Autoethnography and artistic creation: an introspective look at the creative process in musical ensembles

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In contemporary music studies, urban musical ensembles have shifted from being associated solely with artistic practice to becoming a fertile setting for cultural and pedagogical inquiry. This article examines the collective creative processes within such ensembles through the lenses of autoethnography and research-creation, particularly in contexts characterized by cultural diversity. The study aims to explore how music, beyond its aesthetic dimensions, functions as a site of cultural negotiation and a means of generating knowledge. Drawing on theoretical reflection and critical analysis of documented experiences, the article investigates how musical interaction intertwines group dynamics and individual subjectivities to produce a collective artistic outcome. The findings suggest that urban ensembles operate not merely as performance collectives but as arenas of cultural exchange where communicative tensions act as catalysts for meaningful learning. These tensions, arising from diverse perspectives and experiences, enrich collaboration and foster inclusive environments where creativity thrives on difference. Consequently, the creative process is reinterpreted not only as musical production but also as a pedagogical act, an experience that integrates creation, collaboration, and mutual understanding.

KEYWORDS

autoethnography, research-creation, musical ensembles, intercultural education, artistic creation

1 Introduction

In contemporary music research, an increasing number of introspective and practice-based methodologies have emerged, reinforcing the position of the artist-researcher as a legitimate producer of knowledge. Within this paradigm, autoethnography functions as an ethical and qualitative approach through which the researcher situates personal experience, social and cultural interaction, and artistic practice as valid cultural phenomena. As Bishop (2018) elucidates, investigating values, environments, and sociocultural experiences is essential to understanding how musical meaning is constructed. Similarly, Adams et al. (2015) describe autoethnography as a process of reifying conscious awareness, wherein lived experience becomes knowledge through a reflexive dialogue between self and culture.

However, contemporary scholarship has moved beyond individual reflexivity toward a collective consciousness of agency. Drawing on Ortner's (2006) theorization of agency, we can argue that, in the field of musical scholarship, knowledge is not exclusively produced or possessed by the artist-researcher. Rather, it emerges through the dynamic interactions among members of the creative collective, the surrounding social actors such as audiences and listeners, and the broader cultural frameworks that shape and contextualize musical practice.

Research-creation constitutes a fundamental paradigm for understanding artistic inquiry. It has been defined as a methodological approach that integrates artistic practice and academic research to generate new, situated, and socially meaningful knowledge (Bravi, 2021). Unlike traditional research, which tends to separate theoretical reflection from creative production, research-creation investigates how artistic processes such as composition, improvisation, rehearsal, and performance, produce tacit knowledge that can be transformed into articulated knowledge through critical and theoretical reflection (Beltrán and Villaneda, 2020; Bruce, 2023).

Within musicology, this paradigm situates artistic practice simultaneously as a process of research and as its outcome. Hornabrook (2018) observes that research-creation challenges epistemological hierarchies by acknowledging creative practice as a form of intellectual activity. Furthermore, Lenette (2019) and Seppälä et al. (2021) explore how arts-based and collaborative methodologies contribute to a decolonizing consciousness that promotes inclusivity and shared authorship. From this standpoint, the ensemble emerges as a living environment where relationships act as generative forces, producing both sound and social negotiation, and thus become a form of collective knowledge grounded in shared learning.

This article examines the collective creative processes within urban musical ensembles through the combined perspectives of autoethnography and research-creation, approached from a cultural, and particularly intercultural, lens. It explores how music, beyond its aesthetic dimension, functions as a site of cultural negotiation and as a means of generating knowledge. Through a critical review of relevant literature and documented experiences, the study demonstrates that the creative processes within ensembles, whether in direct musical production or in related collaborative practices, constitute not only artistic endeavors but also pedagogical experiences. Moreover, it highlights how moments of communicative tension foster musical and social collaboration, stimulate reflection, and nurture inclusive learning environments.

2 Methodological framework

The research presented in this article is situated within an autoethnographic framework informed by research-creation, understood as a theoretical and critical approach that emphasizes the interrelationship between artistic practice and the production of knowledge. Following the criteria established by Ellis et al. (2015), autoethnography legitimizes subjectivity and personal experience as valid sources of scholarly insight. The analysis of music-making practices therefore involves both introspection and critical examination of the cultural, symbolic, and pedagogical dimensions embedded within these practices.

In this study, research-creation is conceived not as a linear sequence of experimental procedures but as a reflexive process in which creation itself becomes the method of inquiry. As Beltrán and Villaneda (2020) and Bruce (2023) assert, research-creation entails the articulation of the tacit knowledge inherent in artistic practice through systematic reflection. Within this discussion, the creative process is understood not merely as an artistic outcome but as an epistemic act, one capable of generating situated, embodied, and contextually relevant understandings of lived musical experience.

Methodologically, this article employs conceptual analysis and narrative interpretation of documented episodes drawn from urban musical ensembles. These sessions are treated as case studies that illustrate how collective creativity unfolds within contexts of intercultural education. The research process involves synthesizing theoretical perspectives, composing reflective narratives, and critically analyzing prior works to illuminate the pedagogical and epistemological implications of collaborative music-making.

Reflective and reflexive writing serve as essential analytical tools, embodying a mode of *thinking through practice* (Barz, 2008; Titon, 2008). This approach enables the researcher to adopt a reflexive stance in interpreting the tensions, discoveries, and insights that emerge both from the creative process itself and from engagement with scholarly literature. As Davies and Spence (2010) note, writing reveals fieldwork as a relational and dialogical endeavor in which interpretations are justified and integrated through reflexivity grounded in self-awareness. Reflexivity, in this sense, provides a means to understand how artistic choices, interpersonal interactions, and emotional dynamics within ensembles contribute to the generation and transmission of collective artistic knowledge.

Although this study does not include empirical fieldwork, its autoethnographic nature is manifested through the researcher's interpretive engagement with the musical and pedagogical phenomena under examination. The teacher-researcher is not conceived as an external observer but as an active participant who reflects internally on artistic and educational processes. This reflexive stance situates the researcher's positionality, along with their cultural references, assumptions, and pedagogical orientations, as an integral component of the analytical process.

Accordingly, the methodological framework interweaves theoretical reasoning, artistic reflection, and interpretive synthesis. It acknowledges that musical creation, both *within* and *among* ensembles, constitutes a collaborative artistic process and a pedagogical site for the production of knowledge. Through the combined use of autoethnography and research-creation, this work seeks to contribute to the growing body of scholarship that approaches artistic practice as an exacting, contemporary, and transformative mode of inquiry.

3 Analytical results: autoethnography, research-creation, and creative processes in musical education

3.1 Autoethnography in musical research

Autoethnography represents a methodological shift in music research toward recognizing the researcher's own experience as a legitimate and generative source of knowledge. This approach deliberately avoids the illusory pursuit of objectivity that once dominated traditional ethnography (Malinowski, 2014), instead positioning the researcher as both participant and analyst within the field. This reflexive stance aligns with long-standing critiques of objectivity in anthropology (Clifford and Marcus, 1986), which contend that all cultural description is inherently situated and interpretive.

In the field of music studies, autoethnography enables the examination of creative processes from within, where the act of

making music constitutes both an artistic and an epistemological practice. As Ocaña-Fernández et al. (2020) note, this approach integrates ethnographic observation with autobiographical reflection to reveal how musicians construct meaning through performance, collaboration, and sonic interaction.

Similarly, Bolaños-Motta (2018) notes that through this methodology, researchers can interpret personal experience as an expression of broader sociocultural dynamics. In this sense, autoethnography in music research extends beyond the mere documentation of practice. This article offers a reflexive narrative that reveals the emotional, pedagogical, and cultural tensions inherent in collective creativity. A conflict that emerged during rehearsal between students relying on aural training and those dependent on written notation, did not constitute an obstacle to be resolved but rather a catalyst for negotiated learning. The teacher-researcher's reflection on that moment transformed an ordinary rehearsal into a site of cultural dialogue.

The studies of Cannarozzo and Gonnet (2019) and Tafur (2020) further exemplify this dynamic. Tafur's journal entry, describing a moment of tension during the introduction of Afro-diasporic rhythms, demonstrated how artistic dissonance can serve as a catalyst for pedagogical innovation when participants engage in open dialogue. In both cases, reflexive narration enabled a deeper understanding of how musicians negotiate meaning and construct identity within ensemble practice.

Failing to acknowledge the agentive dimension of autoethnography is a recurring oversight in music research. Drawing on Ortner's (2006) anthropological theorization of agency, we can extend her insights to the context of musical ensembles, where teaching artists exercise agency by recognizing themselves as co-creators rather than as detached facilitators. Such recognition makes visible the emotional and ethical dimensions of artistic practice, which often surface in the researcher's reflective writing produced during and after the creative process. This writing documents moments of hesitation, shifting power dynamics, and transformative encounters within teaching and research practice, moments through which creativity itself can emerge.

The pedagogical significance of autoethnography lies in its capacity to humanize musical research. By acknowledging processes of vulnerability, it fosters a dialogical understanding of how artistic encounters generate knowledge. This perspective aligns closely with Small's (1998) concept of *musicking*, which posits that musical performance is a social act wherein all participants such as the performers, listeners, and educators engage equally as co-creators in the production of meaning. Turino (2008) and Kenny (2016) expand upon this view, proposing that musical practice constitutes a community of learning grounded in shared aesthetic and social interaction, whose components are inherently interconnected and inseparable.

Autoethnography, in its relationship to musical research, delineates a methodological path that intertwines personal narrative, artistic practice, and cultural interpretation. Through this approach, teachers and performers are encouraged to transform the tensions inherent in creative processes into forms of knowledge, thereby conceiving the ensemble as a site of both artistic expression and pedagogical dialogue. This method fosters the generation of theoretical reflection while simultaneously cultivating ethical awareness and inclusive practice. Ultimately, reflexivity itself emerges as a form of

creative agency, enabling the ongoing reconfiguration of artistic and educational experience.

3.2 Research-creation as a method for generating artistic knowledge

Research-creation has emerged as a leading methodological paradigm in the arts, linking artistic processes with research inquiry to generate new forms of experientially situated knowledge. It legitimizes artistic production not merely as self-expression but as a rigorous mode of research in its own right. According to Bravi (2021), research-creation constitutes a process in which the artwork, the act of creation, and the reflective analysis form a triadic unity, simultaneously the object, method, and product of inquiry. This conception suggests that artistic making is inherently bound to critical reflection and that artistic practice produces insights inaccessible through traditional academic epistemologies.

At its core, research-creation challenges the conventional separation between practice and theory. Hornabrook (2018) contends that creative work can yield knowledge as rigorous as that produced by conventional empirical or theoretical methodologies, provided it engages in systematic reflection within a clearly articulated methodological framework. This approach recognizes the aesthetic and conceptual dimensions of art as mutually constitutive, emphasizing that meaning arises through the dynamic interplay between *doing* and *thinking*. Similarly, López Cano and San Cristóbal (2014) identifies in research-creation the articulation of tacit knowledge embedded in artistic gestures, sounds, and intuitive processes, knowledge that, through reflection, becomes communicable and academically legitimate.

The educational implications of research-creation become particularly evident in creative laboratories and ensemble-based practices, where moments of communicative tension serve as catalysts in the learning process. Ariza (2021) recounts an episode in which an experimental music ensemble encountered such moment during a disagreement over the use of harmonics. Following the facilitator's intervention, a period of silence ensued that proved to be profoundly productive. This reflective pause enabled the group to record and compare two versions of the piece, one incorporating and one omitting the disputed element, before engaging in collective discussion of the aesthetic and pedagogical criteria involved. Ultimately, the ensemble reintegrated the gesture as a consensual interpretative solution. The episode thus demonstrated how communicative tension can be transformed into negotiated learning and artistic innovation within ensemble practice.

Echoing this, Bravi (2021) describes an instance in which students resisted the institutional formalities associated with academic presentation, asserting that "the works speak for themselves." Through sustained dialogue, both faculty and students collaboratively constructed a space where theoretical discourse and creative performance could coexist meaningfully. These examples illustrate how the creative process inherent in research-creation converts conflict and communicative tension into opportunities for collective intelligence, reflection, and artistic transformation.

Aguilar (2025) reinforces this view, emphasizing that art practice does not automatically constitute research practice; intentionality is essential. He argues that creative inquiry begins

only when artists allow reflexive questioning to reshape their practice, for it is through this process that both artistic intelligence and knowledge emerge. In the improvised performance workshop, he describes a disagreement between advocates of structured technique and proponents of improvisational freedom prompted participants to articulate their understanding of "creation" through reflective writing. These written reflections became a process of self-revelation, exposing the formative structures underpinning each participant's creative approach and cultivating a heightened methodological awareness. Consequently, reflexivity, understood as the capacity to critically examine one's own creative responses, emerges as a foundational principle of research-creation.

Further evidence of this dynamic can be found in the performance laboratories documented by Gutiérrez Mavesoy and Rodríguez Peña (2019), where students likewise recorded oral reflections on their collective creative experiences. Such practices underscore the premise that knowledge may arise as readily through sound, gesture, and shared experience as through language and text. In the musical field, research-creation foregrounds the ensemble as a living laboratory in which aesthetic exploration, emotional resonance, and cultural exchange converge. By situating creative activity within a reflexive and educational framework, research-creation not only broadens the scope of artistic integration but also affirms its role as a transformative agent of knowledge within academia.

3.3 Creative processes in musical ensembles

Collective musical creativity represents one of the most intricate and enriching forms of knowledge production in the arts. Within ensembles, creativity does not emerge from an isolated act of individual genius but from the dynamic interplay of participants through sound, gesture, listening, and dialogue. Hierrezuelo et al. (2019) describe ensemble activity as a co-construction of meaning arising from the continuous interaction among its members, in which the group's sonority remains fluid and perpetually in the process of self-renewal. In this environment, creativity stems directly from the relational processes involved in negotiating musical ideas, interpretative approaches, and the social dynamics that unfold among participants.

Hierrezuelo et al. (2019) recount a paradigmatic case from a rehearsal in Madrid, where an unexpected change of tempo generated initial confusion and silence among the students. Rather than interpreting this as a failure or mistake, the researchers viewed it as evidence that musical conflict can act as a source of innovation and renewal. The episode demonstrates that creativity often arises not from technical precision alone but from the capacity to embrace improvisation, uncertainty, and collective problem-solving.

A particularly illuminating analysis of participatory and presentational modes of musical engagement is offered by Turino (2008), who distinguishes between settings where performer and audience are hierarchically separated and those in which all participants contribute to the act of music-making. This distinction sheds light on ensemble practice as a participatory process in which creative meaning is co-produced, reaffirming that musical knowledge is inherently social, negotiated, and emergent.

These reflections suggest that creative activity cannot be understood solely in terms of what is ultimately composed, for ensemble creativity is fundamentally a social act of co-producing meaning within a community united through the act of making music. In educational and classroom ensemble contexts, these processes acquire an additional pedagogical dimension, enriching both the learning experience and the cultivation of collaborative creativity.

Carrasco and Núñez Mora (2023) describe how redefining the traditional divide between stage and audience in a workshop initially generated discomfort and hesitation among participants. However, when the teacher expressed a desire to perform alongside the students, this gesture of vulnerability transformed the atmosphere: hesitation gave way to spontaneous participation, and tension evolved into open exchange. The episode demonstrated how communicative tension, when approached reflexively, can foster engagement and acts of creative freedom as participants begin to interact more collaboratively.

Along these lines, Colorado Uribe (2023) recounts how a participant's dissonant improvisatory electronic piece inspired others to imitate its sounds, giving rise to a new motif that prompted the group to reconsider and ultimately redefine the direction of their work. Such instances reveal that the essence of ensemble creativity lies in recognizing difference as a productive force, a space of negotiation and renewal rather than a barrier to artistic or educational progress.

Collective improvisation serves as a laboratory of social creativity. As Veloso (2017) and Herrera Portella (2023) observe, group improvisation requires a delicate balance between structure and spontaneity, demanding attentive listening and mutual trust among participants. Sankar Rodríguez (2024) describes a situation in which musicians, initially paralyzed by the fear of producing "wrong sounds," were encouraged by the facilitator to each create a sound. This act disrupted their hesitation, giving rise to a sense of collective flow and emergent musical dialogue. The episode highlights the ethical and pedagogical dimensions of ensemble practice, demonstrating that learning does not occur solely through technical mastery but through empathetic listening and the confidence to respond creatively within a group dynamic.

Cantillano Rojas (2022) recounts a case in which students debated whether rap could be incorporated into an Andean musical piece. The discussion, initially rooted in divergent perceptions of authenticity, evolved through dialogue into a form of creative synthesis that fostered a genuine appreciation of cultural plurality. Likewise, Hernández Prado (2022) explores how the shared activity of making art within an ensemble contributes to the shaping of cultural identity and the promotion of social inclusion.

Leadership and the distribution of roles significantly shape the expression of creativity within ensembles. Arévalo Berríos (2022) and Ledesma (2024) note that horizontal and participatory forms of leadership tend to enhance both motivation and creative sensitivity among group members, whereas hierarchical authority often diminishes creativity and emotional engagement.

In conclusion, creative processes in musical ensemble settings are simultaneously artistic and pedagogical in nature. They unfold through cooperation, negotiation, and reflexivity, producing not only aesthetic results but also ethical and social learning outcomes. Collective creativity in music-making thus emerges as an ongoing process of inquiry, interpreted through the dual perspectives of autoethnography and research-creation, where diversity, tension, and

dialogue are consciously embraced as essential conditions for the production of shared knowledge. Ultimately, music-making transcends the mere execution of technical skill to become a practice rooted in mutual understanding, cultural exchange, and collective transformation.

3.4 Interculturality and communicative tensions in the music classroom

Interculturality in the music classroom refers to the coexistence of students and teachers who bring diverse cultural, ethnic, and musical backgrounds to the learning environment. In contemporary educational contexts, particularly within institutional and commercial programs, this diversity manifests in the encounter between Western classical traditions and local, popular, and Indigenous sound practices. As Nova Barrios and Rodríguez Cruz (2023) explain, such plural soundscapes offer rich creative possibilities but also generate communicative tensions when musical discourses, aesthetic values, or modes of expression come into conflict. Yet, rather than hindering learning, these moments of tension can serve as pedagogical catalysts, fostering reciprocal learning and intercultural understanding among participants.

In classroom settings, such tensions often emerge from the friction between institutional expectations and learners' cultural identities. Estrada-Vidal and Epelde-Larranaga (2020) describe a case involving secondary school students who began improvising over contemporary, yet distinctly Asian, rhythms during a reading exercise. Initially, the teacher interrupted the activity, but the situation evolved into a collective agreement to transform the exercise into an improvised artistic performance. This episode illustrates how conflict, when addressed dialogically, can be transformed into a productive moment of cultural negotiation, revealing the potential of intercultural encounters to enrich both artistic creation and formal learning processes.

Within the field of education, the existential dynamics of the classroom can be productively interpreted through Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) theoretical framework, particularly his concepts of *cultural capital* and *symbolic power*. Teachers, as holders of institutional authority, operate within structures sustained by legitimized forms of knowledge and power. These dynamics often generate both intentional and unintentional hierarchies of cultural capital, reinforcing inequalities that privilege certain artistic traditions while marginalizing others. Such hierarchies contribute to the symbolic segregation of musical genres, elevating some as culturally superior while relegating others to subordinate positions.

Bastidas-Yela and Sevilla-Peñuela (2022) describe students' resistance to Baroque music, which they perceived as disconnected from their social realities; their silence and disengagement constituted an implicit critique of symbolic domination. Likewise, Azorín-Delegido and Bernabé Villodre (2019) discuss the overvaluation of European art music, often manifested through dismissive attitudes toward urban genres such as rap, a form of symbolic violence that restricts students' creative agency and participation.

Conversely, Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action offers a framework for transforming oppositional values into opportunities for dialogue. Tapia Rojas (2023) recounts a debate among students regarding whether the school's end-of-year concert

should feature Beethoven's work or local folk music. The professor encouraged each group to defend its position, leading to a final program that combined both repertoires. This outcome exemplifies Habermas's (1987) concept of the *ideal speech* situation, in which all participants are free to express their perspectives without coercion, reaching consensus through rational and inclusive argumentation (Carabetta, 2017).

From an ethnomusicological standpoint, Ochoa Gautier (2014) reminds us that even the act of listening is culturally situated. The very disposition to perceive or produce sound is shaped by generational histories and identities. Iglesias (2023) describes a classroom performance in which an Indigenous student presented a ceremonial song that initially elicited laughter from classmates unfamiliar with its meaning. The teacher intervened, inviting the student to explain the cultural significance of the chant, thereby transforming disruption into curiosity and appreciation. This episode exemplifies dialogical pedagogy, wherein knowledge emerges from recognizing differences and affirming the validity of diverse epistemologies.

Moreover, not all tensions are expressed verbally; they may also manifest through silence, avoidance, or bodily gestures, each carrying expressive significance. Arenas Torres et al. (2023) describe students from "silence-respecting" cultures whose intentional restraint was misinterpreted as disengagement or lack of participation. Conversely, Muñoz-Troncoso et al. (2024) discuss Afro-descendant and ecofeminist students, artists with strong rhythmic and improvisational sensibilities, who found themselves inhibited by pedagogical models grounded in rigid adherence to musical scores. These contrasting behaviors reveal that communicative tensions are not mere obstacles to learning but rather expressions of divergent cultural logics and modes of communication. Recognizing such diversity requires a sensitive pedagogical approach, one that acknowledges the expressive capacity of the body, gesture, and culturally embedded sound, rather than silencing or overlooking their meaning.

Teacher reflexivity plays a fundamental role in transforming classroom tensions into processes of inclusion. Parejo et al. (2020) describe a teacher who employed an autoethnographic journal to develop awareness of his own preference for European repertoires. Castro Alonso and Chao Fernández (2021) emphasize that the greater a teacher's self-awareness, the more capable they become of modifying their authority and fostering horizontal, participatory learning dynamics. Within the framework of research-creation, the teacher-researcher assumes the role of an intercultural mediator, one who listens, adapts, and reconstructs pedagogical processes with a more collectively human focus. In communicative terms, tension within the intercultural classroom is not destructive but generative; it produces the conditions that allow multiple *lifeworlds* (Habermas, 1987) to coexist.

Through respect and openness, such tensions give rise to creative moments that nurture cultural sympathy and, ultimately, empathy. From this perspective, the music classroom becomes a microcosm of what might be called the "Great Society," which is a space in which music mediates internal and external dialogues, enabling mutual recognition and ethical listening. Within this context, both autoethnography and research-creation serve as methodological devices that humanize teaching by situating knowledge in lived experience. They offer students and teachers alike the opportunity to engage with the universal significance that emerges from embracing differences.

4 Discussion

Approaches to autoethnography, research-creation, artistic collaboration in ensembles, and intercultural pedagogy delineate a complex field of cultural production in which artistic activity is simultaneously epistemological and transformational. Music creation within an ensemble context is not merely an aesthetic endeavor but a situated form of inquiry and praxis embedded within social, cultural, and emotional frameworks. In this situated praxis, music-making becomes a means of generating knowledge among participating musicians, wherein meaning, identity, and power relations are enacted both individually and collectively.

Ensemble-based creation must therefore be understood as a relational and dialogical process. Each musician contributes not only technical skill but also personal history, emotion, and cultural background. These distinct subjectivities converge in a generative interplay that manifests what Ortner (2006) describes as *agentive action*, the capacity of individuals to improvise and transform their environment through practice. The ensemble thus becomes a site of collective agency, where learning occurs through difference rather than uniformity. Diversity among musicians is not a hindrance but the very source of artistic and pedagogical innovation.

At the same time, such diversity introduces communicative and symbolic complexities that shape ensemble dynamics. Following Bourdieu's (1984) concept of *cultural capital*, hierarchies of taste and legitimacy often reproduce themselves within classrooms and rehearsal spaces. When teachers privilege certain repertoires or aesthetic norms, other forms of knowledge risk marginalization. This underscores the necessity of reflexivity as a condition of practice, as an ongoing self-examination through which teacher-researchers become aware of their own positions and presuppositions, thereby opening spaces for horizontal dialogue and more inclusive forms of musical knowing.

From the perspective of research-creation, tension does not necessarily signify failure but rather constitutes a methodological pathway, a means of inquiry and a way of knowing. Artistic *friction*, manifested in moments of disagreement, silence, or dissonance, marks critical junctures for reflection, negotiation, and learning. As Bravi (2021) and Aguilar (2025) observe, such moments of creative doubt are intentionally provoked to deepen understanding. They prompt students to articulate the form in which they wish to recreate and to negotiate the meaning of what is being collectively achieved. Within this process, sound and dialogue are interwoven, giving rise to co-created knowledge that embodies both the aesthetic and the relational principles of research-creation.

The autoethnographic gaze of the teacher-researcher is central to this inquiry. Through reflexive writing and narrative accounts of the creative process, the teacher-researcher documents not only outcomes but also the processes of *becoming*, how personal learning, emotional response, and pedagogical choices evolve within the ensemble context. This reflexivity repositions the teacher-researcher from the role of knowledge transmitter to that of co-learner and mediator, echoing Habermas's (1987) notion of *communicative action*, wherein understanding arises not from authority but from discourse. From this perspective, the teacher's subjectivity is not a limitation but a resource: it becomes the foundation for empathy, trust, and the cultivation of creative freedom within the educational and artistic space.

Furthermore, intercultural musical settings benefit profoundly from the pedagogical reflexivity that underpins methodologies such as research-creation and autoethnography. In moments of collective music-making where culturally informed identities converge, performers engage in what Ochoa Gautier (2014) calls *plural hearing*, a practice of openness to multiple forms of sonic experience and a conscious rejection of epistemological dominance. From this perspective, the ensemble operates as a microcosm of democratic citizenship, where listening, negotiation, and co-creation give rise to a pedagogy grounded in recognition and coexistence.

The discussion above shows that musical creation within intercultural ensembles constitutes a participatory form of epistemic pluralism that integrates aesthetic, social, and ethical dimensions into a shared space of inquiry. The union of autoethnography and research creation reimagines classrooms and rehearsal spaces as communities of representation in which knowledge is not simply transmitted but constructed together. Reflexivity, in this sense, is not an optional complement but a methodological and ethical necessity that enables the emergence of meaningful, inclusive, and transformative knowledge within artistic and educational contexts.

5 Conclusion

This study explores autoethnography and research creation as methodological approaches that redefine artistic practice and pedagogy within music education. It demonstrates that ensemble-based art making constitutes a space where the artistic, epistemic, and social dimensions of practice coexist. The ensemble is therefore not only a site of performance but also a living laboratory of knowledge production, where collective creativity, reflection, and intercultural dialogue are continuously intertwined.

The results presented throughout the paper demonstrate that musical creation has a fundamentally relational and collaborative character. It is shaped not only by technical ability but also by the personal and cultural experiences that participants contribute to a shared field of meaning. Within this communal dynamic, hierarchies of authority and knowledge become visible and can be transformed, leading toward more democratic and participatory forms of learning. In this context, the teacher-researcher assumes a renewed role, no longer as a distant observer of knowledge production, but as an active co learner who encourages communication, reflection, and the imaginative exchange of diverse perspectives among participants.

Research-creation therefore demonstrates that artistic practice, particularly in the field of music, should not be regarded as a peripheral area of investigation or as merely expressive activity that offers little informational value. Instead, it represents an existential challenge and a meaningful way of searching for insight, capable of generating situated and transformative forms of knowledge. When the act of making music is accompanied by critical introspection, documentation, and commentary, it allows for the expression of everyday corporeal and emotional forms of understanding that are often overlooked within traditional academic paradigms because they appear fragmentary or incoherent. Recognizing creative processes as

epistemic engagements helps to bridge the distance between the intuitive richness of artistic knowledge and the reflective depth of academic inquiry.

These methodologies also find meaningful parallels in intercultural education. They invite teachers and learners to regard cultural differences not as a problem to be resolved but as a stimulus for creativity and an ethical dimension of learning. The tensions that arise, whether communicative, musical, verbal, or emotional, become productive moments in which power, identity, and belonging are negotiated through sound. Through autoethnography, educators can recognize their own cultural positioning, while through research-creation they can transform that awareness into a shared pedagogical process. This collaborative engagement enables the development of learning experiences where the equal participation of all voices leads to a deeper embodiment of diversity and inclusiveness.

Finally, this article reaffirms the view that artistic creation constitutes knowledge in action. By integrating autoethnography and research-creation into the study and teaching of music, it becomes possible to reach new areas of learning that, in the future, may further honor plurality, dialogue, commonality, and shared challenges. These methodologies have the potential to expand both our cognitive capacity and the conditions for transformation. Through creative action, knowledge itself becomes a form of human language that broadens understanding and humanizes learning. It demonstrates that knowledge emerges from encounters among voices, experiences, and cultures, revealing the deeply human dimension of creativity that is inherent in musical practice.

Ethics statement

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. Written informed consent from the participants was not required to participate in this study in accordance with the national legislation and the institutional requirements.

Author contributions

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