

COMMUNITY MUSIC

By Alba Sanfeliu

who is in charge of the Music, Arts and Peace program at the School for a Culture of Peace. Also she has participated in the CD, singing in the *Cripple Creek* chorus (song num.13), with the American Musician Lou Hevly. Special thanks to him for revising this text. alba.sanfeliu@uab.es

Introduction:

"Music, means and tool of universal expression, allows the communion and the participation: the union with the others, with the environment, and participation in the inner wealth of the being (...) To share is the best guarantee of peace. Music and arts invite to the participation and constitute an antidote against the obstacles in the harmony among the men (...) Art transfigures everything. It has the power of abolishing evil"
Yehudi Menuhin and Miguel Angel Estrella.

Music is a tool of universal expression. All cultures have experienced different degrees of contact with music throughout history. In spite of every type of difference that can separate us, music allows union, facilitating communication and empathy, inviting reciprocity, and encouraging people to share sensitivities. Music is a great means of communication and of intercultural union. As Kjell Skyllstad suggests,

"Music lies at the very heart of the intercultural process of bringing people together. Since the early days of humankind, musical activities have been developed as tools in the training and development of the human capacity for communication, social interplay and democratic interaction at all levels. The secret of this unusual capacity of an artistic medium rests with the innate and universal musicality of man². (...) Two or more people create something that is greater than the sum of what they create each on their own. And sympathies are formed - strong feelings of belonging. Music making in a group brings out the social dynamics of the group³".

Aiguallum, Voices of Diversity

"**Aiguallum. Veus de la Diversitat**" is a project that has culminated in the publication of a CD-book gathering 21 new citizens of Manresa, a town located near Barcelona city, in Catalonia, Spain. These amateur artists from all over the world sing songs whose lyrics are related to Water and Light, a theme chosen because these natural elements play an important role in the history of Manresa. Some of the lyrics also speak of love and nature.



Some of the musicians. Picture courtesy PEC

¹ *La música, mensajera de la paz*, by Yehudi Menuhin and Miguel Ángel Estrella. Published at *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Number 29, March 1998. Available in Spanish at this link:

<http://escolapau.uab.cat/img/programas/musica/07musica004e.pdf>

² *Music and Mediation*. By Kjell Skyllstad. Published at SGI Quartely. Music as a force for peace. July 2004. Soka Gakkai International Quarterly Magazine. Number 37. Buddhist perspectives on peace, culture and education. Available in Spanish at this link: <http://escolapau.uab.cat/img/programas/musica/07musica009e.pdf>

³ *Creating a culture of peace. The performing arts in interethnic negotiations*. By Kjell Skyllstad. <http://escolapau.uab.cat/img/programas/musica/07musica010i.pdf>

Background

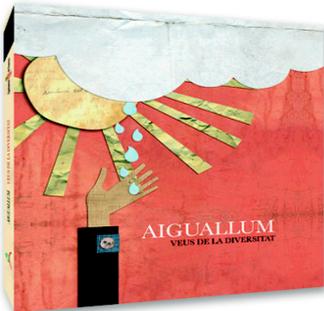
Manresa is a city of about 75,000 inhabitants, where more than 12,500 are people from other countries of the world.

This CD-book is one of the projects of PEC (Local Education Project), a part of Manresa's City Council, whose goal is to use **music as a bridge of cohesion among the newcomer collectives that live in the city.**

The PEC started its activity with the adhesion of Manresa to the Town Council of the **International Association of Educative Cities**. PEC *"promotes a project where different institutions and citizens, beginning with a diagnosis of their cities, describe actions and take initiatives in order to act as an educative influence within the city. It is, then, a project of civic education commitment. Education is understood to be a permanent process of integral learning that goes on throughout life, and that therefore continues after formal schooling"*.

The city of Manresa, in order to attempt to shape the initiative of the educative cities, carried out a diagnosis of the city and of its educational infrastructure (schools, civic centers, entities, etc.). It analyzed areas in which it was necessary to improve education. These areas involved civility, social cohesion and active citizenship or participation. To deal with them, the NIM, *Nucli Impulsor de Manresa*, was created. These thirty to forty people organized debates at a local level to discover what projects might be carried out in the city so as to improve in these areas. One of the projects was the idea of making a CD which included people of other cultures who live in Manresa, taking into account that music could be a good tool for promoting social cohesion and fostering relationships among communities. The initial idea for the project was from **Josep Maria Vilar** and the musician **Oriol Farré**, and the task of promoting it, and finding resources and alliances, was done by **Anna Vilajosana**, PEC's coordinator.

The Musical Project:



Aiguallum is an ambitious project involving coordination and musical arrangement with songs from all over the world: Mordovia, Ukraine, Armenia, Romania, Moldova, Russia, Mozambique, Gambia, Senegal, Morocco, Sidi Ifni, England, US, Denmark, Italy, Switzerland, Mexico, Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Argentina and China. After a selection process of the songs and musicians carried out by Josep Maria Vilar, Oriol Farré and **Toni Xuclà** (a Catalan musician/producer who also contributed musically to the project), 21 participants were selected.

The main goals of this production were to use music as a cultural bridge, to search for interpersonal dialogue and cohesion, and to bring people from different countries together using music as a language of knowledge and communication between different cultures.

As Josep Camprubí, mayor of Manresa, comments *"The result of this exercise goes beyond the soundtrack. In the attached book, you can learn a little more about them (the participants); you can see why they are in Manresa and what do they do; and you will meet in the flesh some of the people that are behind the word "immigration". Music, once again, is revealed as a tool of communication of the first order that, overcoming cultural barriers and idiomatic difficulties, is capable of uniting very diverse persons who coincide in the here and now so as to construct a common project"* (information on the CD).

All the songs have been created in a search for a new musical language, based on the inspiration from the origins and backgrounds of the 21 different artists. As it says on the CD *"The result is a fusion among musicians of the world, respectful of their origins, and open to new languages (...) Once again, music is show as one of the most powerful tools for the communication among persons. When other forms of communication do not serve, music serves in an intuitive and profound way"*.

Participants passed through the recording studio **Kay** to record their songs. Some professionals and others amateurs, they came with their respective groups, or with only their voices and some musical instruments. In this way the songs developed, along with the participation of many Catalan musicians that helped with the music.

The album has been divided into geographical blocks, and songs are separated by musical interludes that have been given the name of musical instruments from the areas where the amateur artists come from. Some of these traditional instruments are Duduk (flute from Armenia, Russia and the Balkans), Balafon (African marimba), Kora (African harp), Huapanguera (Mexican guitar) or Saz (Mandolin from Turkey, Syria, Iraq and the Balkans).

After the recording sessions, some gatherings with the musicians were celebrated during February and March of 2009. On these days there were music and gastronomy (since in one of the meetings the musicians brought food from their respective countries); these were used as the thread to help the participants get to know one another little by little, and to show up their cultural and musical differences, as well as their resemblances. (In one of the acts a musical improvisation was made among the assistants, and the meeting was closed with everyone dancing traditional Catalan dances).

On April 23rd of 2009 the CD was presented in different points of the city, with 5000 editions for sale.



On Sunday, August 30th 2009, as a part of the Official Program of the 'Festa Major' (city festival), a concert was held in the city center, officially presenting the CD to the city. Sixteen musicians took part in the concert, which was given a good reception by the citizens.

At present the project is at a musical resting point, even though it is known that sooner or later, the music will sound again.

The day concert. Picture courtesy PEC