



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Healthcare messages communicated through artistic expressions during the COVID-19 pandemic - Hello (*from the Inside*)

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 OPEN ACCESS

PUBLISHED
31 January 2025

CITATION
Eidsaa, RM., 2025. Healthcare messages communicated through artistic expressions during the COVID-19 pandemic - Hello (*from the Inside*). Medical Research Archives, [online] 13(1).
<https://doi.org/10.18103/mra.v13i1.6183>

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DOI
<https://doi.org/10.18103/mra.v13i1.6183>

ISSN
2375-1924

ABSTRACT

The article explores healthcare messages communicated by artistic expressions presented in video formats during the COVID-19 pandemic. The subtitle *Hello (from the Inside)* refers to an Adele parody created by the American singer and comedian Chris Mann in March 2020. By altering Adele's title, *Hello (from the Other Side)* and lyrics, Mann voiced the isolation anxiety felt worldwide when the coronavirus rapidly spread across the globe and the quarantine forced us to stay away from social activities. From the very start of the pandemic, music and other art expressions emerged in digital formats as an immediate response, created by individuals and groups to comment on the circumstances and reflect uncertainty. Parallel with Corona narratives and information about the increase in COVID-19 cases, news channels distributed a range of messages through art, especially music. Art institutions, performing ensembles, and solo performers streamed events, and home-based music and dance activities emerged on social media. Healthcare organizations and institutions joined in the trend and spread COVID-19 information online. Hospital employers appeared with health messages creatively communicated through art. People's homes, institution interiors, hospital lobbies, and surgery rooms became stages for narration, singing, and dancing. When the world seemed to have paused, we gratefully received healthcare messages from the 'inside'. The present article applies an interdisciplinary analytic approach to eight selected video clips that juxtapose artistic expressions and healthcare messages. It aims to shed light on how health messages and aesthetic expressions created during the first wave of the pandemic reflect an artistic conceptualization of COVID-19 knowledge and experiences.

Introduction

The article's point of departure is in the case study *Aesthetic Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Corona Performance No Problema*.¹ International research on the role of art during the COVID-19 pandemic and the creative artistic project *No Problema* for schoolchildren and university students inspired the study. It reflects knowledge about art as a response to global crises and a more profound understanding of connections between art and society. The case study and the present article about the COVID-19 healthcare messages embedded in artistic concepts are based on methodological approaches promoted by the research group *Art and Conflict* at the University of Agder in Kristiansand, Norway. The researchers use different interdisciplinary and cross-aesthetic perspectives when carrying out small-scale and more extensive studies in music, theatre, dance, film, literature, and visual arts. The main objective is "to understand and analyze art in relation to complex social, cultural, didactic, and historical contexts".²

The research problem of the present article is to explore how health messages integrated with artistic expressions emerged as interdisciplinary conceptualizations that revealed processual healthcare knowledge and reflected human experiences that occurred during the first wave of the pandemic. The definition of "health" in this context is based on the World Health Organization's (WHO) principles:

Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The extension to all peoples of the benefits of medical, psychological, and related knowledge is essential to the fullest attainment of health. Informed opinion and active cooperation on the part of the public are of the utmost importance in the improvement of the health of the people.³

Based on the WHO's principles, this article refers to physical, mental and social well-being. The eight video examples show five aesthetic conceptualizations of health issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic: 1) singing doctors and nurses, 2) musical tributes to health workers, 3) hospital staff dance, 4) well-known songs with COVID-19 lyrics, 5) creative COVID-19 poetry.

The following section provides perspectives on art's connection to crises. It comments briefly on research connecting music and human experiences in conflicts on various levels. It may serve as a background for understanding the extensive digital production of artistic responses to the global pandemic. The second part of the present article analyses and discusses eight video examples classified into the five categories of "corona art"⁴⁻⁵ mentioned above.

RESEARCH ON MUSIC AND ART AS RESPONSES TO CRISES

Music listening, music performing and related artistic activities have been extensively studied as responses to mental, social and physical well-being. Researchers from various art disciplines, especially music and visual arts have outlined art's potential to create lines of connections

between society, groups and individuals through receptive experiences and active involvement in creating and performing music or other expressions of art. Art creativity and social relationships are commented on by the Spanish art director Ramon Parramon: Artistic creativity starts making sense when it is expressed in the social context, in the framework of an interconnection between creative subjects, infrastructures, institutions, and collective bonds.^{6(p6)}

Parramon discusses how societal ideologies and values shape art and its potential impact on society. From mid-March 2020, aesthetic responses emerged to comment on the growing collective, global anxiety. Bradbury et al. comment: The arts were proactively adopted by many as part of a strategy to cope with the crisis and to support and help people manage the stress of the pandemic. Arts were found to facilitate relaxation, escapism, mood, confidence, positivity, a sense of connection, and to reduce loneliness, worries, and negative emotions.^{7 (p5)}

There is extensive documentation on the use of visual art as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic,⁴⁻⁷ but this article will focus on music. Empirical studies on individual's use of music in everyday life is a central topic,⁸ and ethnomusicologists frequently discuss the meaning of music and art activities in complex societal crises.⁹ Music was introduced to distribute health messages early in the pandemic. One of the first viral examples was opera arias sung from Italian balconies. The balcony singing is commented on by the Norwegian musicologist Rinholm, who refers to a collective vulnerability: Opera singing from balconies means something different after COVID-19 hit the world. In this context, the balconies were not part of the scenography at an opera stage but real balconies in real Italian cities. What meaning does the balcony song reflect in addition to the text and what it otherwise means? It can perhaps be said that the singing from Italian balconies reflected that we have limited control over our lives. Are we connected in new ways since we need each other to a greater extent than we imagined?^{10(p57)}

Thus, the opera moved outside the institutionalised venues and became a symbol of connecting art and people during the emergence of a global crisis. Art institution stages were used in new ways. Another example is the Grand Theatre de Liceu in Barcelona, where more than 2300 plants were placed by the conceptual artist Eugenio Ampudia in the audience's seats, and a string quartet performed from the stage. The juxtaposing of a string quartet's music shared with a plant installation in the auditorium was published worldwide.¹¹

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND HEALTH COMMUNICATION

American history professor Peter Baldwin thoroughly analyses how different countries coped with the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. He argues that the immediate worldwide scientific cooperation was "one of the epidemic's few silver linings". Compared to earlier pandemics, "an astonishing amount of scientific information on the coronavirus poured out almost instantly".^{12(p14)} Baldwin describes how epidemiological knowledge was posted on the web rapidly, so quickly that scientists had to develop effective critical review

systems to guard against misleading and possible conspiracy theories that might harm public health.^{12(p15)}

In the book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, published sixty years ago, Marshall McLuhan¹³ claimed that 'the medium is the message', which connects to our perspectives on multimedia transmission today. As explained by the author David Kadavy: To McLuhan, media is anything that extends our capabilities as humans. He says, "Any extension, whether of skin, hand, or foot, affects the psychic and social complex." In other words, any media extends our capabilities. The process changes how we think and interact with one another.¹⁴

The distribution of health messages on social media and TV channels during the COVID-19 pandemic underlines McLuhan's argument about media as an 'extension of man'. When we could not meet face-to-face, there was a profound distribution of messages on the Internet about health issues, ranging from washing hands to numbers of COVID-19 cases and deaths caused by the pandemic. The increased use of digital media reflected how communication had been developed, and pandemic news rapidly spread across the globe. Bezbaruah et al. who discuss how the digital revolution has transformed communication, commented on the global Internet sharing of information when the coronavirus hit:

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has seen an information deluge on digital platforms, making it difficult to identify trustworthy, reliable sources. This phenomenon is now referred to as an "infodemic"; a communication of both "accurate and inaccurate information during an epidemic", which has given rise to the field of "infodemiology", the science of managing infodemics.^{15(p1)}

Parallel to social media's dissemination of official institutional health messages and private COVID-19 narratives, artistic concepts emerged as aesthetic responses to the crisis. The present small-scale study on health messages and communication through the arts will not discuss the science of managing infodemics. However, reminding readers that the video examples selected as empirical data mirror digitalised media's information transmission is relevant.

In 2022, the World Health Organization presented the online conference *Communicating Science through Art During the COVID-19 pandemic*. The moderator, Supriya Bezbaruah, who is responsible for WHO's health message communication to the public, refers to the organization's aim to make science useful, relevant, and meaningful for people. The topic for the conference is that disseminating health information is a meaningful and effective way to "reach to the hearts of people and getting science to the heart of people, through art."¹⁶ Art's role in health communication is further highlighted by the WHO Art and Health lead, Christopher Bailey. Not only does art present scientific knowledge about the COVID-19 pandemic to the public, but artistic pandemic projects also signal to health institutions the great value of creativity in the arts for people. Creativity is highlighted as a crucial element for mental well-being in times of crisis. Thus, perspectives from the WHO conference in 2022 shed light on COVID-19 health

communication through art in the examples selected for this study. The examples show aesthetically framed messages about physical, mental, and social well-being, from the 'inside'.

Method

American sociologist Patricia Leavy comments that art has the potential to be both immediate and lasting.¹⁷ She undelines that while the arts are worthy unto themselves for studies in artistic expressions and cultural enrichment, they are invaluable to research across disciplines. Thus, this article aims to describe, explore, and discover meanings created across the disciplines COVID-19 healthcare and aesthetic-artistic expressions and activities during the first wave of the pandemic. This article reflects methods related to research in the arts highlighting interdisciplinarity, multimodal theory and music performance approaches.

INTERDISCIPLINARITY

In art research a variety of terms are used to define interdisciplinarity. The Open College of Art explains interdisciplinarity as "the study of two or more disciplines alongside a critical engagement with subjects in the wider world, that aims to communicate connections through thinking and practice."¹⁸ When the Slovakian Music Professor Jerneja Znidaršič discusses interdisciplinarity in education, she emphasizes that "disciplines may be connected by complexity of forms, levels, views, approaches and strategies, although they all have a feature that is connecting disciplines or/and subjects".^{19(p3)} Thus, an interdisciplinary approach seems relevant when exploring this study's empirical material which is connected to thinking and practice.

Applying Professor Svetlana Nikita's typology of interdisciplinary strategies to the analysis may help to achieve a deeper understanding of the health and art-conceptualization.²⁰ Nikita uses the terms *contextualizing*, *conceptualizing* and *problem-centering* when explaining how fields or phenomena are connected: *Contextualizing* means to analyse depending on the applied context (time and history), "embedding any disciplinary material in the fabric of time, culture and personal experience."^{20(p252)} *Conceptualizing* undelines what are the core concepts that are central to two or more disciplines, and what is the rigorous quantifiable connection among them. *Problem-centering* refers to taking into account the knowledge and models of thinking in several disciplines to examine messy-life problems (water, global warming, pandemics) that require more than one discipline to solve. The strategy aims for using the achieved knowledge and understanding to action and social change.^{20(p253)}

ADDITIONAL THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The eight video examples are also explored by using elements from van Leeuwen's multimodal theory,²¹ perspectives from music aesthetics referred to by the musicologist Furnes,²² and relational aesthetics.²³ According to van Leeuwen,²¹ no message or "text" is monomodal; there will always be more than one mode or expression to explore. The elements in the video clips may be interpreted according to their meaning-making function referred to as *semiotic potential*. Van Leeuwen lists several language functions, and for this analysis, the

emphasis is on interactive, personal, imaginative and informative use of language.^{21(p77)}

A key question is how the health messages integrate into artistic concepts, genres, and styles and thus reflect what Furnes call conceptualised connections between musical (or artistic) and non-musical (or non-artistic) elements.^{22(p229)} Thus, there is a relevance in using perspectives from music aesthetics in the analysis. In addition, the video examples also connect to the American professor of music Gerald Klickstein's key terms for musicians' audience communication: *relevance*; how a target audience connects culturally and intellectually with the expressions presented; *empathy*: how the target audience connects emotionally with the content, and *exclusivity*: how the musician provides experiences not readily available elsewhere.²⁴ Furthermore, the empirical data may be viewed according to the French philosopher Nicolas Bourriaud's approach *relational aesthetics*. Bourriaud's perspective on art is that the meaning of art lies in the human interaction and the social context of artistic activities, the situations in which art and an audience create a community together, the use of art as a form of life and a model of agency in the world, and that the prime criterion for artistic quality is no longer the newness of an aesthetic expressions.^{25(p92)}

The video examples

The video selection takes its point of departure in examples from the UK and North America due to language issues. Each video includes spoken verbal messages and messages through music. The examples are categorized into five artistic concepts to expose how health and artistic concepts became connected. The analytical approach highlights the key terms related to the above interdisciplinary approaches. It examines the presentation modes, including the performer's verbal message, musical expressions, style, genre and dissemination, and physical environment. The video categories are:

1. **Singing doctors on the COVID-19 front line.** "Imagine" by Dr Elvis Francois and Dr William Robinson, March 25, 2020,²⁶ and "The Self You Used to Know" by Dr Grant Kennedy, April 5, 2021²⁷
2. **Musical tributes to health staff.** "Fight Song - Like a Small Boat on the Ocean" by singer-songwriter Rachel Platten May 2, 2020;²⁸ and "Smile" by nurse Alaina Smalley at Phelps Hospital, December 7, 2020²⁹
3. **Hospital dance videos.** Hospital staff presented a line dance to de-stress with the hip hop song "Cupid Shuffle" April 7, 2020,³⁰ and, Dancing When Celebrating the COVID-19 Vaccine December 22, 2020³¹
4. **Songs with COVID-19 lyrics.** "Hello (from the Inside)" - an Adele Parody by performer Chris Mann, March 26, 2020³²
5. **Creative COVID-19 poetry.** *A Drop of Hope: Poetry from the Vaccination Centre* created by the organisation Poet in the City, UK, in collaboration with the Science Centre Frances Crick Institute in London³³

The research questions are: 1) What messages or values are apparent in the video content? 2) Which music or art genres and styles are present in the examples, and 3) How do art modalities add meaning to the health messages?

SINGING DOCTORS ON THE COVID-19 FRONTLINE

Video A

Dr Elvis Francois and Dr William Robinson present their message of comfort by singing John Lennon's "Imagine".³⁴ The video reflects two performers who, with passion and in a straightforward way, address the public with Lennon's famous song. The News reporter comments that their performance occurs "right after the shift", which gives us a feeling that the music is closely connected to the medical tasks they have just completed. The doctors present the song for voice and piano accompaniment and supply their performance with brief comments, highlighting "Imagine" as a song to promote hope and establish feelings of togetherness in a difficult time. Their rendition of the song is convincing and reflects that they are also experienced as a musical team. The performers wear surgery room uniforms and are in a hospital environment.

Video B

The second example shows Dr Grant Kennedy, a singer-songwriter, in a park outside the hospital with his guitar. He is alone in a park, dressed in everyday clothes, and brings a personal object, his guitar. He talks openly about personal stress, grief, and anxiety, including family challenges, when he recalls the situation in 2020. Kenny comments that music has a therapeutic effect on him, and composing songs has resulted in mental health relief. In a closing remark, Kennedy comments that he and his family experienced relief when vaccination was available in 2021. Dr Kennedy identifies with the public's anxiety, which he also confirms by his song "The Self You Used to Be" with lyrics describing how his personality is affected by the circumstances. Doctor Kennedy presents a delicate guitar accompaniment to the song.

The singing doctors' art and health message

- *Contextualizing.* The doctors' authority as members of a medical staff, a community of workers lifting other people, physically or mentally
- *Conceptualizing.* The pandemic's challenges presented (problem-centering) as core concepts in verbal message and the lyrics semiotic potential
- *Conceptualizing.* Health care employers' authority (Video A) and vulnerability (Video B)
- *Problem-centering.* Video A presents a well-known song with community-related lyrics, reflecting a globalized, connected humanity, Video B presents an introvert singer-songwriter contextualizing the performance in time, culture and personal experience
- *Interdisciplinary connection.* Mental health communication and valuebased comments on music: music is hope, music comforts, music promotes togetherness
- *Interdisciplinary connection.* Verbal language is interactive and personal and enhanced by bodily functions of singing and playing an instrument

- *Interdisciplinary connection.* Contrasting voice technique underlines different responses to crisis; the uplifting “Imagine” and the introvert “The Self you Used to Know”
- *Informative use of language.* Admitting the global uncertainty (Video A), addressing physical well-being by referring to vaccination (Video B)
- *Connecting music and non-musical elements.* “Music as a powerful form of medicine”

reflect a personal and emotional approach as a core concept

- *Interdisciplinary connection.* Verbal message and musical expression presented in a convincingly and encouraging style
- *Multimodal approach.* Performers’ clothes connect to the situation; pyjamas and hospital uniform
- *Meaning-making language.* Informative background identification Video A: Further search revealed one performer’s involvement in health-related context Musician on Call,³⁶ and the other performer’s involvement in a New York choir. The News reporter commented on meaning: “she is singing to cope with the pandemic; a nurse with a song in her heart”²⁹
- *Relational aesthetics.* References to family; the performer’s baby and a defined health care team in Video A. Video B refers to singer’s mother, who is a nurse₇
- *Informative language.* Video B: Addressing music as a tool to focus on mental health but also as a tool to regulate and calm physical functions such as breathing

MUSICAL TRIBUTES TO HEALTH STAFF

Video A

The American singer-songwriter Rachel Platten presents “Fight Song: Like a Small Boat on the Ocean” as a tribute to nurses at Brigham and Women’s Faulkner Hospital, NY. The chorus is “This is my fight song, take back my life song”, which we may understand as connected to the COVID-19 pandemic in this context. The singer is wearing her pyjamas and sits by her grand piano, giving the viewers a glimpse into her everyday life. The video juxtaposes Platten’s performance with portraits of the hospital staff. The nurses wear work uniforms and masks, and appear in different hospital environments.

This is a tribute to the commitment of the staff in intensive care units. At the end of the video, Platten addresses the nurses directly, saying; “I love you. I hope that this has been a small quantity of life and strength”. The video is dedicated to “all those who remain on the front lines at Brigham and Women’s Faulkner Hospital” and “across the globe”.

Video B

“Smile, though your heart is aching” is sung by the nurse Alaina Smalley, Intensive Care Unit Manager, comforting the staff at Phelps Hospital in New York. The video refers to the value of singing to destress and gain bodily control, and Smalley promotes music connected to self-care and meditation. Smalley’s voice sounds professional and convincing. Nevertheless, she emphasises that she never regrets choosing to be a nurse since the work has an extensive value in her family; her mother is a great example. When asked about giving advice, Smalley focuses on mental health. The lyrics seem particularly meaningful in this case; they have the message of not giving up. The nurse-singer appears as a solo performer wearing her hospital uniform, but there is a glimpse of her as a member in a virtual choir presenting the song “Smile”.

The musical tribute singers’ art and health message

- *Problem-centering.* Represent the global applauding of health workers for their battle on the COVID-19 frontline³⁵
- *Interdisciplinary connection.* Verbal language is interactive and personal and enhanced by bodily functions of singing
- *Contextualization.* Inside and outside locations Video A “Fight Song” lyrics are a tribute from the outside to the inside, Video B “Smile” lyrics are an insider’s message to other insiders, health staff colleagues
- *Conceptualizing.* A capella (unaccompanied) singing and singing accompanied by piano only

HOSPITAL DANCE VIDEOS

Video A

Ten intensive care unit nurses dance to the song “Cupid Shuffle” in the Intensive Care Unit reception room. They wear their Intensive Care Unit T-shirts and masks; some have face shields. The choreographic structure has unison movements, but the individuals move relatively freely. There is a cheerful atmosphere; we can hear the nurses laughing and joining in to sing the lyrics. This aligns perfectly with the musical ambience of a hip-hop-inspired line dance. The dance sequence reflects collective destressing.

Video B

The video shows dance as an expression of joy to celebrate the arrival of the Corona vaccine. From a Tel Aviv hospital, CNN reported an unusual scene in the hospital lobby: “It felt like a party, but what the staff was celebrating was the start of Israel’s vaccination campaign”. The video highlights an interview with Dr. Adi Nimrod, who expresses his gratitude for the vaccine and refers to the overwhelming health challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. He underlines that the pandemic experience has taught us to be humbler and care for each other. The reporter provides an informative summary of the pandemic in Israel, and the video concludes with a clip from the hospital lobby, which serves as a venue for joyful dancing. Since the arrival of the vaccine, “vaccine dance videos” were posted on TikTok and other social media, showing hospital staff with masks and face shields dancing outside the hospital.³⁷

The Hospital dancers’ art and health message

- *Contextualizing.* Dance as an expression of hospital staffs’ feelings applied in time and history ; - the COVID-19 context
- *Conceptualizing.* Dance is destressing and serves as a personal, spontaneous expression of joy
- *Problem-centering.* Dance reflects recreationally exercising to de-stress from practical work situations and was used to welcome the COVID-

19 vaccine (achieved knowledge and understanding to action)

- *Connected by non-verbal expressions.* Connecting mind and body, movements and non-verbal communication
- *Relational aesthetics.* Dance as a tool for connecting with others
- *Interdisciplinary complexity.* Psychological, bodily, and artistic components reflecting health care staff as 'humans, not heroes'

COVID-19 LYRICS AND RECOVERY ANTHEMS

On March 22, 2020, CNN reported that people eagerly rewrote classic songs with coronavirus lyrics:

With millions of Americans stuck at home to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus, people are doing whatever they can to stay sane. For some, that means rewriting the lyrics to their favorite songs to add a little levity to a grave situation.

Some are channelling their inner songwriter to rework classics by Billy Joel, Queen, and others into clever new compositions that reflect how drastically our lives have changed in recent days.³⁸

The example "Hello (from the Inside)" - an Adele Parody by Chris Mann, March 26, 2020²² sparked the idea for the headline of the present article. The new lyrics depict quarantine consequences and voice the deep anxiety the majority feels. The singer's pale face from the inside of the window underlines his dream of going out to eat and drink. He calls for social life; he misses his neighbours and searches for entertainment other than news and Disney movies. The authoritative message to stay at home breaks his heart; he is on the verge of panic.

Several well-known songs were rewritten with COVID-19 lyrics, but songs with original lyrics were also used, as presented by The Current Music News on 20 April 2020, highlighting that NYC hospitals pick coronavirus 'survival anthems'.³⁹ The reporter refers to hospitals that have selected victory repertoires (*recovery anthems*) used for patients' health progress, referring to the Beatles' "Here comes the Sun" as an example, frequently played when patients were successfully taken off the ventilator.

New COVID-19 lyrics' art and health message

- *Contextualizing.* New lyrics "Hello from Corona life" mirror COVID-19 restrictions (time and history)
- *Contextualizing.* The state of yearning for social life embedded in an artistic language
- *Conceptualizing.* Facial expressions, gestures and voice quality creates a powerful dramaturgy reflecting anxiety as a COVID-19 core concept
- *Interdisciplinarity.* Isolation, loneliness, and fighting against an outside enemy shared by language and soul, a musical 'echo' and atmospheric timbre reflecting sincere feelings
- *Interdisciplinarity.* Music as ritual: Recorded well-known songs with relevant lyrics consciously used by hospital staff as 'recovery anthems' to celebrate patients' health progress

Creative poetry writing A Drop of Hope

This example presents an institutional initiative introducing a participatory project to the community,

asking the public to share their pandemic experiences. In this case, the main performer is the Francis Crick Institute, a leading scientific institute on research in biomedicine. The institute promotes a community-focused approach to science and emphasizes that they "understand the impact of science on their everyday lives more than ever".⁴⁰ The project is presented on web pages⁴¹ and a Vimeo video.⁴²

In January 2021, the institute changed its exhibition gallery to a vaccination center as part of the UK vaccine campaign. The project was a collaboration between the institute and Poet in the City, a nationally supported spoken word charity. When coming to receive their vaccination, the visitors were given a card and asked to write a few sentences about their feelings concerning the pandemic year and the vaccine. The result was "thousands of voices heard from the community". The institute invited twelve poets to create poetry based on the extensive material from people who came to the gallery to receive their vaccination, their "drop of hope", and reflections by the medical staff at the vaccination center. By rewriting the words shared through individuals' themes, stories, narratives and perspectives, the poets created a collection of 12 poems that were put up as exhibition objects outside the Francis Crick Institute between May and August 2021. The Vimeo video (5:15) combines informative messages, exhibition photos reflecting individual thoughts presented on posters in different colors, and interviews with three poets who share their feelings when creating texts based on the community messages. The video sound is professionally designed with atmospheric and emotional ambient music.

A Drop of Hope's art and health message

- *Contextualizing.* Art needed to give space to healthcare: The vaccination centre moved in to inhabit Crick's exhibition department
- *Conceptualizing.* Inclusive, participatory artistic concept in a multicultural area
- *Problem-centering.* Health research institution invited the public to create art to examine messy-life problems
- *Problem-centering.* Multicultural approach and connecting individuals' situation to global health issues
- *Language's semiotic potential.* Individuals' emotions reflected in language
- *Interdisciplinarity.* Health issues, solidarity, identification, creative art
- *Relational aesthetics.* Reflecting connections between institute and local community, health institute and art organization, poets and the individual contributors
- *Interdisciplinarity.* Aesthetic dimension and informative messages disseminated through words, photos, sounds and music

The video clips have in common that meaning of the art and health message lies in the situation in which performers and the social media users create an audience together. As members of the audience community we recognize Klickstein's key terms for audience communication *relevance, empathy and exclusivity*.²⁴

Discussion

The discussion aims to better understand the possibilities of implementing interdisciplinary interactions between health messages and artistic expressions. For this reason it is vital to explore the integration or synthesis of knowledge as the boundaries between disciplines are dissolved, so that knowledge can be produced. The examples presented in this article reflect a richness of meanings that emerged through interdisciplinary, multimodal and aesthetic communication approaches to the music, lyrics, rewritten lyrics, spoken words, movements, dance, spaces and places. The various elements interacted dynamically on different levels,¹⁹ commenting on physical, mental and social well-being.

INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND MEANING-MAKING

Firstly, meaning emerged from digital production formats and global dissemination through social media networks. The examples above illustrate the transmission of messages through digital productions, which originate from video recordings, TV channels, and social media. Thus, all examples are presented through digital tools; they are 'extensions of man'.¹⁴ The Creative Poetry Writing *A Drop of Hope* contrasts the other cases by highlighting the participatory and inclusive component. Apart from that, this article does not outline recipients' responses.

Secondly, each example projects *problem-centering*;²⁰ the meaning of a global crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic. The construction of meaning takes its point of departure in the pandemic as a discourse for interpretation or a dramaturgical concept explained by the Norwegian professor Andreas Sønning as "the frame of understanding, how we present the content and what elements we emphasise."⁴³ Each example offers individual perceptions of meaning. However, the pandemic affected all of us to such an extent that if we had conducted a reception study on the video examples, the result might have exposed a shared interpretation of the juxtaposing of art and health due to our collective participation in the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, from the perspective of Bourriaud's relational aesthetics, the videos reflect the quality of communicating art and health messages to recipients in a shared societal context. The diverse users of social media became like one community in March 2020. The art modalities functioned like a "model of agency in the world"¹⁸, a way of being proactively involved in the ongoing crisis.

Thirdly, singing, playing instruments, dancing, creating poetry and sharing personal stories digitally were juxtaposed with non-artistic components such as verbal health information and forged into multimodal messages about health and art, gaining meaning through the presented aesthetic-artistic content and the non-art components²² such as location, performers' profession, environment and cultural connotations. Consequently, each video example highlights a health message that emerges as a foreground or an equal component through the various artistic concepts. The messages came from physical 'insides', which imply apartment interiors, hospital lobbies, intensive care units, outdoor hospital spaces, and science institutions such as the Francis Crick Institute hosting vaccination centres.

Fourthly, connecting art to non-artistic disciplines, in this case health, raises the question if music and dance in these examples were used to "spice" up the health message, or if they "engage with the wider world" through the juxtaposed disciplines of artistic-aesthetic elements and health issues to create a "new language".¹⁸ Thus, the field of health reached out to form connections with ideas from a broader cultural context. The health and art videos reflect an interaction and conversation within of the works' aesthetics and externally with ideas. The videos then reflect a synthesis of practice.¹⁸

COMMUNICATION THROUGH ART

The video examples present five singers: two doctors, two nurses, and one professional performer. They have distinct voices and efficient and straightforward lyrical interpretation, which, from this author's perspective, enhance the health messages and add a new meaning, since the music works as an attention-promoting component, as in music therapy sessions.^{44(p145)} Using their voices to sing and talk underlines their personal style and strengthens their focus on mental well-being (*hope, relief*) and social well-being (*togetherness*). One of the doctors' comment on vaccination confirms the inclusion of the physical health aspect. The singer-songwriter performer referred to in Video B *Musical tributes to health care staff* addresses one hospital medical staff team. Thus, the singer creates a social atmosphere, which the doctor duo expressed in the first video example (Video A). The intensive care unit manager, singer and nurse in Example 2 Video B emphasises bodily control and breathing. Thus, she focuses on both mental and physical health.

The two dancing hospital staff examples show distressing and spontaneous joy to celebrate the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccination. Both videos promote healthcare staffs' personal feelings. The healthcare employers appear as integrated community members, allowing them to reflect on their need for mental, physical, and social wellbeing. The dancing sessions showcase the team's interactive communication and expose nurses and doctors who risk showing vulnerability in choosing bodily improvisation as an aesthetic response to cope with COVID-19 related emotions.

Hospital staff dancing later became highly debated, as some critics commented that it diminished respect for the health workers. One example is *The Matt Wash Show* on April 14, 2020.⁴⁵ According to Lancaster et al.,⁴⁶ many healthcare workers used social media in 2020 to publish dance responses to COVID-19. The videos were labelled "dancing nurses" and Lancaster et al. who conducted a study on 52 TikTok dancing nurses' videos, claim that in some videos, ethics regulations became violated. Spontaneously created dance at the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccine, such as shown from the Tel Aviv hospital, appears less controversial since the dance reflects individual responses of joy and was presented in hospital lobbies or outside.

The professional performer in the video example *Hello (from the Inside)* emerges as a dynamic communicator, conveying a message of existential loneliness parallel with the lyric's list of COVID-19 restrictions and societal effects. He altered Adele's famous ballad into an artistic narrative reflecting individuals' struggles to cope with

everyday life during a global crisis. The artistic elements added emotional dimensions that would have been impossible with words alone.

ART AND HEALTH

The poetry-writing project example, *A Drop of Hope*, exemplifies how a health institution welcomed the public's personal messages. From this author's perspective, new meanings emerge immediately by exploring how the Francis Crick Institute and Poets in the City present *A Drop of Hope* in the Vimeo video, linking together atmospheric ambient music and soundscapes with general project information, the poets' personal emotions during the creative process and the coloured photos of the text contributions. The Vimeo video reflects a realization of the Crick Institute's mission statement "to carry out world-class research to understand how living things work and to drive benefits for human health" when inviting citizens to participate in a unique example of human care, expressed by combining science, sound, visual art and poetry reflecting issues about mental health in a beautifully designed aesthetic message.⁴⁷⁻⁴⁸

All the examples above convey health messages from "the inside." The artistic concepts, genres, and styles became dynamic elements interacting with each other through interdisciplinary phenomena. As social media users, we connected culturally and intellectually with the artistic content that resonated with our understanding of the situation. Thus, we became emotionally connected to the health aspects and art elements since we became attached to involvement in the COVID-19 pandemic as a collective trauma (*time and history*). The combination of health messages and artistic concepts provided an exclusivity, offering us experiences (*core concepts*) not readily available elsewhere while we examined messy-life problems (*problem-centering*).²⁰

When studying the videos, questions about values and meaning arise from a musicologist's perspective, and it seems relevant to lean on the music psychologist Lars Bonde.¹⁹ In his discussion about the possible effects of music, Bonde introduces four focus areas: *physiology* - music as sound affecting the body; *syntax* - music as a language creating experiences of aesthetic cohesion and structure; *semantics* - music as a language with existential meaning; and *pragmatics* - music as interaction and social phenomenon.^{19(p11)} Each video example may reflect Bonde's components as we think that the public experienced a richness in the complexity of musical sounds, the music's communicative qualities, and the feeling of togetherness. Thus, the health messages seemed to be strengthened by the music. The Norwegian sociologist and founder of the Peace Research Institute in Oslo Johan Galtung's theses of art refer to 'uplifting music' and 'music and unity:

Art may make us forget the ordinary, catapulting us for some time to a virtual, more spiritual level where we meet a pure more detached reality, a form in space (visual art, sculpture) and /or time (music, literature), detached from empirical reality. We are uprooted by good, touching,

engaging art from our here and now, with all its pain and pleasure, into the world of the artist who fills us with his or her form and content.^{49(p54)}

Galtung's theses should be subject to critical discussions. However, the video examples mirror health messages interwoven with music and other artistic expressions aiming to have an 'uplifting' effect on the receiver, in this case, the public who used digital media in their daily life during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the art and health concepts reflect Klickstein's key terms for audience communication; relevance, empathy and uniqueness.²⁰

On February 10, 2020 the South China Morning Post published a video on YouTube with the headline "Coronavirus medical staff dance with quarantined patients in Wuhan". AP/Newsflare Wuhan commented:

In order to entertain the quarantined patients in Wuhan, medical staff in a makeshift hospital have come up with this idea. Health workers said these patients have mild symptoms of coronavirus. And that many are depressed and worried about their condition. The staff hope the dance can cheer the patients up and help them to recover. Their efforts have touched many online.⁵⁰

Before the global community had heard about the novel coronavirus, Chinese nurses in protective clothing played music from a loudspeaker and danced in a makeshift hospital. The event was like a healthcare institution's first "hello" to the public and thus introduces the extensive production of digitally shared art and health messages about the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

According to the Italian pianist, music historian and philosopher Alberto Nones, the pandemic "made our priorities explicit, with health and safety set above all the rest, including not only culture and leisure, but even work and economic growth".^{51(pvi)} Even so, the pandemic resulted in an extensive production of new knowledge in many fields, such as global communication, medical research, health care, art in society.

Regarding future research, the author concurs with Supriya Bezbaruah, the moderator at the 2022 World Health Organization Conference on Communicating Science through Art during the COVID-19 pandemic, referred to in this article's introduction. Her desire is for the WHO to gain deeper insights into the dissemination of science through artistic concepts. She asks for further research, using creativity positively and constructively to attain more knowledge to communicate science connected to the art and to involve the community in expressing health related challenges and emotions through artistic expressions. For researchers in various fields, Bezbaruah's request may inspire and encourage further explorations of the interdependence of science, art, and health.

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