

# Guitar Express: Accompanied “Songs of Deserts”<sup>1</sup> as Oases in Life-long Memory Journeys

Ioanna Etmektsoglou  
Ionian University, Greece

Kiki Kerzeli  
Greek National Opera Educational & Social Activities

Katerina Vlachoutsou  
Public Mental Health Center, Larissa, Greece

*Being able to play the guitar and sing one’s favorite songs is often an unrealized adolescent dream. Guitar Express is a group music making approach that aims to enable people to realize this dream and develop an identity of amateur musician regardless of age. This is achieved through the use of an alternate tuning of the guitar and a variety of ‘tricks’ that are being constantly developed to address individual and group needs. The following paper is informed by arts-based research and attempts to provide a general impression of the Guitar Express group approach. Based on the expressions of adults and senior aged adults who have participated in one or more of its groups—as well as the verbal contributions and interpretations of two teachers, a collaborating psychologist, and myself as initiator and supervisor of the program—the major benefits for the Guitar Express participants are, that a) it functions as a means for them to express and regulate their emotions, b) it counteracts feelings of isolation, c) it allows them to experience deeply personal and shared group moments, d) it provides opportunities for dealing and preparing for various kinds of losses, e) it helps people accept personal limitations while searching for alternative solutions, f) it improves the quality of everyday life through its infusion with collective musicking, and g) acts as motivator for involvement in a social music activity. At a more general level, the Guitar Express group experience may be seen as a musically driven journey into the linearity and circularity of time; it may revitalize the participants’ memories of their ‘songs of deserts’, transforming them to oases in personal life-stories, re-enabling connections with the past and augmenting meaningfulness in the present.*

Keywords: guitar, Guitar express, collective musicking, quality of life, everyday life

At last you want to do something for yourself! Something that will give you pleasure while sharing with others. You hear about a 'Guitar Express' group, and decide to give it a try. You always wanted to learn the guitar, to be the one accompanying the singing of friends in ordinary and special occasions; the one to accompany your own voice in the solitude of your room. Actually you had tried to learn the guitar when you were young, but it had not worked out. You remember your old guitar... 'it must be still in the attic' you think. You look for it... and you find it. You dust it with care. As you do, you resonate in synchrony with the dust particles that fly in the air. They form a fast moving cloud, uncovering old particles of your own past life. All of a sudden, another cloud is being formed, holding together the humidity of hanging tears. Yet, you don't cry. You wonder whether your guitar is still alive and give it a gentle strum. Yes, it still has a voice; a rather inharmonious, but real voice! You ask a friend to change the old rusty strings. Off you go with your old/new guitar and your old/new self to the GE group. On your way to class, negative thoughts creep in your mind, such as: I will be the oldest one in the group and I will not be able to follow the rest; they will use music notation, but I hardly remember the names of the notes from grade school; I will not be able to play and sing at the same time; I will be exposed, singled out; I will fail again! I will fail!!! By the time you enter the room, your guitar has already grown to become unbearably heavy. You sit hesitantly on an empty chair in the circle of the buzzing room. As you try to catch your breath, your eye gaze catches the welcoming, reassuring smile of the young teacher... and here, begins your story in *Guitar Express*; your second chance for an active, embodied, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, social, cultural and political musical life.

Our introductory passage is a 'factional' story (Gouzouasis and Ryu 2014) that mingles factual research information with fictional writing elements, in an attempt to present a distilled, composite personal experience of many different people who as adults, or older adults, decided to try out the *Guitar Express* program. But, before entering further into the examination of the participants' experience in *Guitar Express*, we will present a short introduction to the program itself and the context of its development.

### ***Guitar Express*: Identity and Origins**

*Guitar Express* is a quick, group guitar approach for song accompaniment, suitable for people of different ages and ability levels. The aim of *Guitar Express (GE)* is not to replace traditional guitar methods, but to enable people—who have so far experienced music as passive receivers—to engage actively in group music making.

Etmektsoglou, Ioanna, Kiki Kerzeli, and Katerina Vlachoutsou. 2019. *Guitar Express: Accompanied 'Songs of Deserts' as oases in life-long memory journeys*. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 18 (2): 25–56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22176/act18.2.25>

This is accomplished through the use of an alternate guitar tuning, which makes playing the guitar much easier. As a result, the members of a group manage to accompany a song with their guitars immediately during the first lesson. The program started in 2013 at the Department of Music of the Ionian University (Corfu, Greece). It came as a result of years of research, which I have been conducting with the aim to develop experiential ways of engaging non-musicians in active music making. My research led me to an article by Krout (1999) about the use of alternate guitar tunings in the context of music therapy. Of these tunings, I chose one, which I assumed would be most suitable for applications in music education or community music contexts. Having experimented with this way of accompanying initially myself, I then expanded the experimentation by incorporating this approach to a homework assignment in the undergraduate class “*Introduction to Psychology of Music*,” which I teach at the Ionian University. The assignment involved teaching an adult non-musician to sing a song and accompany himself/herself on the guitar in just four lessons. The student-teachers had to use an alternate tuning in G minor (D Bb G D G D), videotape their lessons, and describe the process of learning as well as their feelings and thoughts and those of their students with regard to the GE approach. Very quickly after this initial pilot testing in one-to-one teaching, the first *Guitar Express* group was formed in the local community of Corfu. Since then, a variety of GE groups were formed in Corfu and in other Greek towns (e.g. Kavala and Athens), focusing on primary school children, adolescences, teachers of special education, and to a greater extent on adults and older adults.

### *Experimental Journey on the Tracks of the ABER Train*

My main motivation for experimentally entering the realm of Arts Based Educational Research (ABER) was that it claimed a space for imagination in academic research writing. In trying to be 'scientific,' educational research methodologies to a large extent have tended to stress linear thinking and a contrived technical language that is accessible only to select scholars and very few non-academics. Allowing poetic imagination to enter research methodologies such as the ABER could be a means toward opening our minds to possibilities (Greene 2007), and opposing “the apartheid logic of black and white” (Greene 1994, 495). In reading about a/r/tography, a hybrid form of action research that was first developed in the visual arts, I found myself identifying with living a life of inquiry as an artist, researcher,

and teacher (Springgay, Irwin, and Kind 2005; Gouzouasis 2006). To the complexity presented in our constant effort to understand these roles, their dialogues, and shifting qualities, I found a further complexity added by my two other professional identities, that of a music psychologist and music therapist. I realized that these roles could potentially enrich the inquiry by adding different perspectives and associated theories and practices, but at the same time, they introduced an increased complexity. It seemed as if they augmented my impression of engaging “with a continual process of not-knowing, of searching for meaning that is difficult and in tension” (Springgay, Irwin, and Kind, 902).

Acting as a child let free at a candy shop, I did not choose only one kind of candy, but I picked several that I thought I might like to employ. In my general approach to the present paper, I use a literary style of writing intermixed with a more 'formal academic' style, and to a lesser extent a documentary styled video as means to represent data. In the context of poetic inquiry, de Vries (2007), Langer and Furman (2004), and Prendergast, Gouzouasis, Leggo, and Irwin (2009) have provided examples of representing data through poetry, while Bakan (2013) explored the potential of song to “render meaning, teach, address ethical issues, and enhance knowledge-communities” (1). I could not, however, identify my work strictly as poetic inquiry, as I used parts of existing song lyrics, which I then transformed more or less to make them become meaningful bridges for the presentation and interpretation of the themes that emerged from the data. Metaphor, which according to Barone (2001) is an aesthetic design element in the broader category of “expressive rhetorical strategies and devices” (25), was indeed a device which permeated my writing in specific instances but also at a more holistic level at which an *express train* stands in as a metaphor for *Guitar Express*,<sup>2</sup> and a *song* stands for an oasis in the desert of memories. Finally, my recent introduction to autoethnographic and duo/multi ethnographic inquiry (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2010; Gouzouasis, Irwin, Miles, and Gordon 2013; Gouzouasis and Regier 2015; Gouzouasis and Ryu 2014; Gouzouasis and Yanko 2018; Gagné, Bakbak, Chahroor, and Wattar 2018; Lund, Holmes, Hanson, Sitter, Scott, and Grain 2017) and ethnodrama (Saldaña 2008; Gouzouasis, Henrey, and Belliveau 2008), inspired me to attempt the short introduction of the 'adult' who decides to try out the *GE*. During my foray into ABER and a/r/tography, I gathered some specific tools, but more

importantly I developed a sense of freedom to use metaphor and apply parts of song lyrics as poetic organizers of the research findings.

### *The Video*

[Video link]

In Arts Based Educational Research, video or film has been used as a strategy or medium for teaching and learning (Saldaña 2009; Gagné, Bakbak, Chahroor, and Wattar 2018), and as means for data representation (Gagné, Bakbak, Chahroor, and Wattar 2018). The video of the present study was not approached from an artistic point of view, but rather was created mainly as a vehicle for the representation of the musical experience of *GE* participants. It is a short version of a non-professional, documentary-like form that was created as part of the five-year celebration of *Guitar Express*. Kiki Kerzeli—a former university student, *Guitar Express* teacher, and research collaborator—directed the film. Its linked, condensed version forms an integral part of the current paper and aims to present some of the themes that emerged from the *Guitar Express* experience as described by adult and older adult members of such groups. The inclusion of video excerpts from the participants' responses to open-ended questions on a questionnaire is intended to more authentically represent the emotional qualities of participants' unique personal experiences as well as a nuanced sense of the collective experience.

The multi-modal nature of the video enables the viewer and listener to access simultaneously textual and contextual information such as the timbre of the voice, its melodic and rhythmic variations, its silences, hesitations, crescendi, diminuendi, stresses, as well as the eye gaze, the way of presenting one-self in terms of clothes and accessories, the manner of moving while speaking, and the background of the room. In other words, it enables the viewer to access the *embodied, contextual, cultural, and even political reality*. Reavey (2011) supports that visual researchers place an emphasis on addressing participants as active agents in the research process. Our choice of presenting data through video may have indeed increased opportunities for the participants to invest their presentations with emotionality, because they identified themselves as co-creators of the research film.

The elements of the video, which may be interpreted as carrying meaning beyond the words and songs, are twofold. First, the movement between different

groups and contexts during the performance of a single song, which could be interpreted as an artistically driven research choice, that highlights the relevance and shared meanings of these songs for people of different ages, who live in different areas of Greece. The second element relates to the existence of a blank, white music staff-board and a black metal music-stand at a corner of the music library of the Ionian University, which formed the background 'against' which the study participants were situated when asked to talk about their experiences. This choice of props was made rather instinctively by a volunteer student videographer, who not knowing about the *GE* program, attempted to create 'a musical background.' It is interesting to note the artistic and cultural significance attached to the music stand in performances, at least in Western countries. This significance could be also inferred by its use as important prop in the autoethodrama work by Saldaña (2008) entitled *The second chair*. Set against the reality of the *GE* program, which never employed a music-staff board during lessons, while many times chairs or coffee tables were used as replacements for non-existing music stands, this antithesis may problematize us about the current public view on music amateurism as necessarily dependent on traditional 'classical' music notation, and about the possible meaningful connections between group community musicking and a music department of a Greek university.

The people who speak on the video, or who are represented in the present paper through parts of their written statements, were selected purposefully because they covered a wide range of ages (42–75 years of age).<sup>3</sup> Also, they were self-motivated to share their experiences. The songs, which are interwoven between the interview excerpts on the video, were selected based on aesthetic criteria by Kiki Kerzeli. At a later time, in an attempt to contextualize the data and find a way to communicate the basic themes in a meaningful and artistically playful way, I thought of looking into the song lyrics to search for possible connections. Initially, this act seemed to be rather arbitrary, but artistically attractive. However, while reflecting on the song lyrics, I started recognizing possible embedded meanings, some of which might be pertinent to *Guitar Express* or analogous music groups in other cultural contexts, while others might be more or less unique to such groups, when actualized in the context of the Greek culture.

### *Researchers' Tools*

The text-related data for this video were derived from participants' written answers to open ended questions of a questionnaire that was administered at the end of their membership in a *Guitar Express* group, and to other participants at the end of the first phase of their membership. Having read repeatedly a large number of answers from *Guitar Express* students, which we had gathered during the last 4 years, we decided (with Kiki, then a student teacher) to include in the video the ones that revealed most vividly and in depth the potential benefits of the *Guitar Express* for adults and older adults. The study's participants were not members of the same group, but had participated in one of the *Guitar Express* groups in either Corfu or Kavala, between 2014 and 2018. The group members who appear speaking on the video are the learners who were still living in Corfu and were willing to share on camera what they had written about this experience in their past. Even though the contributions of some individuals were more spontaneous than those of others, they were asked to stay focused as much as possible on the main message of their written comments, so that we could ensure that a variety of issues were covered while avoiding too much overlap. In listening to and interpreting the words of the participants, one should take into consideration the fact that they were initially written in their own time at home, close to the final session of the group experience. Another set of data consisted of the summative comments of the two student teachers (Kiki Kerzeli: KK and Georgia Spanou: GS), the collaborating psychologist (Katerina Vlachoutsou: KV) and myself (IE). The latter comments are aimed at presenting the *Guitar Express* approach in its educational, research, and community music contexts, while also revealing our own professional and personal unique perspectives about its meaningfulness.

### **The *Guitar Express* Train is On Its Way**

While writing this paper, two major ideas were situated to ground my thoughts: Gouzouasis's (2013) idea of 'becoming pedagogical' and Eisner's (1991) conceptualization of educational programs as studios. '*Becoming pedagogical*' resonated strongly with the way I have been approaching my personal continuing education, as well as the education of my university students who chose to become involved in the *Guitar Express* groups. For our small research team, it has been a reflective

and reflexive journey into being different, understanding and appreciating differences in others, teaching people with various needs and learning from them; a journey into becoming a better listener, musician, teacher, researcher and human being; an ongoing journey that was not confined at the university during office hours, and an experience that possessed characteristics of 'social flow' (Walker 2010). As problems, possibilities, and 'aha' moments would reveal themselves in the studios of *Guitar Express* groups or in someone's personal study and experimentations, the excitement of sharing 'pieces of the puzzle' could not wait for the next arranged meeting. Thus, they were communicated through informal discussions, phone calls, and electronic messages that contained text, images, and the occasional short video clip. For me this '*becoming pedagogical*' is being actualized at three levels—that of the teacher supervisor, the co-teacher, and the member of a *Guitar Express* group (as learner and participant-observer).

The second background idea that has assisted me in defining the *Guitar Express* group approach, came from reading Eisner's (1991) statement, "Educational programs, I learned from the arts, should not be modeled after the standardized procedures of the factory; the studio is a better image" (19). In thinking about the *Guitar Express* approach, we were troubled about what to call it. Eisner's concept of an educational program in the image of a *studio*, seemed to represent best the nature of a *Guitar Express* group, as it captures its quality as a systematic, yet creative, ever adjusting (s)p(l)ace (de Cosson 2004). I could now visualize and imagine hearing this special music studio as being located onboard an express train. So, '*Come all aboard the Guitar Express train! First stop, Mount Olympus.*'

**But the good Zeus  
takes from her the water of adolescence  
turns her to a cloud and disperses her  
so that they won' t find her.<sup>4</sup>**

*Some wishes and life dreams  
seem to vanish...  
along with the loss of adolescence,  
when Zeus takes away the water  
of this important phase of our life-cycle.  
Some of these life-dreams,  
however,*



*do not really vanish;  
just seem to stay hidden  
somewhere in our memory,  
dormant, with no water to nourish them,  
so that they could grow and take form in reality.*

For many adults or older adults, to learn to play a musical instrument, and often the guitar, seems to be one of these important, yet frequently dormant, adolescent dreams. This dream often becomes re-awakened through participation in *Guitar Express*. In the group, members find the precious water, the rich soil, and the appropriate climate for their music dreams to grow into reality. They tend to come with excitement about the possibility of realizing the old dream, but also seem to carry with them fears about possible failure in making the dream come true, because of age limitations (i.e. physical problems related to arthritis or other illness), sensory limitations (i.e. reduced hearing and/or visual sensitivity), and cognitive limitations (i.e. memory problems). In addition to such individual parameters, there might be others that depend on the functions and values that a particular culture adopts about music and musicians within specific social and historical contexts (Sloboda 2005).

There is evidence that music specialization existed since ancient times in Greece, but at the same time, active music making seemed to be valued as part of education, as leisure activity for amateurs, and for the accompaniment of songs in everyday life (Baines 1992, 200).<sup>5</sup> In Western countries, the roles and status of amateur and professional musicians, as well as those of listeners, have changed throughout history. According to Small (1998), the emergence of full-time professional symphony orchestras in the mid 19th century Europe and USA empowered professional musicians while disempowering amateurs. Those changes seem to have affected the musical life and education in Greece as well. Additionally, in the beginning of 20th century, the establishment of Music Conservatories (e.g. Odeia), encouraged the enrollment of children in a system of music training which seemed to aim primarily in the development of professional musicians. In that context, many children would not succeed to meet the demands of a strict curriculum and often stopped taking music lessons after a few years. In other words, there was not much allowance for the education of the amateur musician in an Odeion. In consideration, it was not so unexpected that many adults who joined the *GE* reported

Etmektsoglou, Ioanna, Kiki Kerzeli, and Katerina Vlachoutsou. 2019. Guitar Express: Accompanied 'Songs of Deserts' as oases in life-long memory journeys. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 18 (2): 25–56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22176/act18.2.25>

negative, music education stories in their youth, which in turn were detrimental for the development of their future music identities as young people and adults. The over-emphasis on the training of professional musicians by the Odeion in Greece, and later on by some university music departments, was considerably balanced by the Community Music Societies that include bands, choirs, and other instrumental, vocal, and dance ensembles. Community music groups aim to be inclusive and support the development of amateur musicians. Older adults could have access to the latter groups, but not so easily if they had not been members since their younger years. Such a 'late' access to instrumental-vocal group music making and education could be more possible in *GE*, as it specializes in an individualized, problem solving teaching approach that aims at maximum inclusion.

The above limitations in most cases prove not to be catastrophic in the attainment of the dream to become a musician, given the special conditions of *Guitar Express* and the students' persistence and motivation to succeed. When the initial fears disappear and the students realize that they can really turn their dream to reality, it seems as if they have discovered anew *their hidden pond with the water of adolescence*. With glowing faces they admit, 'Its never too late!' This experience seems to contribute to their need for *self-actualization* (Maslow 1943), in the sense of enabling them to materialize an important aspect of what they wanted to be in life: a musician, 'even if' this had to be 'an amateur musician.' Their 'amateur' music identity is derived from their sustained efforts and commitment in the *Guitar Express* group, in the context of what Stebbins (1992) refers to as '*serious leisure*,' a type of leisure that may lead to significant personal psychological and social benefits.

However, *Guitar Express* does not limit its scope to amateurizing<sup>6</sup> as serious leisure (Stebbins 1992), but approaches amateurizing openly as Regelski (2007) purports, aiming to "encourage musicking of all kinds, at all levels of expertise, as a valid musical practice of laypersons" (43). Thus, while encouraging participants to practice at home and strive for aesthetically rewarding music experiences in practice and performance, it is also inclusive of people who, for their own reasons, might approach it more as casual leisure. As Small (1998) supports, musicking "is not concerned with valuation. It is descriptive, not prescriptive" (9). In *GE*, some group members might demonstrate a *serious* commitment by their regular, timely and active presence in lessons and a more *casual* commitment to their home

practice. From their sustained commitment in being members of the group, one could infer that it must offer them meaningful experiences in the context of music.

Zeus might be powerful enough to take away our adolescence as we grow older, but he cannot take away the songs we sang and listened to when we were adolescents or young adults. We get to keep music with us almost forever; especially the popular songs of our youth (23–24 years of age) that tend to remain our favorite music for the rest of our life (Holbrook and Schindler 1989; Russell 1997). We repeat, re-create and re-contextualize these songs throughout the stages of our young adulthood, adulthood, and older adulthood. Based on research findings, as well as the expressed preferences of adults and older adults in *Guitar Express* groups, popular songs of youth form the main part of our repertory. Being sensitive to the musical preferences of individuals is one of the aspects a *Guitar Express* teacher has to consider in the process of *becoming pedagogical*. Many other aspects regarding teaching music to adults and older adults are worthy of our attention as they reveal themselves through encounters in the *studio*. Some of them make us reconsider stereotypes about aging and approach every student with a fresh perspective, regardless of age-expected limitations. In that line of thought, I share an embarrassing, yet thought provoking story of an event I experienced recently.

### “We are not ‘hyper-aged’”

During the first presentation of the *GE* documentary film (long version) in Athens, I made the mistake to report that the *Guitar Express* had been applied among other groups, to groups of ‘υπερήλικες’ (‘eeyperilikes,’ hyper-aged). I do not like the word ‘υπερήλικας’ in Greek (‘eeyperilikas’), as it seems to carry negative connotations in our modern times which tend to value high levels of physical fitness and much less so wisdom. In this respect, ‘ενήλικας’ (‘enilikas,’ adult) is being often perceived as one who is going through the ‘target age,’ ‘ηλικιωμένος’ (‘eelikiomènos,’ aged) is one who has completed it, and ‘υπερήλικας’ is one who has well passed it and moves toward decline and death.<sup>7</sup> In the evening of my presentation, the audience included several of the members of our *Guitar Express* group for 65+, who were indeed over age 75. However, they were one of my best audiences ever—listening attentively, asking questions, sharing their thoughts, singing and moving when asked, and being ready to come up on the stage and demonstrate how they work in their *Guitar Express* lesson. I definitely perceived

Etmektsoglou, Ioanna, Kiki Kerzeli, and Katerina Vlachoutsou. 2019. Guitar Express: Accompanied ‘Songs of Deserts’ as oases in life-long memory journeys. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 18 (2): 25–56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22176/act18.2.25>

not a sense of being on the verge of decline—I only felt respect, enthusiasm, and a sense of hope for what life could also be for me when I will reach that age. No, certainly they were not 'hyper-aged' ('υπερήλικες'—fourth age), and most of them did not even communicate a sense of being 'aged' ('ηλικιωμένοι'—third age). It is likely for this reason that a woman from the audience in her 70's came up to me and said that she and her group do not like to be called 'hyper-aged.' Fair enough, I had learned a very important lesson—*Zeus might have the power to take away the water of adolescence, but he cannot take the hidden pond...*

**Love me,  
as much as you can, love me<sup>8</sup>**

*A plea for love through a song.  
A song becomes a means for expressing  
this very basic and universal need:  
the need to be loved.*

Music expresses, communicates (Mithen 2009) and modifies emotions. It has the power to induce emotions to the listener, perhaps because it resembles in several respects the human voice, while at the same time, may exceed it in terms of speed, intensity, and timbre (Juslin and Laukka 2003). According to Juslin and Västfjäll (2008), one way that music induces emotions to the listener is through *emotional contagion* that takes place when “the listener perceives the emotional expression of the music, and then 'mimics' this expression internally, which [...] leads to an induction of the same emotion” (565). Music immediately activates many neurons in the brain and therefore may arouse strong and diverse emotions (Perrone-Capano, Volpicelli, and di Porzio 2017). It is often being used purposefully for emotional regulation (van Goethem and Sloboda 2011; DeNora 1999), while it may also counteract feelings of isolation and loneliness (Hays 2005). The *Guitar Express* groups provided the context for possible satisfaction of some of '*the love needs*' (Maslow 1943), mainly because of the aforementioned 'emotional' qualities of music, but also because they offered to each of their members a place in the group, and especially in a music group, which through entrainment and shared musical preferences promotes a sense of sharing and belonging—a sense of being loved.

**What should I do with their honors?  
their theatrical words?  
On my mind's screen,  
paper idols, dead.**

*Relationships and social recognition  
loose their importance  
when they are judged as hypocritical,  
meaningless,  
dead*

Adults and older adults, who might be experiencing significant life changes and deaths of close relatives or friends, often search for meaningful social relationships. Sharing a “thirst for knowledge,” “the thirst for music,” the “thirst for joy,” seem to be foundations for meaningful social relationships in the context of *Guitar Express*, despite admitted considerable differences among individuals. The characterization of the group as *participatory* rather than *presentational*, according to Turino's (2008) definition, affords valuing “social interaction as integral to the musical experience” (Giebelhausen and Kruse 2017, 4). Group members are not there only to advance their music skills, but also to socialize and have fun, qualities that also have been observed in ukulele community music groups (ibid).

*Group musicking*<sup>9</sup>

The act of musicking makes possible various types of relationships for the people who are present, relationships between individuals, between individuals and the society, but also between humanity and the natural world and perhaps even with the supernatural world (Small 1998). Music stimulates the release of oxytocin, a 'social' hormone, creating group consciousness (Perrone-Capano et al. 2017). One of music's main evolution-based functions is to increase social bonds (Mithen 2009). According to Pavlicevic (2003), “group musicking provides deeply personal, private, as well as collective musical and emotional experiences” (104). Music's unique adaptive value lies in its potential to “override individuality for the benefit of the group” (Peretz 2006, 24). Unlike speech, which becomes unintelligible when several people speak at the same time, music affords simultaneous singing and dancing based on the unique qualities of its melodic intervals and its

Etmektsoglou, Ioanna, Kiki Kerzeli, and Katerina Vlachoutsou. 2019. *Guitar Express: Accompanied 'Songs of Deserts' as oases in life-long memory journeys.* *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 18 (2): 25–56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22176/act18.2.25>

organized rhythm. It makes possible group experiences, while allowing to some extent the autonomy of the singing voices, the moving bodies (Brown 2000, in Peretz 2006), and even the heterogeneity of meaning (Cross 2001). Therefore, individuals may experience their own thoughts and associations, while at the same time, sharing a common musical experience with the group.

Playing a musical instrument in a group may be understood as a form of *social entrainment*,<sup>10</sup> between the students, the teacher-coach, but also the music group as a whole. The communicated signals include musical sounds and hand-body movements while playing the instrument. In *Guitar Express* groups, social entrainment functions as a natural 'teaching tool' that facilitates the development of the playing technique of individuals, who experience difficulties but learn by watching and helping each other. It may also result in improved expressive qualities of the group sound, through collective musicking, that fosters what is referred to as '*primitive emotional contagion*' (Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson 1993; Hatfield, Bensman, Thornton, and Rapson 2014).

The *Guitar Express* music group is being described by participants as a place "to forget" reality and its problems, to do "something for one's self," "to express feelings that were 'choked,'" "to share in playing and singing with different people," and "to try and discover what one can do." It could be seen as a *playroom* for adults, what Winnicott (2005/1971) would refer to as a *transitional space*, where people exist and communicate in a state in-between reality and fantasy, a place where a person continues learning about the others and himself/herself, and is given the chance to try out new sides of his/her identity; a place that absorbs difficulties but also allows people to transform themselves. This transformation is apparent in the sayings of many group members, especially in terms of acquiring a more positive outlook in their everyday lives. Given the group condition, one could argue that *self-actualization* (Maslow 1943) might emerge not only as result of a personal highly valued experience but also as a result of an analogous collective music experience afforded by the *Guitar Express* group.

**Ah, Margarita,<sup>11</sup> daughter of May,**  
**Ah, Margarita, daughter of May**  
**Ah, Margarita, you enchantress<sup>12</sup>**

*Ah, Margarita, You, daughter of May,  
 flower of Spring,  
 daughter of creative powers,  
 musical flower  
 Ah, Margarita, You, enchantress  
 You leave no one out  
 Your chants drawing all to music*

But what sort of tricks can be developed in the *Guitar Express* studio to ensure that *Margarita's* “*enchantment*” is transformed into an active, embodied experience for all group participants?

### *Alternate tuning and other tricks*

*Guitar Express* members refer to the program as an easy and quick way to learn to accompany songs on the guitar. In designing the *Guitar Express* method, a major goal was to make possible for the participants to accompany and sing at least one song from the first lesson. This was a way to ensure sustainment of *enchantment* and motivation during the difficult initial phase; at the time when members of the group would have to deal with an unknown instrument and a new method of making music with it, while at the same time singing. An alternate tuning was our initial trick. Barre playing (i.e. placing the index finger across an entire fret to form a chord) seemed to me the simplest, and therefore I experimented mainly with tuning the guitar in G major and G minor. G major tuning seemed to be quite easy for many children’s songs, but G minor provided more possibilities as one could play both minor and major chords. The minor chords, are played barre with the index finger, while the major ones are performed by adding the middle finger to the second string, at the fret following the barre finger.

The barre playing provided quick and easy access to music accompaniment, and also it was simple to learn and remember at a cognitive level. At the same time, it was difficult on the hand, as one needed to exert equal pressure on all strings with the index finger, something that often proved to be difficult for untrained and less strong and flexible fingers, especially if there were also problems of arthritis. It also resulted in a not so pleasant, muffled sound, originating from half pressed strings. A variety of 'tricks' were used to counteract this problem, such as the playing only of the three lower -in space- strings (d, b-flat, g) by some members of the

group, the protection of the barre finger with homemade cardboard or plastic covers, or even the use of professional and homemade capos or slides. These and other such tricks (see also Leist 2015) keep being introduced by the *music alchemist* in his/her *Guitar Express* studio, as part of materializing *Margarita's enchantment* for all group members.

**And I won't miss you  
cause my soul will be  
the song of the desert  
that will follow you.<sup>13</sup>**

*I won't miss you,  
because like a song of the desert  
I will always be with you  
I won't miss you,  
because the song,  
my oasis,  
will help me keep you alive  
forever.*

As humans we have a very intimate and deeply rooted relationship with voice and song. At an ontogenetic level, music's highly relational and communicative nature is evidenced in the mother-infant vocalizations and movement exchanges (Trevarthen and Aitken 2001). From very early on, even prenatally, we are exposed to songs. Parents use songs to help modulate their infant's emotional state and level of arousal (Shenfield, Trehub, and Nakata 2003), to direct its attention, to teach new things, to share fun times. As we grow older, songs follow us through life, in a way of helping us keep a memory record of life-important events and contributing to our sense of identity and connection with the past (DeNora 1999). Most people listen to their *songs of the desert*, but not all of them sing them, as some might have developed early in life the false belief that they are 'tone deaf' and cannot sing (Wise and Sloboda 2008). *Guitar Express* groups seem to create a safe environment for the uncertain singers, as their voice is being 'supported' by other voices and the guitar accompaniment.

Even though our preference for certain songs might be based on aesthetic, music-related criteria (i.e., intrinsic parameters) (Meyer 1956), perhaps more often it



is based on non-musical (i.e., extrinsic parameters)—namely, arbitrary relationships between a particular song and an external non-musical event that carries for us high emotional significance (Sloboda and Juslin 2001). Davies (1978) refers to these associative theories as “*Darling, they're playing our tune*” theories. It is because of these strong mnemonic associations that certain songs might evoke very strong emotional reactions to particular members of a music group, while leaving others rather untouched. Beyond the common core of repertory favorites for a particular age group, based on its youth hits (Holbrook and Schindler 1989; Russell 1997), members of the *Guitar Express* group often approach the teacher with 'special requests' for songs, which they seem to want very much to learn for reasons they might share or not. They tend to communicate an urgency to learn as many of 'their' songs as soon as possible.

The ability to *keep revisiting our songs of the desert*, stands very strong against the hardships of even a lengthy life-journey. In older adults, there seems to be a strong relationship between emotion and memory regarding old popular songs, even though the elicited memories tend to lack specificity (Schulkind, Hennis, and Rubin 1999). Long term memory, which is responsible for recalling songs of the past, appears not to be affected substantially even in cases of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's or other dementias (Perrone-Capano et al. 2017). Adding to our list of *songs of the desert*, might also be possible when working with older adults. As we grow older, it might be less easy to learn new information, but if it is presented in ways that stimulate curiosity and interest, it seems to be quite possible (Galli et al. 2018). The introduction of new, unfamiliar songs in the repertoire of the *Guitar Express* group does not happen very often, but sometimes comes as a natural consequence of the inclusion of someone's favorite song which is not known to the entire group. Also the teacher at times might introduce to the group an unfamiliar song, because of its aesthetic-expressive value.

**You left and went away,  
clouds shadowed the heart,  
the songs faded out from the lips,  
the flowers withered all around...<sup>14</sup>**

*You left  
You ran away*

*You fled the country*  
*Our relationship ended*  
*You grew up and went to the university*  
*You left me alone in this life*  
*You died.*  
*My heart is overcast.*  
*My songs of the desert stopped coming through.*  
*The music pond is empty.*  
*No water for the flowers*  
*they died too.*

Loss is a major theme throughout our lives, but tends to be an essential life-challenge for adults and older adults. Songs that refer to different kinds of losses are embedded in the repertory of *Guitar Express* groups, and could be seen metaphorically as '*musical homeopathic remedies*' that allow participants to experience small dosages of loss as they empathize with the unknown song hero and the sad music that describes his/her sufferings. Members of the *Guitar Express* group who have experienced important losses, seem to have used the group as a diversion or as a *space* to re-engage with life.

The *safety needs* that form the lower part of Maslow's (1943) pyramid, are met perhaps in less obvious ways in *Guitar Express* groups. According to Welch (2005), regular singing activities may provide a sense of pattern and order and function as a contrast to the routines of one's regular weekly schedule. In a similar way, the regularity and continuity of the *Guitar Express* group meetings might be creating a sense of *safety* to older adults, by acting in systematic and positive contrast to the numerous internal and external changes that often seem to threaten established routines and the sense of stability in everyday life.

**Colors, colors,**  
**leave the deeds alone.**  
**Colors, colors,**  
**colors and fragrances.<sup>15</sup>**

*Colors, colors,*  
*colors and fragrances,*  
*colors and timbres*  
*of sounds?*

Sensory stimuli by themselves, or especially when organized in artistic forms, may attract our interest and lead to aesthetic experiences. In music, aesthetic listening happens when a person “perceives, understands, enjoys and evaluates a musical event” (Reybrouck, Vuust, and Brattico 2018, 107). Aesthetic experiences in music seem to add 'quality' to life, and constitute the necessary condition for the realization of music's contributions to human well-being and health (ibid). One of the important challenges for the *Guitar Express* teacher is to create for individuals the necessary conditions so that they experience that the music they play and sing is 'beautiful', despite the often limited musical resources of the group. Some of the ways to achieve this, have been through creative instrumentations, invitation of professional musicians or university music students as guests in some class meetings or for performances, and a musically interesting teacher's playing approach, in terms of providing accompaniment and short solos or melodic fillings. As in other music teaching-learning contexts, “to teach music effectively, a teacher must possess, embody, and exemplify musical understanding” (Elliott 2009, 172). Research has shown that older adults seem to prefer live rather than recorded accompaniment in music groups (Moore, Staum, and Brotons 1992). Based on that preference, the teacher seems necessary to function at the same time as a coach, a conductor, and an accompanist-soloist.

**How I like this sun  
How I like this sun  
How I like the morning.  
And the friend is a pain  
and the friend is a pain  
who shouts 'ekdromi!' (let's go out!)**<sup>16</sup>

*You like the sun and the morning  
You view it behind the window  
its hard to step out/doors...  
Despite your complains,  
you might need your friend  
to shout to you 'ekdromi!'  
Let's go for an excursion!*

'Εκδρομή' (excursion, outing) is a very positively weighted word for most Greeks, since during their school days it meant a day off, when all the school goes to a place where usually the students have the space and time to play games outdoors with their friends, and to socialize in the proximity of their teachers until the end of the school day. When the excursion is not *decided for* a person as it happens in school, he/she has to decide himself/herself to claim it, or wait for a friend to 'drag' him/her out for it. A participatory music group (Turino 2008) such as the *Guitar Express* might function as the friend who 'shouts' for excursion. It might offer a much-needed excursion from life's daily challenges and routines, a positive break, a creative and social sanctuary. With time, relationships tend to develop between members, so indeed, if one does not come to a class meeting, he/she would receive phone calls to make sure that he/she is all right and if so, to shout to him/her: let's go 'εκδρομή'!

*“Now I will not just listen to music, but I will also play myself.”*

According to Creech, Hallam, McQueen and Varvarigou (2013), “active music making has been found to provide a source of enhanced social cohesion, enjoyment, personal development and empowerment and to contribute to recovery from depression and maintenance of personal well-being throughout the[se] latter stages of adult life.” (83). In *GE*, students, regardless of age, are taught to become “reflective music practitioners” in accordance with the philosophy of Praxial Music Curriculum (Elliot 2009, 170), and their education focusses on life in the present and the future, as long or short this might be. The membership in a *Guitar Express* group may provide a sense of musical independence (Regelski 2009) and freedom to an adult or older adult who develops the capability to sing and accompany herself/himself on the guitar. S/he may share this experience in the group with others, but also s/he may sing and play the guitar at home for practice or just for fun, alone, or with friends. With those considerations in mind, it seems to contribute to the fulfillment of her/his *esteem needs*, as s/he acquires an aesthetic-expressive tool, that may be used at will and with no help at home. At the same time, the needs for attention, recognition, prestige, and appreciation from others, are met by sharing the musical achievements with family, friends, and general audience, during performances. The excursion (*εκδρομή*) is an active time of having fun with others, as is singing and playing one's guitar.

**There is no happiness  
that can be cut into three,  
but in our case,  
there is no other way.<sup>17</sup>**

*In our case,  
there is no other way.  
There is no other way.  
But could perhaps  
be another way?*

Understanding reality, dealing and negotiating with the barriers it might impose, accepting limitations but also searching for other ways, is work that can take place naturally in the studio of *Guitar Express* groups. *Guitar Express* is not a music therapy approach<sup>18</sup>, and therefore, given the fact that it is contextualized in music education or community music settings, it does not claim to provide therapeutic work. Nevertheless, as a creative inclusive group, it naturally offers opportunities for personal development. The barriers that a newcomer to *GE* might face, could be psychological, somatic, social, cultural, or of yet a different nature. Some of these might originate from the guitar as a material instrument. Often to the amazement of a novice, the guitar does not play 'magically', but requires, even from the start, a basic dexterity and the application of the right amount of pressure in order to sound musically. Alas, even the instrument of desire itself, introduces barriers, while the body of the adult or older adult might introduce more barriers. An accepting and encouraging teacher, employing teaching strategies, such as alternate ways of fingering, instrument adjustments, as well as a musically pleasing accompaniment through her own playing, might assist group members in their slower or faster way of dealing with their somatic barriers. The *Guitar Express* group also with all of its members, may function as a *container* for personal disillusionments and as an encouraging voice for overcoming barriers. Additionally, the group might provide containment at a musical level, as its general musical sound might 'cover' the mistakes of particular members. After having struggled in dealing with their barriers in various ways, when they succeed, individuals might come to realize that indeed *in their case there is another way; perhaps even more than one.*

*Reflecting on the journeys and imagining new routes*

The imagination afforded to life by our immersion in the production of arts, and especially as seen here by group musicking, opens our perceptions to new possibilities (see Greene 2007) and invests everyday moments with meaningfulness. *Guitar Express* participants shared some of these new significant possibilities and meanings of their journeys. In this closing section of the paper, we will briefly present textual snapshots of personal and group music journeys from the professional and personal perspectives of the two student teachers, the collaborating psychologist, and myself.

Kiki Kerzeli: *Guitar Express* is for me an exploration around my musical identity. It came in the middle of my [undergraduate] studies, when I was searching for what I could do with the 'tool' I was studying, to reveal to me that the musical expression is situated not only in concert halls, study rooms or in composers' scores, but it must be situated and we owe to make it exist out in the world. I am particularly moved by the fact that people who have never been engaged in music, are now actively introducing it to their life. It is characteristic in the narratives, mainly of our women students, the saying that the guitar now comes out of the attic, emerges from the case and occupies a prominent place in their home. So, between cooking, ironing, other housework, children, husband, friends and everyday problems, they find space and time to embrace the guitar and play at least 'half a song' in the span of a day. My vision is, the *Guitar Express* network to keep on growing day by day and to continue surprising more and more people engaged in it, about what they are ultimately capable of achieving.

Georgia Spanou: With the *Guitar Express*, every time I listen to songs nowadays, I think about them differently and I say "That's a good choice for the next lesson," because in this course you are responsible for preparing songs, adapting them to the needs and preferences of the group; you have to devote yourself to it. Because in each lesson, people who come to these groups become enthusiastic like young children, every time they hold on their hands [the sheet of] a new song. What keeps me more interested in *Guitar Express* lessons, is that people of different ages and different personalities come, but they all have something in common: the fact that they leave behind obligations and various thoughts and do something for themselves.

Katerina Vlachoutsou: *Guitar Express* has been a journey towards remembering, re-viewing, re-thinking of meaning in adulthood. The participants' different life courses, stemming from different socio-economical backgrounds, nonetheless depict various aspects of a similar cultural and political reality. Based on these, music cannot have a central role in one's life, due to either non existing professional prospects, cultural stereotypes that the profession of a musician affords, or simply lack of resources and/or opportunities to learn. Discovering the meaning making process out of one's own life, when encountered with the *Guitar Express*, and the focus on music once again in the lives of the participants as a way to express that value granted on their lives this time by them as adults (and not by society's expectations in their early years), has revealed to me immense prospects for approaching personal identity.

Ioanna Etmektsoglou: I think that *Guitar Express* becomes a 'vehicle' for collective musical expression, something that modern humans seem to need greatly. Emotional activation, teamwork and aesthetic pleasure, which emerge when a member of the group "is immersed" in the melodic singing and the harmonious sounds of the guitar accompaniment, seem to function as very powerful internal motivators in *Guitar Express* groups. All these factors, contribute not only to personal music development, but also to the creation of a team spirit and the containment and acceptance of diversity, whether this might be in age, motor skills, musical preferences, character, or even in the ideology of group members.

*GE* is unique among music ensembles, as it seems to stand as an analogue to the '*friends going to the taverna*' atmosphere, who after having eaten, and while still sipping wine, take out the guitar and sing popular songs of their generation that speak to their hearts. They revitalize and enrich their songs of deserts in a setting where there is space for musicking for all, with its broad sense as meant by Small (1998). A setting where besides music there is space for chatting and laughing and trying to convince the teacher and the rest of the group to include your favorite songs in the repertory. It is a setting that allows you to find your best ways of expressing yourself musically and gives you a second chance to repair your earlier music education.

The possibility and necessity for educational repair work during one's lifetime is stressed in Plato's '*Laws*' (1.644) by Atheneus, who in referring to the necessity of a good education, adds "καὶ εἴ ποτε ἐξέρχεται, δυνατόν δ' ἐστὶν ἐπανορθοῦσθαι, τοῦτ' ἀεὶ δραστεῖον διὰ βίου παντὶ κατὰ δύναμιν" ("if ever [education] errs from the

right path, but can be put straight again, to this task every man, so long as he lives, must address himself with all his might.” (Translation: Bury, 1967–68). My vision for the *Guitar Express* is for as many people as possible to be offered a ‘remedial’ music education experience that would enable them to repair their injured music identities, to take hold of the guitar and engage with music in an active, embodied, accompanied way, that will allow them to draw meanings from their ‘songs of deserts’ throughout their lifetimes.

### **About the Authors**

Ioanna Etmektsoglou studied at the University of Illinois (Urbana, USA), from where she received bachelor (B.S.) and master (M.S.) degrees in music education and a Ph.D. in psychology of music with emphasis in music education (1992). She later trained as a music therapist (M.A. 2007) at Anglia Ruskin University (Cambridge, England). Since 1995, she has been teaching at the Department of Music of the Ionian University, in Corfu, Greece. She is interested in experimenting with teaching approaches and community projects that are based on discovery, extend teaching in contexts outside the classroom, and foster creativity and environmental consciousness in children and adults.

Kiki Kerzeli studied Music Pedagogy and Psychology of Music at the Ionian University, Department of Music Studies, from where she graduated with Excellence in November 2017. She is working at the Greek National Opera, in the field of Social and Educational Activities by implementing the *Guitar Express* program for people aged 65+. She is also involved in the creation of musical material in the field of performing arts. At the same time, she is interested in exploring music education through alternative teaching methods and in the diffusion of music into vulnerable social groups in communities.

Katerina Vlachoutsou studied psychology at the Panteio University in Athens and proceeded in her studies with a M.Sc. in Social Psychiatry in the Medical School of Ioannina, Greece. She received training in systemic—family psychotherapy from the Educational Institute “Antistixi” in Athens. She is a regular member of the Greek Systemic Therapy Association ELESYTH, and practices clinical and psychotherapeutic work during her private practice, with individuals, couples and families. Her interests in human systems and the existential dimension, led to her professional practice in the Public Mental Health Center of Corfu and lately in the PMHC of Larissa.

### **References**

Baines, Anthony. 1992. *The Oxford companion to musical instruments*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Etmektsoglou, Ioanna, Kiki Kerzeli, and Katerina Vlachoutsou. 2019. Guitar Express: Accompanied ‘Songs of Deserts’ as oases in life-long memory journeys. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 18 (2): 25–56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22176/act18.2.25>



- Bakan, Daniel. 2013. This is the beauty: song as a/r/tographical exploration. *UNESCO Observatory: Multi-Disciplinary Journal in the Arts* 3 (2): 1–20.
- Baltes, Paul B., and Jacqui Smith. 2003. New frontiers in the future of aging: From successful aging of the young old to the dilemmas of the fourth age. *Gerontology* 49 (2): 123–35.
- Barone, Tom. 2001. Science, art, and the predispositions of educational researchers. *Educational Researcher* 30 (7): 24–8. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0013189x030007024>
- Creech, Andrea, Susan Hallam, Hilary McQueen, and Maria Varvarigou. 2013. The power of music in the lives of older adults. *Research Studies In Music Education* 35 (1): 87–102. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1321103x13478862>
- Cross, Ian. 2001. Music, cognition, culture and evolution. In *The Biological Foundations of Music*, edited by Isabelle Peretz and Robert J. Zatorre, 28–42. New York: Annals of New York Academy of Sciences.
- de Cosson, Alex. 2004. The hermeneutic dialogic: Finding patterns midst the aporia of the artist/researcher/teacher (rewrite #10 in this context). In *A/r/tography: Rendering self through arts-based living inquiry*, edited by Rita L. Irwin and Alex de Cosson, 127–52. Vancouver, BC: Pacific Educational Press.
- DeNora, Tia. 1999. Music as a technology of the self. *Poetics* 27 (1): 31–56.
- de Vries, Peter. 2007. Using poetry as data representation to explore music opportunities parents provide for their children at home. *Music Education Research* 9 (1): 17–34.
- Eisner, Elliot W. 1991. What the arts taught me about education. *Art Education* 44 (5): 10–19.
- Elliott, David J. 2009. Curriculum as professional action. In *Music education for changing times*, edited by Thomas A. Regelski and J. Terry Gates, 163–74. Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media B.V.
- Ellis, Carolyn, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner. 2010. Autoethnography: An overview. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12 (1): Art. 10. <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1101108>
- Etmektsoglou, Ioanna, Kiki Kerzeli, and Katerina Vlachoutsou. 2019. Guitar Express: Accompanied 'Songs of Deserts' as oases in life-long memory journeys. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 18 (2): 25–56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22176/act18.2.25>

- Euripides. *Andromache*. 1216. (David Kovacs, editor). Accessed from <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text.jsp?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0089%3Acard%3D1214>
- Gagné, Antoinette, Sumaya Bakbak, Ghada Chahrour, and Dania Wattar. 2018. Re/discovering our teacher identities through digital storytelling with Syrian children and youth: A multi-ethnography of four diverse educators. *Master of Teaching Research Journal, Inaugural Issue*. Accessed from <https://mtrj.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/mtrj/article/view/29368/22393>
- Galli, Giulia, Miroslav Sirota, Matthias Gruber, Bianca Elena Ivanof, Janani Ganeshalingam, Maurizio Materassi, Alistair Thorpe, Vanessa Loaiza, Mari-nella Cappelletti, and Fergus I. M. Craik. 2018. Learning facts during aging: The benefits of curiosity. *Experimental Aging Research* 44 (4): 1–18.
- Giebelhausen, Robin, and Adam J. Kruse. 2018. “A smile on everybody’s face”: A multiple case study of community ukulele groups. *International Journal of Music Education* 36 (3): 347–65.
- Gouzouasis, Peter. 2006. A/r/t/ography in music research: A reunification of musician, researcher, and teacher. *The Arts and Learning Research Journal* 22 (1): 23–42.
- Gouzouasis, Peter, Rita L. Irwin, Emily Miles, and Alexandra Gordon. 2013. Commitments to a community of artistic inquiry: Becoming pedagogical through a/r/t/ography in teacher education. *International Journal of Education and the Arts* 14 (1): 1–23. Retrieved on 12/7/2018 from <http://www.ijea.org/v14n1/v14n1.pdf>
- Gouzouasis, Peter, and Chris Regier. 2015. Adolescent love and relationships: An autoethnography of songwriting and guitar playing. *Journal of Artistic and Creative Education* 9 (1): 68–98.
- Gouzouasis, Peter, and Jee Yeon Ryu. 2014. A pedagogical tale from the piano studio: autoethnography in early childhood music education research. *Music Education Research* 17 (4): 397–420.
- Gouzouasis, Peter, and Matthew Yanko. 2018. Reggio’s arpeggio: Becoming pedagogical through autoethnography. In *Meaning making in early childhood research: Pedagogies and the personal*, edited by J. M. Iorio and W. Parnell, 56–70. New York: Routledge.
- Greene, Maxine. 1994. Carpe diem: The arts in school restructuring. *Teachers College Record* 95 (4): 494–507.
- Etmektsoglou, Ioanna, Kiki Kerzeli, and Katerina Vlachoutsou. 2019. Guitar Express: Accompanied ‘Songs of Deserts’ as oases in life-long memory journeys. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 18 (2): 25–56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22176/act18.2.25>

- Greene, Maxine. 2007. Beyond incomprehensibility. Accessed from: [https://maxinegreene.org/uploads/library/beyond\\_i.pdf](https://maxinegreene.org/uploads/library/beyond_i.pdf)
- Hatfield, Elaine, John T. Cacioppo, and Richard L. Rapson. 1993. Emotional contagion. *Current Directions In Psychological Science* 2 (3): 96–100.
- Hatfield, Elaine, Lisamarie Bensman, Paul D. Thornton, and Richard L. Rapson. 2014. New perspectives on emotional contagion: A review of classic and recent research on facial mimicry and contagion. *Interpersona: An International Journal on Personal Relationships* 8 (2): 159–79.
- Hays, Terrence. 2005. Well-being in later life through music. *Australasian Journal on Ageing* 24 (1): 28–32.
- Holbrook, Morris B., and Robert M. Schindler. 1989. Some exploratory findings on the development of musical tastes. *Journal Of Consumer Research* 16 (1): 119–24.
- Juslin, Patrik, and Petri Laukka. 2003. Communication of emotions in vocal expression and music performance: Different channels, same code? *Psychological Bulletin* 129 (5): 770–814.
- Juslin, Patrik, and Daniel Västfjäll. 2008. Emotional responses to music: The need to consider underlying mechanisms. *Behavioral And Brain Sciences* 31 (5): 559–621.
- Krout, Robert. 1999. Contemporary guitar applications. *Music Therapy Perspectives* 17 (2): 51–3.
- Langer, Carol L., and Rich Furman. 2004. Exploring identity and assimilation: research and interpretive poems. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/ Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 5 (2). Available online at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/2-04/2-04langerfurman-e.htm>
- Laslett, Peter. 1989. *A fresh map of life: The emergence of the third age*. London, UK: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.
- Leist, Christine P. 2015. A guide to selected alternate guitar tunings for music therapists. *Music Therapy Perspectives* 33 (1): 71–5.
- Etmektsoglou, Ioanna, Kiki Kerzeli, and Katerina Vlachoutsou. 2019. Guitar Express: Accompanied ‘Songs of Deserts’ as oases in life-long memory journeys. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 18 (2): 25–56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22176/act18.2.25>

- Lund, Darren E., Kimberley Holmes, Aubrey Hanson, Kathleen Sitter, David Scott, and Kari Grain. 2017. Exploring duoethnography in graduate research courses. In *Theorizing curriculum studies, teacher education, and research through duoethnographic pedagogy*, edited by Norris and R. Sawyer, 111–29. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Maslow, Abraham H. 1943. A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review* 50 (4): 370–96.
- Meyer, Leonard B. 1956. *Emotion and meaning in music*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Mithen, Steven. 2009. The music instinct. *Annals of The New York Academy of Sciences* 1169 (1): 3–12.
- Moore, Randall S., Myra J. Staum, and Melissa Brotons. 1992. Music preferences of the elderly: Repertoire, vocal ranges, tempos, and accompaniments for singing. *Journal of Music Therapy* 29 (4): 236–52.
- Pavlicevic, Mercedes. 2003. *Groups in music: Strategies from music therapy*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Peretz, Isabelle. 2006. The nature of music from a biological perspective. *Cognition* 100 (1): 1–32.
- Perrone-Capano, Carla, Floriana Volpicelli, and Umberto di Porzio. 2017. Biological bases of human musicality. *Reviews In The Neurosciences* 28 (3). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/revneuro-2016-0046>
- Phillips-Silver, Jessica, C. Athena Aktipis, and Gregory A. Bryant. 2010. The ecology of entrainment: Foundations of coordinated rhythmic movement. *Music Perception* 28 (1): 3–14.
- Plato. *Laws*. Accessed through: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0165%3Abook%3D1%3Apage%3D644> (English Translation by R. G. Bury).
- Prendergast, Monica, Peter Gouzouasis, Carl Leggo, and Rita L. Irwin. 2009. A haiku suite: the importance of music making in the lives of secondary school students. *Music Education Research* 11 (3): 303–17.
- Reavey, Paula. 2011. The return to experience. In *Visual methods in psychology: Using and interpreting images in qualitative research*, edited by Paula Reavey, 1–13. London: Routledge.
- Etmektsoglou, Ioanna, Kiki Kerzeli, and Katerina Vlachoutsou. 2019. Guitar Express: Accompanied ‘Songs of Deserts’ as oases in life-long memory journeys. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 18 (2): 25–56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22176/act18.2.25>

- Regelski, Thomas A. 2009. Conclusion: An end is a beginning. In *Music education for changing times* edited by T. Regelski and J. Gates, J., 187–97. Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media B.V.
- Regelski, Thomas A. 2007. Amateuring in music and its rivals. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 6/3: [http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Regelski6\\_3.pdf](http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Regelski6_3.pdf)
- Reybrouck, Mark, Peter Vuust, and Elvira Brattico. 2018. Brain connectivity networks and the aesthetic experience of music. *Brain Sciences* 8 (6): 107.
- Russell, Phillip A. 1997. Musical tastes in society. In *The social psychology of music*, edited by David J. Hargreaves and Adrian C. North, 141–58. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Saldaña, Johnny. 2009. Popular film as an instructional strategy in qualitative research methods courses. *Qualitative Inquiry* 15 (1): 247–61.
- Saldaña, Johnny. 2008. Second chair: An autoethnodrama. *Research Studies In Music Education* 30 (2): 177–91. doi:10.1177/1321103x08097506
- Shenfield, Tali, Sandra Trehub, and Takayuki Nakata. 2003. Maternal singing modulates infant arousal. *Psychology of Music* 31 (4): 365–75. doi:10.1177/03057356030314002.
- Schulkind, Matthew D., Laura Kate Hennis, and David C. Rubin. 1999: Music, emotion, and autobiographical memory: They're playing your song. *Memory and Cognition* 27 (6): 948–55. doi:10.3758/bf03201225
- Schuller, Tom, and David Watson. 2009. *Learning through life: Inquiry into the future for lifelong learning*. Leicester, UK: NIACE.
- Sloboda, John A., and Patrick N. Juslin. 2001. Psychological perspectives on music and emotion. In *Music and Emotion: Theory and Research*, edited by Patrick N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda, 71–104. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sloboda, John A. 2005. *Exploring the musical mind: Cognition, emotion, ability, function*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Small, Christopher. 1998. *Musicking: The meanings of performing and listening*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.
- Springgay, Stephanie, Rita L. Irwin, and Sylvia Kind. 2005. A/r/tography as living inquiry through art and text. *Qualitative Inquiry* 11 (6): 897–912.
- Etmektsoglou, Ioanna, Kiki Kerzeli, and Katerina Vlachoutsou. 2019. Guitar Express: Accompanied 'Songs of Deserts' as oases in life-long memory journeys. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 18 (2): 25–56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22176/act18.2.25>

- Stebbins, Robert A. 1992. *Amateurs, professionals and serious leisure*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Trevarthen, Colwyn, and Ken Aitken. 2001. Infant intersubjectivity: Research, theory, and clinical applications. *Journal Of Child Psychology And Psychiatry* 42 (1): 3–48.
- Turino, Thomas. 2008. *Music as social life: The politics of participation*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- van Goethem, Annelies, and Sloboda, John A. 2011. The functions of music for affect regulation. *Musicae Scientiae* 15 (2): 208–28. doi:10.1177/1029864911401174
- Walker, Charles J. 2010. Experiencing flow: Is doing it together better than doing it alone? *The Journal Of Positive Psychology* 5 (1): 3–11.
- Welch, Graham F. 2005. Singing as communication. In *Musical Communication*, edited by D. Miell, R. MacDonald and D. Hargreaves, 239–59. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Winnicott, D. W. 2005/1971. *Playing and reality*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Wise, Karen J., and John A. Sloboda. 2008. Establishing an empirical profile of self-defined “tone deafness”: Perception, singing performance and self-assessment. *Musicae Scientiae* 12 (1): 3–26.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I was inspired to use the phrase 'songs of deserts' from Mariannina Kriezi's lyrics of the song, “The quiet evenings,” part of which appears performed on the *Guitar Express* film. The Greek word for desert 'έρημος', refers literally to a kind of landscape, which is flat, sandy, extended, with no vegetation. Metaphorically, it has come to mean emptiness, absence of other life, and loneliness. In the latter sense it has been used by Euripides in his tragedy *Andromache*, where the old man Phileas (Πηλέας), having just heard about his grandson's death by murder, calls himself, 'έρημος' in expressing his unbearable loss and the vast voidness left in his life (Euripides, *Andromache*, 1216). In the title of this paper, 'deserts' refer to memory landscapes of adults and older adults. When, formerly rich memory landscapes start becoming more or less deserted, the individual's own identity might feel threatened. The songs, his/her favorite songs, may function as small yet vital oases in these arid memory landscapes. They might bring forward places, faces, events, but most importantly strong emotions that were experienced long

ago, thus helping an individual to connect the past with their current identity and therefore experience life as more meaningful.

<sup>2</sup> The word 'express' is associated with a fast entry into the world of the active music makers, and at the same time with the possibilities afforded in *GE* for participants to 'Express' emotions through group music making. The concept of the 'Train' could be referred to a containing and accepting space for the group members and their shared musical journeys. It could also be interpreted with its other meaning: 'to learn.'

<sup>3</sup> The people on the video who appear to play music are between 20 and 87 years of age, but are not all represented through their verbal comments in this paper.

<sup>4</sup> 'Nefelis Tango.' Lyrics by Haroula Alexiou, music by Loreena McKennitt.

<sup>5</sup> In Greece, as far back as the Homeric times, we find evidence for the differentiation between the professional and amateur musicians. In *Odyssey* (viii), for example, King Alkinous did not call amateurs – he summoned the professional bard Demodocus to sing with his *kitharis* (a type of four-stringed lyre) in honor of the guest Ulysses. From the 7th century BC, there is an interesting specialization of the Greek lyre-type instruments, with the simpler one, the *lyra*, being assigned to music education and amateur playing, the *barbitos* (a variation of the lyra, taller in size and with a deeper sound) appearing as the instrument of lyric poets “for accompanying drinking and love songs” (Baines 1992, 200), and finally, the wooden *kithara*, which was the instrument played by professional musicians only and which also appeared in music contests. (ibid).

<sup>6</sup> Regelski (2007) attributes the neologism '*amateuring*' to Robert Booth, who defines it as, “the active, committed, disciplined (or disciplined'), enlivening and loving pursuit of [...] music” (27).

<sup>7</sup> Based on a less biased approach to the life cycle (Laslett 1989), the category 'ηλικιωμένος' (aged), is referred to as *third age* and characterizes a quality of life and not a chronological age period. Contrary to Schuller and Watson (2009), who conceptualize the *Third age* between 50 and 75 years and the *fourth age* as a category including all people over 75 years of age, Baltes and Smith (2003), would agree that individuals over the age of 75 would not necessarily be characterized as belonging in the *fourth age* category, if they engaged with life, were independent, physically and mentally stable, and reported a sense of well-being.

<sup>8</sup> 'Love me.' Lyrics and music by Andreas Thomopoulos.

<sup>9</sup> Small (1998) coined the term *musicizing* (gerund of the verb 'to music') to displace the emphasis from music as a cultural product and place it on the process and

context of music making. According to his definition, “To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing. We might at times even extend its meaning to what the person is doing who takes the tickets at the door [...]. They, too, are all contributing to the nature of the event that is a musical performance” (9).

<sup>10</sup> According to Phillips-Silver, Aktipis, and Bryant (2010), “social entrainment is a special case of spatiotemporal coordination where the rhythmic signal originates from another individual” (3).

<sup>11</sup> Margarita, in Greek, is the name of the flower *daisy*, but also a common woman's name.

<sup>12</sup> *'Margarita Majopoula.'* Lyrics by Iakovos Kabanellis, music by Mikis Theodorakis.

<sup>13</sup> *'The quiet evenings.'* Lyrics by Marianina Kriezi, music by Lakis Papadopoulos.

<sup>14</sup> *'In the dusk.'* Lyrics by Haralabos Vasiliadis, music by Yiorgos Zabetas.

<sup>15</sup> *'I revered your image'* (Colors and fragrances). Lyrics by Mihalīs Katsaros, music by Yiannis Markopoulos.

<sup>16</sup> *'A red pair of glasses.'* Lyrics and music by Stamatis Kraounakis.

<sup>17</sup> *'There is no happiness.'* Lyrics by Pythagoras, music by Yiorgos Katsaros.

<sup>18</sup> Unless it is embedded in the practice of a professional music therapist and in the therapeutic context.