016 had previously migrated for a few years to another country closer to their homeland. For example, many Afghans moved to Iran before coming to Europe. Some of these young Afghans, mostly from the Hazara tribes who moved to Iran, shared that it was where they had experienced the strongest racism, followed by certain European countries when travelling to Sweden. In Gothenburg, they say that they feel safe.

On arrival in Sweden, most unaccompanied minor refugees exhibited some of the cultural traits acquired in their families and culture of origin, which sometimes contributed to tensions and misunderstandings. For example, some of the newly arrived male students from highly patriarchal societies in 2015 and 2016, did not want to be taught by female music teachers.

Some of the female students who arrived in 2015 and 2016 wore the veil. After a few months, some chose to wear the veil no longer, although it is permitted at DO and in Sweden in general.

The most important aspect for many of the refugee students who joined DO in 2016 was the opportunity to be in an environment with peers who shared their language and culture.

A.1.3

Importance of Teacher-Student Relationships

For the students, the humanity shown by their teachers is very important, particularly to unaccompanied minor migrant-refugees who have faced considerable distress, trauma and/or successive disappointments, causing them to lose faith in themselves and others.

Finding somebody that believes in them and their capacity is difficult but highly sought after by young refugees and migrants. “I thank the teacher for believing in me”, said one of the unaccompanied refugees interviewed in 2022.

For these young people, it is not enough to be good: somebody must believe that they are.

DO lights an internal fire and keeps it lit in the bodies and minds of students. DO is a concrete example of an official organisation in which teachers and leaders are accessible and helpful, fostering empathy between human beings.

Students expressed the importance of having a voice and good leadership. They relate to examples of positive guidance from their teachers. The helpful and supportive attitude from people in a position of power was often a surprise to them and helped them to feel empowered.

Students relate closely to teachers. For unaccompanied minor students, teachers may be the closest person to a parent or a mentor. Students describe a 'good teacher' as a person who listens to them and builds on that connection.

The students also described how their experiences in DO have helped them gain confidence and gave the example of when a teacher helps them to 'play the note with attitude!'.

A.1.4

Importance of Teacher-Student Relationships

Some students have expressed the importance of doing other activities apart from music (i.e., sports, collective games, walks in nature with picnics), which would break up the cycle of coming to class, playing and then leaving. This also gives them the chance to meet other students in DO, developing connections and friendships.

For some students, DO music classes are a path towards finding other related professions in the music world. For example, one of the students sees his experience in DO as an opportunity to learn music and become a better hip-hop producer.

A.1.5

Internal Programmes at DO

DO has two internal programmes: the Young Leaders Program, in which selected students are empowered to participate more closely in the organisation, aims and communication of DO; and the Young Mentor's Program, in which the more advanced students provide mentorship to new students and extra support for the teacher.

Students repeatedly expressed the importance of these programmes, highlighting their inclusivity and empowerment, as well as offering them the opportunity for greater involvement in the project and motivating those who wish to pursue university studies in music or pedagogy.



A.2. Teachers at D0

“We are not just teaching classes; we are relating to other human beings.”

Artistic and pedagogical director of D0, 2022

This sentence reveals the methods and the aims of D0. It shifts the focus of the classes from music learning to human interaction. Teaching in D0 requires more than musical and pedagogical knowledge: it also demands a broad, flexible set of social skills and a deep engagement and concern for the ‘other’.

A.2.1 Specific Teacher Requirements for D0

One of the specific requirements for teachers at an organisation such as D0 is that they must be constantly aware of a perpetual and always surprising learning curve. The fundamental mantras for teachers are flexibility, adaptability and openness.

They must, for example, be ready for a class plan that might be completely transformed from one day to the next, depending on the people and the context. Teachers develop a sort of ‘programmed flexibility’.

A.2.2

The DO Method

The collective is key to the DO method. Some new teachers find it challenging, as they may not have experienced this previously in their music education. The group classes may also create situations in which minor physical or musical mistakes are missed.

DO requirements and methods may be considered demanding for some teachers, students, and other organisations working within education at the outset. It takes time and experience to understand and feel comfortable with the requirements of DO, but regular training sessions are provided to teachers to share tools from the DO learning model.

Teachers also try to learn from their own student experience, reproducing what works and rejecting what doesn't. The educational program and pedagogical framework is designed to encourage that freedom. All teachers can experiment with new methods and pedagogical ideas. Teaching at DO requires trust at all levels of the organisation, and there is good communication throughout the whole team. Teachers with several years of experience in the unique context of DO say they have evolved considerably, both personally and professionally.

A.2.3

Teacher Interactions with Students

Teachers interact a lot with their students – in the classes, when choosing the repertoire, when expressing feelings, or during the traditional Swedish breaks for food and drink called fikas. Teachers keep the parents involved in all activities, sharing knowledge and responsibility. They have the phone numbers of most students, and there are chat groups to keep everybody informed.

For teachers facing multicultural classes, one of the challenges is finding metaphors that function for all cultures. They also use humour as a tool in the classroom, and there is a lot of positive reinforcement. For example, “Guys, you are talented!”, said the teacher after a first class in Tynnered’s Community School. “Trumpet, don’t be afraid to make mistakes, just make them louder, we need to hear you!”, insisted the teacher in Bethlehem Church, in central Gothenburg.

Most teachers are foreigners too, and come from Portugal, Spain, Italy, Venezuela, Japan. This tends to reinforce the bonds with the migrant students as they are all trying to be accepted and learn the country’s language, ways and ethos.

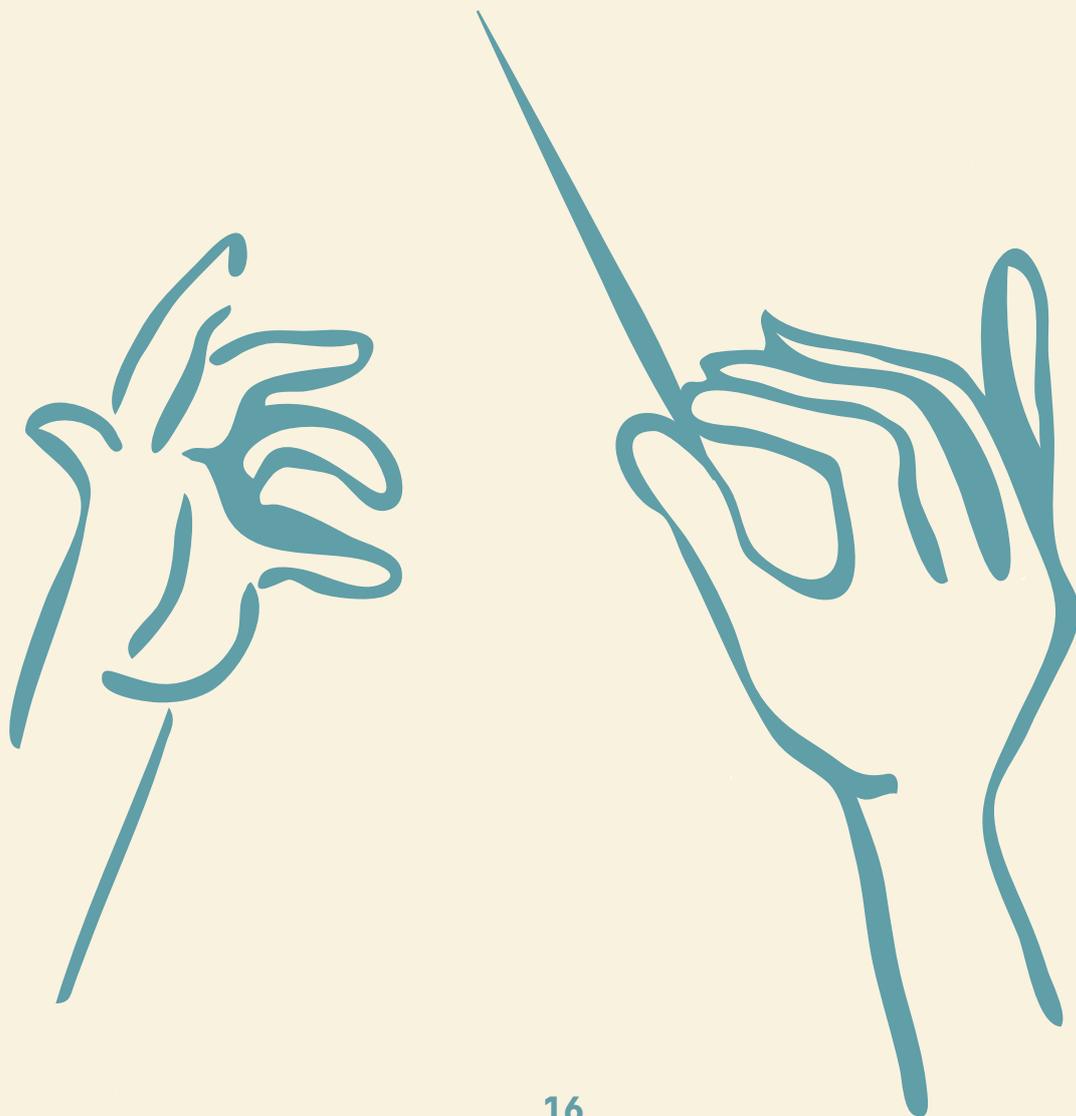
A.2.4

The Pivotal Role of Ron Davis Alvarez

Ron Davis Alvarez, the co-founder of DO and principal teacher, has seen what he wants to achieve become reality, and therefore knows what must be done, ensuring that the project adapts to the local context. He is admired by his colleagues for his boundless energy and his knowledge of proven music pedagogy tools.

Ron Davis Alvarez has discussed the issue of culture shock, which he believes should be addressed by taking things slowly, particularly during mediation processes. Radical changes cannot be expected from any of the involved social actors, particularly with regard to habits, customs and morals, and it is essential to allow time to explain, demonstrate, convince and praise.

He elaborated further in 2022, stating, “The human relation is the crucial factor. Surely music is a catalyser, you have a rehearsal, a concert, you have something to aspire to, but the connection you have with what you say, and the way you talk to people, I believe that is what makes the difference.”





A.3.

Emotional Impacts of Teaching at D0

Migration and refugee studies have developed a vast body of scientific literature on issues related to trauma and other psychological effects. Much has been written on the traumatic effects of war, hunger and forced migration on young people reaching Europe. Many students of D0 have experienced deep psychological distress.

For this report, we wish to highlight a much less talked-about concern, related to the emotional impact on teachers who work in organisations such as D0.

Teachers are confronted with youngsters in a very vulnerable physical and/or psychological condition, separated from their families and displaced from their home culture. Teachers expressed some of their fears and the challenges of working at D0.

A.3.1

Challenges for Teachers in the DO Context

Teachers have been in close contact with their students since the establishment of DO in 2016. Ron Davis Alvarez insists on being always open to the needs of students. “You can call me any time, I would say to them, and the kids would call at 2am to talk about anxiety and panic attacks, to say that their asylum papers have been refused, or that they would be sent back to Afghanistan soon”, he explained.

Some teachers become very connected to the students and their stories, which can cause them emotional or health issues. It is difficult to get involved with such delicate human experiences without the adequate preparation for dealing with them. As a result, some teachers have expressed pain, rage against the system, and a sense of powerlessness and frustration, among other feelings.

The teachers of DO, dealing with many refugees with no official documents, may feel a great deal of concern for the students to whom they have become attached. It is beyond the scope of a standard teacher’s mission to deal with bad news, with the unknown, having to grasp Swedish law, and finding urgent ways to provide comfort and care. Some teachers, deeply affected by such demands, have skipped classes.

Few Swedish teachers had the motivation, the will, and the flexibility to work in the specific context of the DO. Foreign teachers tend to develop stronger bonds with migrant students because they become their local family, sharing some similar struggles, even if the students face considerably greater personal challenges.

A.3.2

Coping with Student Departures

Teachers also have to face the psychological challenge of seeing students they have cherished and spent time with leave the DO program. This may occur because the students are over 18 years old and have to find work or because they have been refused refugee/exile papers, forcing them to leave the country.

It can also be difficult for teachers to start all over from scratch. When a generation of students leaves because they reach the age of 18 and must find work to support themselves and integrate further, the teachers may feel they have ‘lost’ the musical results of all the effort they have put in over the years.

This occurs for all teachers, but is particularly challenging at the DO when the conclusion can be abrupt, and the teachers must accept that there is no musical continuation after students leave.

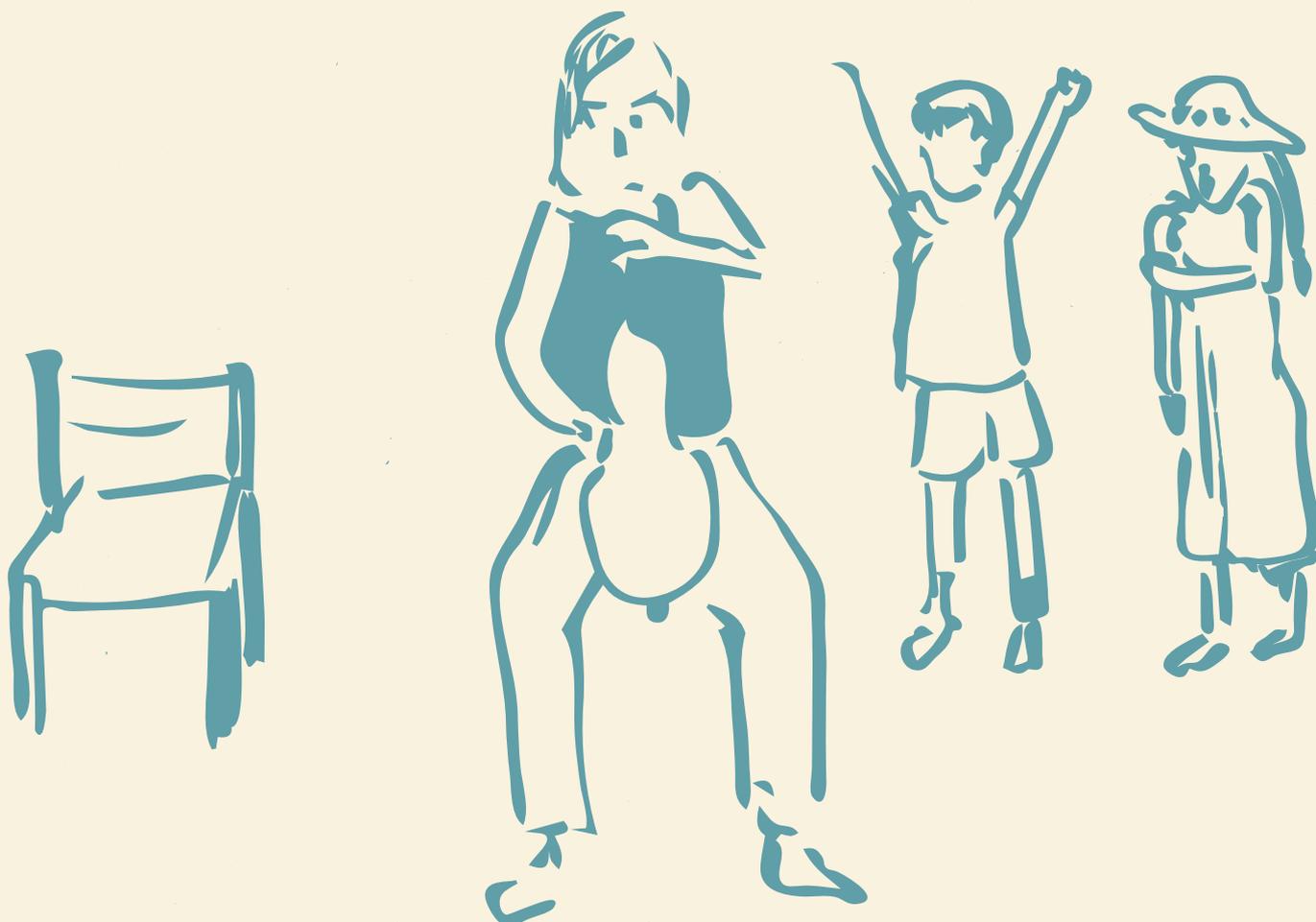
A.3.3

Support for Teachers

When safeguarding issues arise regarding specific situations with students, during the regular meetings with the teachers DO leaders emphasise that teachers are not psychologists and should not be expected to carry out this role.

DO teachers should only relate to students as empathetic human beings and as pedagogues, helping them to get medical/mental support if required. Volunteer psychologists are available at DO headquarters at Bethlehem Church, and both students and teachers in need of counselling may have free access to the Swedish national health service.

Furthermore, Franka Verhagen (Project Manager) and Ron Davis Alvarez (Artistic and Pedagogical Director) maintain close relations with the teachers and the students, and are always available to discuss and analyse any difficulties.



B.

Inclusive Mediation

“We don’t have to go to a foreign country to work for integration, it’s also very needed in Sweden. In some areas of Gothenburg, there are over 100 nationalities and 104 languages spoken.”

DO board member, 2022





Sweden has experienced several waves of immigration in the last 50 years, from people escaping Latin American dictatorships in the 1970s to those escaping the east-European conflicts in the 1990s and, more recently, the refugee crisis from the Middle East and Africa in 2015.

During the latter, Sweden became the European country that accepted the highest number of refugees per capita. The country has historically been perceived as welcoming, but that is now being challenged by some national political forces.

The fundamental aim of DO is to use music education as a means of promoting the social inclusion of students in orchestras and encouraging social integration in Swedish society.

When considering music education as a mediation tool for the inclusion of migrants and refugees, we wish to highlight that this inclusiveness is also applied more broadly in different ways and for different types of social actors. In this section, we also describe potential issues that may arise with some mediations.

We conclude by underlining the importance of the partnerships that DO has created.





B.1. Inclusion and Integration

B.1.1 Teacher Experience of Inclusion

Teachers may be socially integrated, but they must also be integrated into the program and, most importantly, into the lives and cultures of the students. Students have agency, and may permit or deny the inclusion of certain teachers in ‘their’ classes. So, although the stakes are clearly different for the teachers, they also look for ways to feel included and accepted.

Notably, Swedish citizens are the minority in DO. One of the Swedish teachers described this as a ‘liberating experience’ because she feels less observed and judged by her compatriots in this context. Nonetheless, even if the numbers seem to be inverted, this ‘Swedish minority’ still enjoys a highly privileged status compared to the migrants and refugees.

B.1.2 A Welcoming Space for All Human beings

The DO is much more than a space for the inclusion of migrants and refugees. It is open and welcoming to all human beings, including, for example, foreigners from all corners of the globe, the LGBTQIA+ community, and students with ADHD, autism or Asperger’s. Several students describe DO as a ‘safe space’, particularly those who suffered from bullying whether on the streets, at school or online.

Some students and families who joined DO didn't feel included in similar Swedish music-education programmes. Given that many of the halls where DO music classes take place are in churches, people of different faiths or who have no religious belief are demonstrably included. Some migrants are Christians from Muslim countries, who find comfort in the Swedish Free Churches.

B.1.3

How DO Promotes Inclusion

The language used both institutionally and in everyday life is a reflection of the organisation's inclusivity. For example, some teachers refer to the refugees and migrant students as 'the new Swedes', and the LGBTQIA+ members often share their pronouns.

Big concerts held in symbolically charged spaces, such as the main halls of Gothenburg, are a way for the students, parents and teachers to feel included in Swedish society.

Inclusion may also be encouraged in very subtle ways when teaching music. For example, a teacher may choose a musical arrangement that incorporates the maximum number of instruments and proficiency levels or select a warm-up scale that includes all types of voices from the student choirs.

Another musical inclusion initiative is when one instrument group doesn't sound quite so good (for example, the strings), which is put together with another instrument group (perhaps the wind instruments), which is sounding great. The latter elevates the former, including them in a community of sound.

Teachers shared that, given the many unaccompanied refugees in DO, inclusion is also about calling students to ask them how they are, or telling them that they are missed when they don't come to class.

Inclusion in DO also extends to welcoming new ideas from students. One of these ideas was the creation of an Afghan music band, which DO supports by organising a place to rehearse, setting a schedule and finding teachers to participate. This enhances inclusivity further by also giving teachers the opportunity to experience a new culture musically.

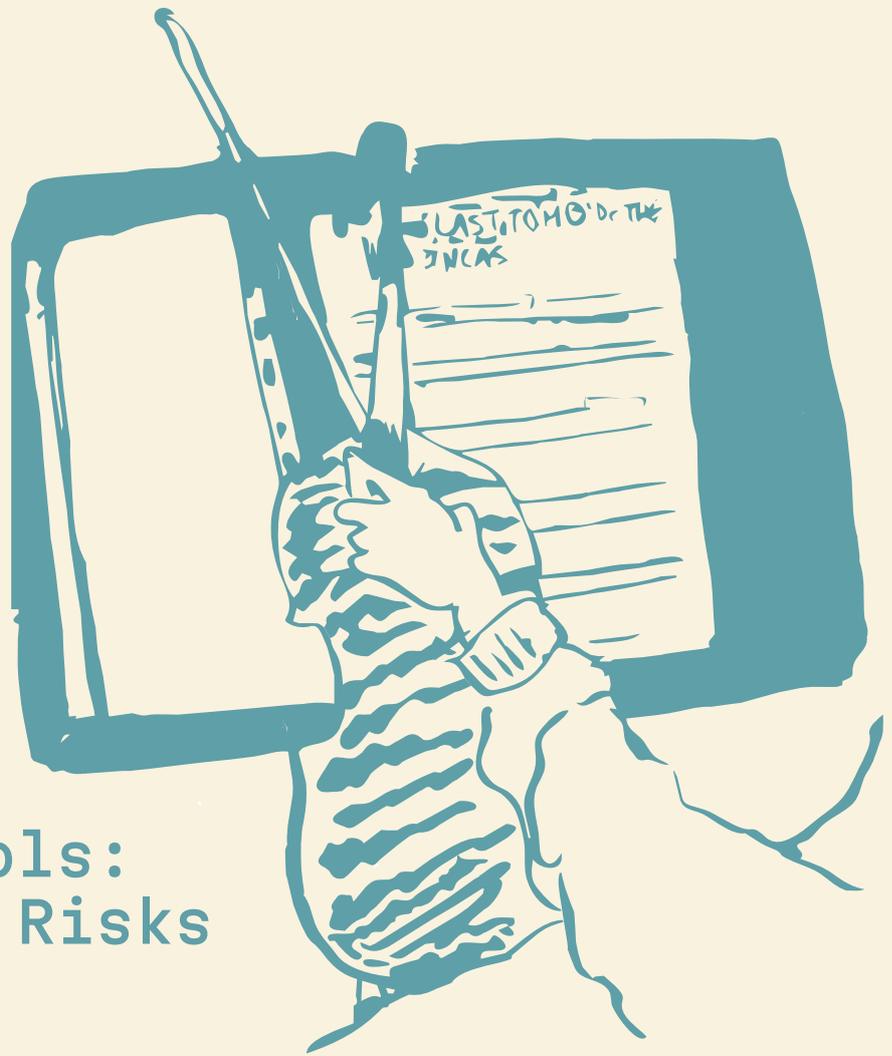
B.1.4

DO as a Path to a Legal Permit

Refugee and first-generation migrant students have a single overwhelming priority: obtaining a legal permit such as a visa or refugee status. These students may believe that learning to play music and the DO can improve their chances of success at achieving this fundamental validation of inclusion.

As the artistic director, Ron Davis Alvarez, explained in 2022: “It’s about survival. They want to solve their daily problems; they are experts in it. Time is a crucial factor. ‘Is the time I am investing in music learning worth it?’, they ask. It is very different from the second-generation migrant students, who come with another attitude, pushed by their parents. I accept the fact that DO and I might be used for a purpose other than music by our refugee students. Some of them started to come looking for shelter and daily food shared during the fikas, just as I did in Venezuela twenty years ago when I started my studies in El Sistema.”





B.2. Mediation Tools: Benefits and Risks

B.2.1 The Repertoire

The repertoire is a challenging mediation tool since many factors must be considered, primarily its purpose to promote learning music and social interaction. DO, like any other organisation dedicated to teaching music, pays considerable attention to its repertoire. They use a 'sequential repertoire', inspired by the Venezuelan method, based predominantly on European and Latin American composers.

Given the range of nationalities represented by the student group, it can be challenging to ensure inclusion through the repertoire. Including Muslim students by using a more Middle Eastern musical repertoire isn't always successful because young students from Arabic cultures tend to prefer more contemporary and popular tunes (as most students do).

On the other hand, sharing a traditional middle-eastern repertoire has a striking impact on the Kurdish youth community since Kurds don't have an officially recognised nation. As a result, the arts can help to claim recognition of a culture and an ethnic territory. This is also true for the Hazara tribe students who created a traditional Afghan music band after the Taliban takeover in 2021.

B.2.2

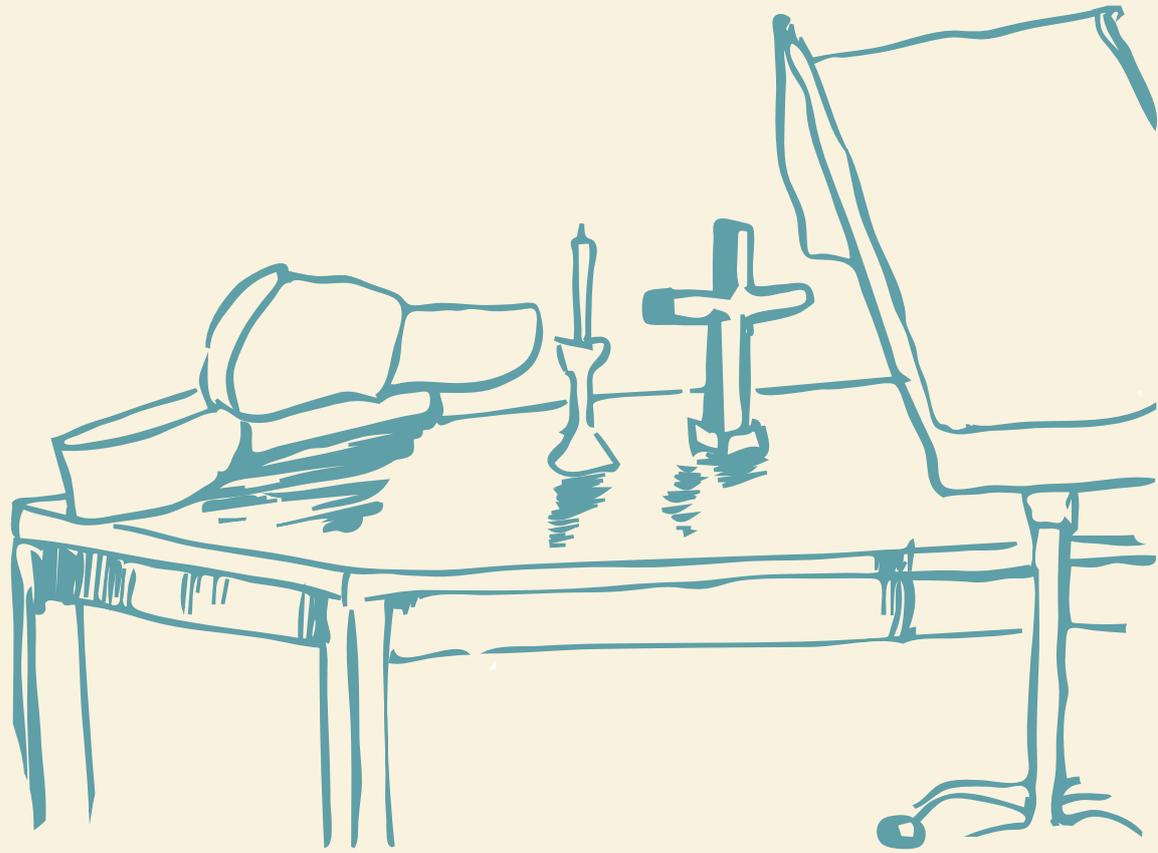
Moving Between Musical Groups in the DO

There are several orchestras in DO, each grouping students of similar musical knowledge together. Moving from one level to another may be considered a promotion of sorts, but this can also impact the students in ways that must be taken into account to ensure a positive mediation.

For example, moving to a higher-level orchestra might mean leaving behind close friends, daily customs or a musical comfort zone. If mishandled, these promotions may lead to the student choosing to withdraw from the project.

Students asked to try the musical experience of a quartet format may experience a similar discomfort. Musicians playing in a quartet may feel less protected by the effect of a large orchestra. Their sound is more present, and the responsibility is greater. Again, a delicate mediation is required.





B.3.

The Significance of Partnerships

B.3.1

Principal Partnerships with the DO

Institutional partnerships are fundamental for DO. The partnerships are diverse in nature and goals and consist, principally, of: the Free Churches; Tynnered Community School; Räddningsmissionen; Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra; and University of Gothenburg.

The Free Churches have been of great support, primarily through the Bethlehem Church which is connected to all the church groups in and around Gothenburg. Historically, the Lutheran Church was the state church of Sweden (until 2000) and the others were called the Free Churches. They are part of the fabric of civil society and focus heavily on voluntary work. Much of the practical and daily difficulties related to the refugee crisis since 2015 have been supported by the municipalities and civil society, with the Free Churches at the forefront.

With regard to the partnership with the Räddningsmissionen (which means 'Rescue Mission' and is a Free Church initiative), it should be noted that the concept of 'mission' is important in the Swedish ethos. There is a clear sense of mission at national and local levels from the Free Churches, both from individual members and institutions.

B.3.2

How Partnerships Promote Inclusion

The Bethlehem Church, which is the main hall and office of DO in the city centre, is a good example of a Free Church being inclusive of all human identities: all nationalities, cultures, faiths and genders are welcomed.

This inclusivity reinforces its partnership with DO, which shares the same ethical principles. Partners such as the Tynnered Community School, where DO holds music classes, are one of the ways to ensure a mixture of social classes among students. This positively impacts the inclusion of all the participants involved.

B.3.3

Inspiring Relationships with Partner Members

Individual and personal relationships underpin the institutional partnerships, such as those between the DO team and the members of the partner institutions.

We often observed the great personal support from the main facilitators of those organisations. For example, when Ron Davis Alvarez first visited a new sponsored group at Tynnered Community School, one of the partners of the Rädningssmissionen insisted, “I am here to make it comfortable for you. This needs to work!”. The main facilitators of each organisational partner have had to explain their actions and convince their fellow members, often in the face of opposition. We acknowledge their insistence and ability to mediate in such complex times.

B.3.4

The Role of the Gymnasium (Swedish Secondary Schools)

DO works in tandem with an often-forgotten partner because it may seem obvious and is obligatory: the gymnasium.

Gymnasiums are Swedish secondary schools, which are mandatory for all unaccompanied minor refugees.

The gymnasium is essential for learning the language, a trade, and improving employment opportunities as an adult. The gymnasiums and DO have a complementary and positive effect on students.

B.3.5

Other Advantages of Partnerships

There are broader advantages to be gained from partnerships. For example, the Tynnered Community School has a psychologist and a healthcare team who are available for monitoring general health as well as providing sex education.

They also have a social worker. In addition, the institutional partners have earned legitimacy over the years and have acquired the practical tools to fundraise for educational pursuits.

The power and knowledge of the institutional partners are also essential for finding locations for classes and schools. This is one of the big challenges in Gothenburg, largely because the procedures are highly bureaucratic. The political dialogue may be very positive, but action is still slow and scarce. It is easier to find the funding than a suitable location.

Tynnered



C.

The Influence of Swedish Culture and Ethos on Social Interactions

The traits and customs of every culture influence daily social interactions.

We have noted the most common examples in the context of DO below.

They have an evident impact on the interactions between all the actors involved with DO, particularly between teachers and students.





C.1.

Swedish Social Mores and Their Impact in the DO Context

Thinking about cultural traits is the job of social scientists but it became clear that it was particularly essential when observing the music classes. We present a few cases observed in Sweden.

Orchestra students would often not raise their hand or volunteer an answer to a question, even when the class was held by the most well-known or highly regarded teachers. This was surprising to us, as we had never observed this phenomenon in similar programmes in France, Portugal, Venezuela or Brazil.

The first potential reason, to be developed further, is that the young people are shy and afraid of being judged if they get the answer wrong. This reproduces what happens in other social spaces where youngsters are afraid of bullying, including in social media.

Other reasons emerged after discussions with Swedish colleagues, such as that their reticence may be related to the Swedish notion of *lagom*, which means to be moderate, balanced and discreet, and the sense that it is best to keep things to oneself.

Another very Scandinavian notion that may play a role is *Jantelagen*, the ‘law of Jante’, a long-established pillar of Scandinavian societies, which emphasises humility and egalitarianism over individualism and egocentrism, and is viewed as a means of promoting equality. Both *lagom* and *Jantelagen* are referred to in most schools and/or by Swedish families. Implicit laws may be very powerful, impacting the way students react in class.

Although most DO students are foreigners, they reproduce what they have felt and learned in other Swedish social spaces such as shelters, families, schools and the street.

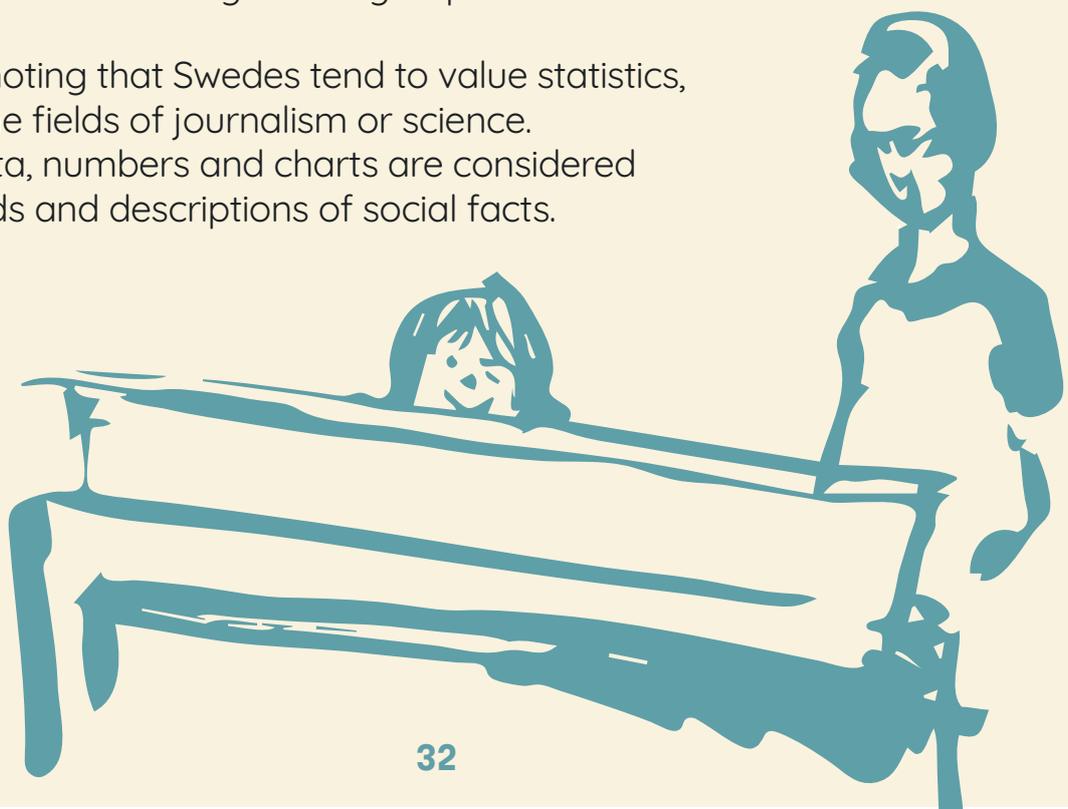
Two other principles impact social relations in Sweden, both designed to ensure personal space: one shouldn't ask anyone where they are from or get too close to someone else.

Making complaints or reporting suspected wrongdoing are often perceived as negative 'victim-blaming' actions and are not socially accepted. People are expected to cope with situations on their own and avoid making them public. This has the potential for negative consequences if there are serious issues that should be reported in any type of organisation.

Some native Swedes we interviewed mentioned the consequences of a lack of struggle from the middle classes, related to not needing to strive for anything, thanks largely to the country's overall economic prosperity. This absence of struggle can impact the effort and commitment required to create and develop programmes such as DO. Conversely, some of the migrant staff of the DO tend to set the bar high and proclaim lofty goals. This attitude is also very much embedded in the Venezuelan culture of Ron Davis Alvarez, founder and artistic director of the DO, which might be considered unconscious or utopian, but also as a driving force. These different attitudes can contribute to culture shock.

Basic education in Sweden has also resulted in forms of individualism. Some teachers and a school principal expressed a desire to bring the focus back to the group and the class as a whole. A balance between individual rights and group responsibility should be sought. Playing together in an orchestra is a means of learning to overcome challenges as a group.

It is also worth noting that Swedes tend to value statistics, particularly in the fields of journalism or science. Quantitative data, numbers and charts are considered superior to words and descriptions of social facts.





C.2.

Other Contributory Factors

Bullying also exists in Sweden, particularly in schools and online.

However, students and teachers perceive DO as a safe space, where there is no bullying of any kind. All members of DO must read, sign and closely follow an ethical charter regarding social interactions.

Sweden has its segregated areas, including in Gothenburg. DO is present in some of these areas, such as Tynnered and Lövgårdet. Many other areas should include DO.

Over the past 30 years, changes to music education programmes in Sweden have contributed to changing attitudes to music, which is now largely considered 'for fun'. At church, for example, people come to enjoy the music. This means that the demands and goals at DO, which strives for excellence, can either impress or cause discomfort to some teachers, parents and students.

The number of music teachers graduating from university in Sweden has dropped considerably, and there are not enough new teachers to fill the teaching posts. Music teachers are scarce, and many are drawn towards the worlds of folk and pop.

Music in schools is largely based on pop-rock and viewed as a pastime or amusement, lacking in seriousness or knowledge. On one hand, this diminishes the complexity and hard work demanded by pop-rock music, and, on the other, it creates a confrontation with the world of classical music, which is considered old-fashioned and conservative. Both views reveal a lack of knowledge regarding the possibilities of learning or playing diverse music genres at a deeper level.

D.

Concerns and Opportunities

In this section, we share some of the concerns that may not be highlighted in similar reports. These concerns have been shared by some of the participants in D0 and others have been observed by the YouSound research team. These concerns should also serve as opportunities for increased awareness and better planning in the near future.





D.1. A Realistic Vision

Music education should not be considered a means of solving societal problems beyond the capacity of the organisation and the teachers, who should not be obliged to bear the weight of this pressure.

At first, teachers may feel overwhelmed by the new social realities they are facing, often very different from their educational backgrounds. Preventing and solving social problems is a responsibility that should be shared by national and local organisations, both public and private. DO is one of these, filling an important gap among a chain of responsible organisations. All DO members should clearly understand their role within this chain and receive adequate support.

DO has created a learning and social context that allows its members to 'dream' in the present and to dream of a better future. However, this risks disappointment if reality fails to live up to expectations and DO members, particularly students and teachers, should be prepared for the possibility of failure. This is a potential outcome owing to factors that go well beyond the reach of any of the educational actors at DO. All the involved members should be better prepared for this possibility.

D.2.

Resolving Teacher Turnover

DO is concerned about the high turnover of teachers. Most are foreign students studying for their master's degrees in Gothenburg, which means they may leave after a year or two. It takes time to develop the very particular teaching skills required for DO and students need time to learn to trust and understand their teachers.

Often, as soon as the students and teachers have bonded both through music and on a human level, the teacher must leave. This instability in the teaching staff also affects the administration of DO.

DO is a project-based programme that cannot offer the security of full-time job contracts. However, the average hourly rate at DO is better than similar organisations in Gothenburg.

D.3.

Funding and Expansion

After the refugee crisis peaks in 2015 and 2016, which could reoccur, it remains crucial to continue funding and supporting educational and inclusive organisations such as DO.

Moreover, the experience accumulated over the years by DO should be shared in international exchanges, forums and conferences, helping other organisations to think and act in similar contexts. This also means that all investment in DO, whether human or financial, will always have a return if it maintains clear, adaptable and visionary goals.

DO should be able to expand its actions in time and space. The mission and methods of DO are well adapted to many contexts that can use art education as a tool for better inclusion and integration of marginalised people in general, and of migrants and refugees in particular. Continuity, stability and sustainability are key factors when working with vulnerable human beings.

DO benefits from the fact that most migrants and refugees perceive Sweden as a 'final destination' compared with countries such as Greece, which is considered a passage territory. It means that students and parents may feel more stability, allowing them to focus on education and promoting their integration.

The slow growth of DO since 2016 can be considered an opportunity, as it permits great control over the quality of what is being provided socially and educationally.

Progressive growth fortifies the pillars of the organisation, ensuring sustainability and enduring effects. DO needs to keep expanding but making steady and confident steps.

Similar organisations have suffered from growing too fast, losing the core of their original mission and what made them successful in the first place. As one of its board members described it, "DO is a small, brilliant thing!". It is important and appropriate to help it grow – but not at the price of losing its brightness.



E.O.

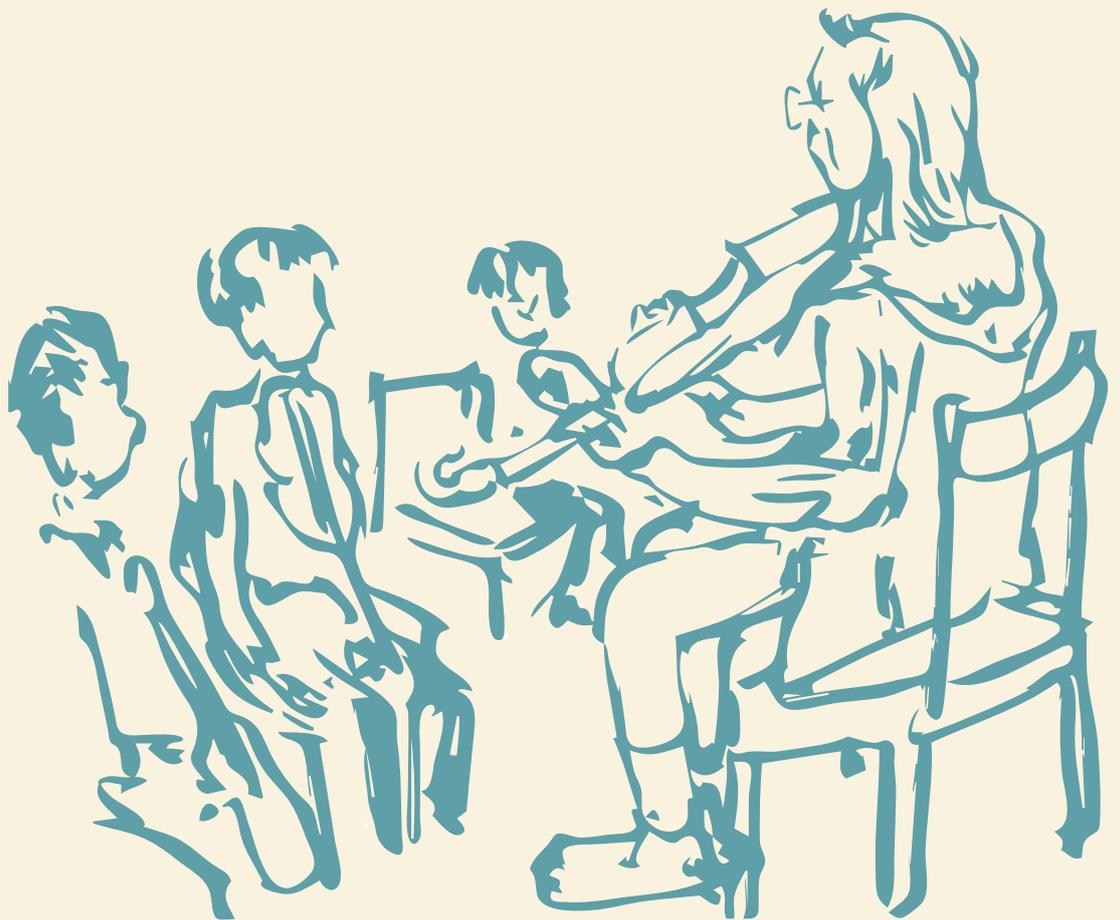
Ideas and Propositions

We conclude this report with ideas and propositions that have emerged from our fieldwork, specifically from the observation and interviews we conducted in 2022.

As social scientists, experienced in studying art-based educational programmes such as DO, we understand and support the ideas and propositions put forward.

Each of these must be evaluated in more depth to better understand the roots, implications and potential repercussions, which require collaboration between all the participants involved with DO, as well as comprehensive support from researchers and frequent exchanges with similar organisations.





E.1.

Improving Teacher Retention

A Human Resources solution should be found to guarantee a core team of teachers in order to provide stability and continuity. Currently, all teachers are part-time, working an average of 8–10 hours per week.

Ensuring a core team of teachers would provide essential support for Ron Davis Alvarez, the main driving force of DO.

Ron Davis Alvarez is the fulcrum of all actions in terms of energy, teaching, partnership, pedagogy and inclusion, which entails considerable pressure on a single individual. Alvarez needs strong and creative teachers around him to expand the field of action and guarantee the continuity of DO in the long run.

Sweden's educational system is based on acquiring a certified diploma for music education. However, given that the country does not produce enough music teachers, it should give opportunities to experienced musicians with effective teaching skills who may not have a diploma. Because of a lack of certified music teachers at a national level, most DO teachers don't have a diploma. They are given the necessary pedagogical support all along their path at DO.

E.2.

Expanding Support for Teachers, Students and Parents

It would be useful to facilitate regular opportunities for teachers to share their experiences with each other, ideally with a social psychologist, an urban sociologist or a migration expert knowledgeable about music teaching present.

This would mitigate the challenging emotional demands of working in the DO context.

Employing a dedicated mediator/facilitator to build and strengthen bridges between DO and new students/parents would be beneficial. At least two teachers have integrated this mission, but hiring someone specifically for the role would allow teachers to focus on their classes.

E.3.

Expansion Ideas

Regular concerts, featuring DO students and students from Gothenburg's Academy of Music and Drama, should be promoted.

The scope of inclusive music possibilities could be expanded by complementing the instrument-based music lessons with singing and choir lessons.

The DO should reach more unaccompanied migrants in shelters and more parents in segregated neighbourhoods through events and musical demonstrations in schools and shelters, which would encourage new students to join.

Finding guaranteed, long-term funding is crucial. As demonstrated by many researchers, investing in socio-cultural programmes such as DO can cost less than fixing the social issues that arise from a lack of care, education and social inclusion.

E.4.

Promoting Further Inclusion

DO should work towards decentralisation. Its headquarters are in the city centre, which means it is not very accessible for potential students living in the suburbs. There is a clear need for more DO partnerships in segregated and isolated areas.

Establishing new inclusive programmes in DO, with appropriate schedules for students that have started university or have been employed in a full-time job would maintain social links with the students and make it possible for them to keep playing music.

E.5.

Evaluation Tools

Evaluation tools are critical for financiers and may be relevant for administrators. Effective evaluations can be very useful for reflection by the organisation members. Longitudinal evaluations, which focus more on understanding rather than counting and judging, could provide valuable input for DO.

In 2026, DO will celebrate its tenth anniversary, an important milestone, and an optimal moment for assessing the past and preparing for the future.

The best evaluation tools may be acknowledging subtle signs. For example, when students bring their friends to DO, often getting them to join the program, this demonstrates the quality of the programme. Similarly, parents are some of the best recruiters by spreading the word among their friends and neighbours.

Other examples include students sharing their musical experiences on social networks and parents giving their time and knowledge to support DO during concerts, helping with logistics and making food for the students.

The parents are always invited to observe the music classes by DO teachers and their presence reinforces bonds and motivates the children. In addition, the blend of cultures and religions in sacred places belonging to the Christian Churches of Sweden, is a valuable demonstration of the openness and social inclusion that are core values of both the churches and DO.

E.6. Awareness of the Political Context

It's important to remain continuously aware of the political context in Sweden and be prepared to take action.

For example, national political disputes over Muslim immigrants or the recent tense relations with Turkey might not favour the development of a program such as DO. In 2022, Sweden's Prime Minister admitted a failure in Sweden's migration and integration policies, but this should not undermine the great work that many institutions and organisations have achieved since 2016, including DO.



GENERAL INFORMATION

About YouSound Research Project

Research project

'YouSound – Music education as an inclusive tool for underage refugees in Europe (2022-2023)

Research Centre

Institute of Ethnomusicology – Music & Dance, Faculty of Social Sciences and Technology, New University of Lisbon, Portugal

Financed by

The Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology. Grant agreement - EXPL/SOC-SOC/0504/2021.

Report written by

Alix Didier Sarrouy
(Following the collaborative approach of the YouSound research project, the first draft was discussed with the leaders of Dream Orchestra.)

Fieldwork at Dream Orchestra in Gothenburg

Alix Didier Sarrouy (January 22 – February 12, 2022), Rita Grácio and Beatriz Machado (August 18 – September 4, 2022). of Dream Orchestra.

Research methods

- Ethnographic observation of music classes and DO administration on a daily basis.
- Semi-structured interviews with students (20), teachers (5), parents (6), founders and administrators (6).
- GDPR and Ethics Consent Forms signed by all the interviewees or by their legal tutors.
- Research methods approved by the Data Protection Office of NOVA.FCSH.

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