Música Hodie | ISSN: 2317-6776 DOI: 10.5216/mh.v26.86266

Interdisciplinary and music: a teacher training experience and didactic proposal for the classroom

Interdisciplinaridade e música: uma experiência de formação de professores e uma proposta didática para a sala de aula

Paloma Bravo-Fuentes
University of Málaga, Spain
palomabravo@uma.es

Miriam Albusac-Jorge
University of Granada, Spain
albusac@ugr.es

Abstract: A research study of teachers and students in Spain was conducted throughout an entire academic year. Our aim was to analyze the educational potential of an interdisciplinary arts proposal. The study involved seven primary school teachers and students in the fifth and sixth years of primary education. It was carried out in two phases; the first was linked to in-service teacher training and focused on the exploration of various interdisciplinary teaching practices, with music as the central axis, in order to achieve bodily disinhibition in pupils. In the second phase, a didactic proposal created for this purpose was implemented in the classroom. The findings revealed that this interdisciplinary approach contributed to enriching the educational experience, fostering the integration of different areas of knowledge, improving communication and collaboration between teachers, with a positive impact on the motivation and participation of students. However, obstacles were identified, such as limited time availability and logistical challenges associated with the bureaucratic burden, which hinder the effective implementation of such projects. Our findings underline the importance of reforming policy to favor

pedagogical music as a means of interdisciplinarity in primary education instruction, thus promoting a more enriching and meaningful learning environment.

Keywords: Didactic proposal; Interdisciplinarity; Primary education; Music; Teacher training.

Resumo: Foi realizado um estudo com professores e alunos na Espanha ao longo de um ano letivo inteiro. Nosso objetivo foi analisar o potencial educativo de uma proposta interdisciplinar nas artes. O estudo envolveu sete professores do ensino fundamental e alunos do 5º e do 6º ano. Foi realizado em duas fases; a primeira esteve ligada à formação continuada de professores e centrou-se na exploração de diversas práticas de ensino interdisciplinares, tendo a música como eixo central, com o intuito de promover a desinibição corporal nos alunos. Na segunda fase, uma proposta didática criada para esse fim foi implementada em sala de aula. Os resultados revelaram que essa abordagem interdisciplinar contribuiu para enriquecer a experiência educacional, promovendo a integração de diferentes áreas do conhecimento e aprimorando a comunicação e a colaboração entre professores, com impacto positivo na motivação e na participação dos alunos. No entanto, foram identificados obstáculos, como a disponibilidade limitada de tempo e desafios logísticos associados à carga burocrática, que dificultam a implementação eficaz desses projetos. Nossas conclusões destacam a importância de reformar as políticas para favorecer a música pedagógica como meio de interdisciplinaridade no ensino fundamental, promovendo, assim, um ambiente de aprendizagem mais enriquecedor e significativo.

Palavras-chave: Proposta didática; Interdisciplinaridade; Ensino fundamental; Música; Formação de professores.

Submitted on: May 20, 2026
Accepted on: July 7, 2026
Published on: July 2026

1. Introduction

This research was conducted by a working group for in-service teacher training entitled: "Music as an interdisciplinary axis for the promotion of transversal competences through digitalization, creativity, entrepreneurship and the fight against inequalities", identified by code 241814GT013 and implemented during the 2023/2024 academic year. This study was developed in accordance with the instructions for the development of working groups issued by the Government of Andalusia (Spain) and the resolution approving the strategic lines of teacher training for the academic year 2023/2024 (Directorate General for Advanced Technologies and Educational Transformation, 2023).

The Royal Spanish Academy conceptualizes interdisciplinary studies as those carried out in collaboration across multiple disciplines (Real Academia Española, n.d.). At the primary education stage, the vision adopted in early childhood education is perpetuated, emphasizing an integral, holistic approach to learning processes (Fernández-Jiménez, 2023). This methodology aligns with the natural way in which pupils at this stage of schooling explore and understand their environment and its components, facilitating a broader understanding of the knowledge that can be gained (Arroyo et al., 2020). Furthermore, according to Jacobs (2019), when educators effectively integrate multiple disciplines, they not only increase the relevance of learning but also promote critical and creative thinking skills, which are essential for students' higher cognitive development.

Araya et al. (2019) stressed that the complexity of the contemporary world demands education that integrates human needs, thus contributing to the search for effective solutions. In this sense, it is essential that an interdisciplinary approach is promoted throughout the entire educational process, from initial teacher training to continuing professional development (Araya et al., 2019; Souza et al., 2022). In this regard, López-Peláez

(2020) emphasizes that teacher training must align with the challenges of 21st-century society, highlighting initial training as fundamental to developing transformative practices in the school environment.

Collaborative work among teachers is fundamental in this context. Baloche and Brody (2017) argued that teachers who form interdisciplinary teams share resources and strategies, which not only enrich their teaching experiences but also significantly improve their students' learning outcomes. This collaboration facilitates the creation of an integrated, cohesive learning environment, which is essential for addressing the diverse educational needs of today's students and fostering deeper, more connected learning.

It is particularly relevant to highlight the importance of establishing working groups as ongoing teacher education tools for collaboration among teachers in primary education schools. These groups not only contribute significantly to teachers' professional development but also enrich the educational environment, fostering effective interdisciplinary synergy. Composed of teachers from different subject areas, these working groups establish an interdisciplinary framework in which each subject contributes its specific expertise towards achieving common goals. This collaborative approach, therefore, not only optimizes educational resources but also promotes a more inclusive and meaningful learning environment for students. In this sense, collaborative work, facilitated by working groups, is an essential tool that fosters the integral development of students. For these reasons, collaborative work, mediated by these groups, is selected as a fundamental approach in contemporary educational practice (Bravo-Fuentes, 2025).

The purpose of this research is to analyze the educational potential of a music-centered interdisciplinary arts proposal designed within a collaborative working group. The study focuses not only on the general benefits and challenges of interdisciplinary collaboration, but also on the specific functions

attributed to music within the intervention. Music was conceived as an organizing and expressive element that connects bodily movement, dramatic action, and contributions from different curricular areas. The problem of practice addressed by the working group was bodily inhibition among pupils in Years 5 and 6. Accordingly, the study sought to: (1) explore music-based interdisciplinary practices that might support bodily expression and perceived disinhibition; and (2) implement and evaluate a didactic proposal designed for this purpose.

In activities linked to corporal expression, students may experience fear of making a fool of themselves. This feeling usually translates into the common reaction of inhibition, which reveals states of nervousness, insecurity, or rejection towards their execution.

The integration of drama and theatre activities in primary education facilitates the resolution of everyday situations through performance (et al., 2016). These activities promote communication skills, empathy, socialization, emotional expression, and group cohesion. They also stimulate creativity, critical thinking, and the formation of values by creating a safe environment for exploring ideas. Such practice is interdisciplinary, combining plastic, dramatic, and musical aspects that favor artistic expression. It also enhances communicative, linguistic, and psychomotor skills, while favoring the development of social skills and conflict resolution. These characteristics make arts integration ideal for promoting teamwork, cooperative learning, and reflection on emotions and the consequences of actions when facing various problems.

Within this interdisciplinary framework, music possesses characteristics that distinguish it from other possible organizing disciplines. Musical experience integrates temporal organization, bodily action, emotional meaning, and collective coordination. Rhythm and musical structure can provide a shared basis for movement, while variations in tempo and dynamics can support the representation of different emotional and narrative states.

Collective musical activity also reduces the sense of individual exposure by placing bodily action within a shared group framework. These characteristics are especially relevant when the educational purpose is to encourage bodily expression and address pupils' fear of ridicule or public exposure.

For these reasons, arts integration is essential for creating a classroom that fosters effective learning and offers resources and strategies that equip students to interact socially appropriately. Enabling primary education students to express themselves through their bodies, through uninhibited movements, will allow them to communicate emotions, feelings, and ideas, as well as to relate better to their environment and to other people. Students must learn to face new situations and overcome the fear of ridicule through activities that encourage free, creative, and collaborative behavior. Consequently, this research is based on the premise that didactic proposals must be meaningful and functional, allowing students to be the protagonists of their learning and favoring their social and emotional development (Heras, 2010).

2. Methodology

This research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Granada. In addition, the educational center also accepted and approved its execution and gave consent for it to be carried out.

The study addressed the following research questions: (1) What benefits and difficulties do teachers identify in the use of collaborative working groups for continuing professional development? (2) What benefits and challenges emerge during the implementation of a music-centered interdisciplinary proposal in the classroom?(3) How do pupils perceive and respond to the proposed activities? (4) What specific contribution do participants attribute to music in relation to bodily expression, participation, and perceived disinhibition?

2.1 Procedure

Our study was conducted from 01/11/2023 to 31/05/2024 by a working group at an educational center in the autonomous community of Andalusia, in collaboration with the Teacher Training Center in the northern area of the province of Granada, following the application, assessment, and acceptance of the project presented. The project also involved the participation of external trainers from the University of Granada and a research group from the Andalusian Regional Government.

The school in which the proposal was developed is a public school that provides infant, primary, and the first cycle of compulsory secondary education. Specifically, this research was implemented in the primary education stage for which the school has one line, i.e. one group of students per year.

The sample of participants included seven teachers from the school who acted as tutors and/or specialists in different areas such as physical education or foreign language, with the music education specialist coordinating the working group. After conducting this training, we hoped that the participating teachers would acquire the necessary knowledge to collaboratively design and implement school proposals for interdisciplinary, arts-integrated work across the different areas of the curriculum, with music as the center.

We carried out this study in two distinct phases. In the first phase, we examined various interdisciplinary teaching strategies and used them to devise a proposal to achieve bodily disinhibition among students. In the second phase, we implemented this proposal in the classroom with fifth- and sixth-grade classes.

The actions of the working group were carried out during the 2023/2024 academic year as follows:

- Identification of problems in the development of teaching activity: According to the Order of 6 September 2002, which establishes the framework of action of the Teacher Training

Centers to promote training in working groups and stimulate the consolidation of professional networks (Junta de Andalucía, 2002), the working groups are considered as an instrument for teacher training and the improvement of professional educational practice and are adapted to the context in which teaching is carried out, focusing "on the practical problems of teaching activity" (Junta de Andalucía, 2002, p. 19495). In this sense, at first, the possible problems to be tackled were evaluated, finally reaching a consensus on the development of a proposal aimed at the bodily disinhibition of students due to the observation of inhibited bodily, attitudinal and social behaviors in pupils in the third cycle of Primary Education.

-Exploration of innovative methodologies for this purpose and experimentation with different materials and equipment.

-Estimation of the possibilities of these materials for the classroom through brainstorming.

-Co-design of an interdisciplinary collaborative proposal focused on bodily disinhibition.

-Detailed elaboration of the proposal, specifying its pedagogical bases, conceptualization, resources needed to carry it out, competences involved, and phases of the work, including an evaluation of it.

- Implementation of the proposal with fifth- and sixth-year students.

- Evaluation of the proposal at the end of its execution.

2.2 Instruments

For this study, we utilized qualitative data collection tools of observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups, in accordance with the descriptive nature of our inquiry.

The observation was participant and non-participant, as a fundamental tool for the acquisition of data from the observation sheets produced within the framework of the

R+d+I project "Transversality, Creativity and Inclusion in School Music Projects: An Evaluative Research" (TCIEM). The semi-structured interview is considered a powerful methodological technique in qualitative research (da Silva and Barros, 2024), and is one of the most widely used data collection techniques in this type of research (Ibarra-Sáiz et al., 2023). It is worth noting that, according to Kallio et al. (2016), the interview guide was rigorously developed prior to conducting our study, which contributes to the objectivity and reliability of the data collected.

Focus groups are used to give students a voice (Bourne and Winstone, 2021) and can be used at all levels of education. In this sense, focus group discussions offer researchers the possibility to give visibility to a "more authentic" voice (Bourne and Winstone, 2021), providing an optimal framework for free expression.

All the information from the observation was collected first, followed by our assessment of teachers using a semi-structured interview with both the working group coordinator and the teaching staff. The interview was initially structured with nine questions that addressed two thematic axes: one being the teacher training process and the other being the teacher's recollection of student response during the implementation of the didactic proposal. Afterward, pupils were evaluated using focus groups by level, one for the fifth year of primary education and another for the sixth year. The focus group script had fifteen items grouped according to school activity, interdisciplinarity, the resources produced by the pupils, musical and artistic expression, and the competences worked on.

The qualitative data analysis software package *NVivo* was used to analyze the data from both the interviews and the focus groups. It is considered a useful and optimal tool for analyzing data from semi-structured interviews and for interpreting the information they contain (Lopezosa, 2020). It is also commonly used for analysis in other qualitative techniques such as focus groups.

3. Results

The data are presented below according to a system of categories resulting from the analysis of the interviews and focus groups. These are divided into five spheres. The first four are drawn from the interviews with the teachers and are: benefits of the working group, problems of the working group, particularities of the implementation of the didactic proposal in the classrooms, and other relevant issues. The fifth area corresponds to the students' contributions and analysis of the focus group data.

3.1 Benefits of group work

The teachers emphasized that one benefit of the working group was the ability to create an interdisciplinary proposal that would otherwise not have been possible. In this sense, the teachers say that this approach proved to be particularly enriching and rewarding, and made it possible to integrate different areas of knowledge around a common theme, thus benefiting the educational process for students and the planning process for teachers.

In addition, the school fostered greater communication among the teaching staff, leading to more effective coordination than usual, with a common goal: the implementation of a final interdisciplinary product. This process involved the joint invention of proposals and ideas, which greatly enriched the collaborative dynamics within the participating teaching team.

Collaboration among students of different levels was another characteristic highlighted by the teachers involved in this project, which facilitated an inclusive and diverse learning environment that leveraged the students' different perspectives and skills.

Finally, teachers highlight the significant challenges that this approach brought to educational practice, both individually

and as a group. They also emphasize how these challenges were successfully overcome, fostering a general atmosphere of satisfaction and motivation among teachers and reaffirming the value of collaborative and interdisciplinary initiatives in education.

3.2 Difficulties

This proposal entailed various logistical and coordination difficulties among the participating teachers that influenced its implementation. This is because one of the main difficulties encountered was the lack of time availability within the teachers' regular timetable, which is further complicated by the need to agree on timetables with external trainers. This challenge requires considerable effort to integrate all participants into a common time frame that allows for effective collaboration.

The coordination of activities during the implementation of the proposal involves several significant schedule adjustments, such as managing teacher substitutions, allocating reinforcement hours, and, in many cases, requiring teachers to spend extra hours at home outside their working hours. This intensification of work not only affects the workload of teachers, but also requires additional planning and management on the part of the school.

Additionally, preparing the teaching material and the proposal itself consume a considerable amount of time. Teachers' work and stress related to time constraints are further complicated by the bureaucratic procedures associated with working group regulations by the Andalusian Regional Government, which state that activity cannot begin before November and must end in May. This limits the availability to carry out the proposal. A possible solution from the teaching staff could be to start the working group earlier than usual and add practical sessions to compensate for the lost time and maximize the proposal's effectiveness.

Finally, although the required investment in materials is relatively low, it is still necessary to consider and plan for the financial and administrative resources needed to ensure that all necessary resources are available without imposing a significant financial burden on the school or teaching staff.

3.3 Classroom implementation

According to the teachers, the educational proposal, once implemented in the classroom, proved extremely positive. Students participated voluntarily, showing a high degree of gratification and motivation, which positively affected their response to the activity. Music played a key role as a motivating and stimulating element, contributing significantly to students' overall enjoyment and enthusiasm. Likewise, the teaching staff observed and confirmed a very favorable attitude among the students, who enjoyed the experience and approached the activity with a playful perspective.

This initiative allowed students to explore new forms of representation and corporal expression that differ from conventional methods, thereby promoting a positive attitude towards the content addressed and strengthening their self-confidence through the specific characteristics of the pedagogical proposal. Within this context, teachers perceive a greater willingness among pupils to participate in bodily and performative activities, along with fewer inhibited behaviors than before the intervention.

Further, unknown aspects of certain students were revealed, particularly those who do not generally stand out in other areas. These students showed a remarkable level of involvement and motivation, which has been recognized and appreciated.

The activity also served as a means for students to recognize their ability to achieve any goal. The children particularly enjoyed the opportunity to collaborate with students from other classes, carrying out their tasks cooperatively and without conflict.

This experience fostered students' creativity, encouraged entrepreneurial initiative, helped dissolve traditional gender roles, allowing free expression regardless of gender, and supported the development of digital competences.

3.4 Other issues

Aside from the benefits and problems encountered in the working group and the assessments derived from its classroom implementation, other issues relevant to this research are worth mentioning. Firstly, teachers consider that forming interdisciplinary work teams and developing music projects require a high level of motivation, specific interest, effective coordination, and clear, decisive leadership. In this sense, the synergy created through teamwork is essential and cannot be achieved individually.

Secondly, the teachers emphasize that the face-to-face environment greatly favors interaction and the exchange of ideas, elements they consider crucial to the success of projects of this nature. In this sense, we have found that the working groups achieve higher levels of efficiency and effectiveness when sessions are conducted face-to-face. Therefore, we recommend prioritizing this modality and avoiding the implementation of virtual sessions, which have not been carried out in this context. Physical presence strengthens the bonds between team members, facilitates conflict resolution, and allows for more fluid and direct communication, aspects that are less efficient in virtual environments. This face-to-face approach ensures that each participant can contribute optimally, making the most of group dynamics and fostering a creative and productive environment.

3.5 Student input

The project was very well received by the students, who were particularly enthusiastic about "performing", taking on

different roles, and collaborating both with each other and with students from different educational levels in carrying out a variety of activities. The dancing and the ability to act out different narratives, such as battle scenes, were highly valued, providing the students with a deeply enriching and rewarding experience.

The project's innovation directly attracted participants' attention and interest due to unique elements such as luminescent materials and a voice-over, which introduced a distinctive approach to the activity.

The students expressed overall satisfaction with all dimensions of the project and showed a clear desire to participate in similar activities in the future. They acquired vital lessons on the importance of ethical and social behaviors, such as refraining from bullying, reading stories and books, avoiding discriminatory attitudes, and promoting a peaceful environment without confrontation.

Specific tasks carried out included making various materials, e.g., hats and a boat, finding and selecting appropriate clothes, recording voice-over, acting out various scenes, and generating creative ideas for these activities. In addition, the students engaged in dialogue in another language (French), actively participated in dances and designed choreographies, which contributed significantly to the development of their linguistic and artistic skills.

The subjects involved in the project were diverse, covering Art Education, Language, Mathematics, French, and Values, all integrated into a global performance. Music played an essential role in the project's success, providing "action, movement, life" and preventing the experience from becoming monotonous. The incorporation of music enriched the project with elements of "intrigue, emotion, joy, mystery, terror...", thus increasing the emotional depth and aesthetic impact of the activity.

Finally, a remarkable facet of the project was the opportunity to express emotions and ideas through body movement, in the absence of verbal dialogue. This demonstrated that the activity is inclusive and accessible, allowing anyone, regardless of language or artistic ability, to participate and contribute meaningfully.

3.6 The specific contribution of music

Teachers and pupils distinguished the contribution of music from that interdisciplinary format as a whole. They described music as providing "action and movement" to the performance and as preventing the experience from becoming monotonous. They also associated it with the creation of different emotional and narrative atmospheres, including intrigue, joy, or mystery.

Music was particularly evident in the dances and choreographies and in the use of bodily expression to convey emotions and ideas. Participants highlighted the possibility of communicating through movement without relying on spoken dialogue. In this respect, music was perceived not merely as background accompaniment, but as an organizing and expressive component of the performance.

These findings reflect the functions attributed to music by the participants within the interdisciplinary proposal. They should not be interpreted as evidence that music alone produced the observed changes, since the intervention also included theatrical representation, visual materials, glow-in-the-dark elements, voice-over, group collaboration, and the production of a collective final performance.

4. Discussion

The findings indicate that the project produced two related but analytically distinct outcomes: benefits associated with interdisciplinary collaboration and functions attributed to music. At the organizational level, the working group

enabled teachers to connect curricular areas. At the pupil level, participants associated the experience with motivation, cooperation, creativity, and greater willingness to engage in bodily expression. These findings are consistent with research that presents interdisciplinary and collaborative curriculum design as a means of strengthening connections between areas of knowledge and increasing the relevance of learning (Jacobs, 2019; Arroyo et al., 2020).

The contribution of music, however, extended beyond the general advantages of interdisciplinarity. Teachers and pupils described music as providing action supporting dance and choreographic activity, and creating emotional and narrative atmospheres. Music therefore appears to have operated as a temporal, emotional, and expressive framework for bodily action. This function is particularly relevant to the initial problem of bodily inhibition, since pupils could participate in shared movement and non-verbal expression rather than relying exclusively on individual spoken performances. This interpretation is compatible with Hallam's (2010) account of the personal, social, and emotional dimension of musical engagement and with Fernández-Jiménez's (2023) view of music as a resource for connecting different curricular areas through a common creative process.

Nevertheless, the motivation and perceived reduction in inhibited behavior observed during the project cannot be attributed exclusively to music. The intervention also combined theatrical representation, visual production, costumes, voice-over, luminescent materials, collaboration between year groups, and the creation of a performance. The novelty of these elements and the opportunity to work towards a shared public product may also have influenced pupils' responses. The study therefore identifies the contribution that participants attributed to music within a complex interdisciplinary intervention; it does not demonstrate an isolated causal effect of music.

The findings concerning teacher collaboration broadly coincide with Baloche & Brody (2017), Arroyo et al. (2020), Araya et al. (2019), and Souza et al. (2022), who emphasize the labor-intensive nature of planning and the integration of disciplinary perspectives. The present study adds a more specific observation: the music specialist acted as a curricular mediator around whom the contributions of other subjects were organized. This coordination role may help to explain how music functioned as the central axis of the proposal. At the same time, the experience shows that interdisciplinary collaboration does not arise automatically; it depends on teacher motivation, clear leadership, protected planning time, and sustained coordination.

The organizational difficulties reported by teachers are also consistent with the concerns about administrative burden described by Alonso et al. (2022). In this case, limited time, timetable adjustments and the regulatory calendar of the working group reduced the period available for co-design and implementation. These barriers should therefore be understood not as evidence against interdisciplinary practice, but as contextual conditions that affected the feasibility of this particular intervention. The findings suggest that schools wishing to undertake similar projects may need protected coordination time and practical organizational support, rather than supporting broad conclusions about educational policy on the basis of a single case.

The main contribution of this study lies in documenting how an in-service teacher working group designed and implemented a music-centred interdisciplinary response to a specific problem of practice: bodily inhibition among pupils in the later years of primary school. It also distinguishes the functions attributed to music from the wider benefits of interdisciplinary work, while recognizing that both dimensions remained closely interconnected throughout the intervention.

4.1 Limitations and future research

This study has several limitations. It was conducted at a single public school and involved seven teachers and pupils from only two year groups. The findings are therefore context-specific and cannot be generalized to other schools. The qualitative design provided a detailed account of participants' experiences, but the study did not include a comparison group or validated pre- and post-intervention measures of bodily inhibition.

In addition, the teachers who implemented the proposal also contributed to its evaluation, which may have encouraged particularly favorable interpretations of the experience. The contribution of music could not be isolated from the theatrical, visual, collaborative, and performative components of the proposal. Consequently, the results should be understood as participants' perceptions of music's role within the intervention, rather than as evidence of an independent causal effect.

Future studies should examine similar interventions in several schools, include larger and more diverse samples, and combine qualitative evidence with systematic measures of participation, bodily expression, and inhibition over time. Comparative designs could also explore differences between music-centered projects and interdisciplinary proposals organized around other curricular areas.

Conclusion

Within the context of this case study, the music-centered interdisciplinary proposal was positively perceived by teachers and students. Thus, interdisciplinary working groups, with a central focus on music, represent a valuable pedagogical methodology within the field of Primary Education. These groups not only foster improved communication and coordination between teachers, but also stimulate active and motivated pupil participation, resulting in richer and more meaningful educational experiences. Participants associated the experience

with increased motivation, cooperation, and willingness to engage in bodily and performative activities. Music appeared to fulfill specific functions by supporting collective movement, facilitating non-verbal expression, and contributing to the emotional and narrative development of the final performance.

These findings should be interpreted cautiously. The study does not establish that music alone caused the observed changes, nor does it support generalization to all primary education settings. Rather, it provides a situated account of how music may operate as an organizing and expressive framework within an interdisciplinary project when teachers have opportunities for collaborative design and coordination.

For similar initiatives, the results point to the importance of protected planning time, clear coordination, and adequate organizational support. Further research across multiple schools, using comparative or mixed-methods designs, is needed to examine whether the perceived changes in participation, confidence, and bodily expression are sustained over time and whether they differ from those produced by other forms of interdisciplinary arts education.

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Funding

This work was supported by the MICIU/AEI/10.13039/501100011033 and by ERDF, EU, under Grant PID2021-128645OB-I00.

Publisher

Federal University of Goiás. School of Music. Graduate Program in Music. Publication in the Portal of Periodicals UFG.

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