

Interviewee: Participant 6

Interviewer: Nathalie Roué

Date of Interview: 02.26.2022

Location of Interview: WhatsApp

List of Acronyms: LL=Participant 6 (Interviewee)

LL: So number 1. What is my view of community music programmes? Well, in my context there are different in every country and very much dependent on what is needed in each community and what purpose they serve. And you know I think in the particular circumstance of Soweto and then Chennai in India, which is where I have got my two programmes, they serve very, very different purposes and we teach very different aged people. So the Soweto Programme caters for school age children and the Chennai Programme caters for 18 to 26-year olds; so very different.

I think in the case of Soweto, the Morris Isaacson Centre for Music really does involve the community. There is the church that is based there at the weekend and a lot of word-of-mouth is how new students are found or come to apply to the centre. I think playing in ensembles, singing in choirs has a lot of resonances for people and particularly using music that is culturally connected rather than disconnected; has been very, very, very important. And certainly families, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, parents over time start to really, really enjoy coming to listen to music, coming to festival days. You know it is seen as something really inspiring and I know that parents and a greater part of the family find it very, very inspiring to see their children learning new skills and being able to communicate their emotions.

There is a lot of pain in Soweto and I mean there is a lot of pain everywhere, but it is a real outlet for many people. I think it is seen as a way to be expressive and original and it often leads some of the students to exploring other types of music, being brave enough to do that and kind of finding their own voice.

LL: Number 2, looking at the role of music education within a broader community. Well, I think it is really, it is a life education and I think it looks after mental health, physical health. It encourages focus and concentration, helps intellectual capacity and through learning different coordinations. You know music is a complex thing and reading music itself is like another language. I think within the broader community it serves as something inspirational and

aspirational. It gives people an interest, a passion. It brings people together and enables people to do something together and also to find a sort of common interest which often means that people are distracted from other worrying and perhaps disturbing things in their lives. It is a place to meet. It creates friendships, playing in ensembles; you know gives people a sort of common thing to hold on to. So I think, you know, one cannot begin to say how much positive impact there is.

LL: Number 3. My connection about ground regarding the El Sistema programme of Venezuela, I do not have one. With the programme that I run is located at the Morris Isaacson Centre for Music in Soweto, South Africa and at the KM Music Conservatory in Chennai with the Sunshine Orchestra.

LL: Number 4. Again, I do not run El Sistema programmes. But as I said, one is in South Africa and another in India.

LL: 5, I do not really feel able to answer that; 6 to 7 also. Number 8 also and also number 9 and 10, 11 and 12, 13 and maybe 14 I can answer a little bit differently or maybe not necessarily about El Sistema.

LL: Just to answer number 14. I think that is very much a mixture. It is word-of-mouth, current students talking to friends, people who live in the local community see that the musicians are going to the school. Ja, I do not think really it is demonstrations or anything at schools. I do not really think that happens very much, but I think it is people seeing things. It is very much word-of-mouth and then local community and then I think there has been quite a bit of television, radio publicity about the music centre and the fantastic students there. I think public performances, *et cetera*. So I think that probably is the main...

LL: Number 15. How do the learners choose their instruments? Well, many, many instruments have been sponsored and brought across from the UK and a huge consignment that was sent by ship like four years ago. There are some instruments in South Africa, but not so many of good quality. Well, it really depends where there are spaces where the teachers have spaces for particular instruments and the Morris Isaacson Centre is not able to offer tuition on every instrument. We have all of the string instruments, the bowed-string instruments that are available, but again it is definitely dependent on what there are teachers for and certainly there are many instruments that are missing at the moment, because there are not teachers for all of the instruments. The learners have to pay a very, very, very small amount, like fees, a

very tiny amount each term. They do not have to pay to keep the instrument at home to practise.

LL: So how are the music lessons organised with learners? They have a lesson face-to-face with the teacher every week. They also have an online lesson with someone based in the UK each week, which is timetabled for when they are at the music centre, at the Morris Isaacson Centre. They also have ensemble, theory, choir on a Saturday, a little bit like a Saturday school, but their one-to-one lessons probably take place on another day.

LL: So number 17. Yes, so how are the ensemble playing and orchestral playing sessions structured? I mean I am not there all the time. So I cannot say for sure, but there is a teacher who leads the ensemble, usually conducting and not necessarily playing and I know that there are specific students who lead different sections. They are trying to create a symphony orchestra, but often it is a string ensemble and then sometimes string ensemble with the woodwind and/or brass instruments that they have. So I do think that that is quite variable.

LL: Yes, the learners do receive theory lessons. That is question number 18. And those are weekly lessons. Learners are organised into their various groupings according to their age and their level and theory exams are also part of what some of them do.

LL: To answer number 19. Music educators are recruited from graduates in Johannesburg, Soweto, experienced teachers; some of them who have studied in Europe and America, but usually people who are from the community, also from the project started by Abris Reynold and [indistinct] [00:00:28] which is not so far away. She is training some fantastic teachers. In terms of the online teachers, they are student teachers based at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and they are mentored to teach their students based in South Africa and in India. Like the face-to-face teachers have between six and ten students. The teachers are based in Soweto, but the student teachers are based at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire who teach online; do not have more than one, maximum two students.

LL: Looking at number 20. There is no general transport organised for the students. They take like local taxis or parents bring them or they walk. Obviously we check up on them, but there is no sort of general transport system that is organised for them.

LL: Number 21. I think there is a lot of room for them to select [indistinct] [00:00:06] music. There is a huge amount of freedom. I think it is very individual-focused; and face-to-face teachers I think are very, very open-minded and obviously are online teachers too to allow

students to play music that they really want to play.

LL: I think the remainder of the questions are maybe not particularly relevant to what I do and what the programme does, but maybe it will be better to have a conversation at some point.

In terms of, you know, advice to the university for the establishment of an EI Sistema-inspired programme, number 25. Well, we kind of use it as a teacher training programme at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, run mentoring sessions, use it as a way of cultural exchange, a way to work on future employment, teaching skills, organisational skills, learning about other cultures. And for the kids in South Africa and the older students in India it is a way to build skills, think of future places where they might go and study, meet teachers, musicians from other countries. I mean that is the same for both sides. But I think it is definitely enhanced teaching skills, teaching knowledge and certainly from the Birmingham side and it has been fantastic to work with other teachers in other countries for our students and hopefully *vice versa*.

Ja, I hope that that is helpful. I think some things maybe, because we are not an EI Sistema-based programme. Essentially maybe some areas are perhaps not as relevant for that reason, but the fact is that they are different, but probably many of the ideals behind them are quite similar. Anyway, I hope this is helpful and all the very, very best with your research and I am sure we will be in touch again at some point.

[End of Transcript]