

THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING TO MUSIC IN THE MUSIC CLASSROOM

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Abstract. *The paper points out the importance of continuous and mapped out listening to music in the teaching of music at a younger primary school age. Also, the paper emphasizes the importance of the aesthetic experience of music, as a complete and irreplaceable part of the teaching practice of music education. Different contexts of adopting musical and aesthetic qualities, followed by aesthetic evaluation, contribute to the development of musical preferences, which results in the formation of musical taste. This fact is very important, especially if we keep in mind the crisis of taste in the sphere of aesthetic and artistic contents that we are surrounded by. In line with the above mentioned circumstances, the role of the teacher is especially important today, who, in addition to the careful implementation of the curriculum, should guide pupils towards the choice of quality music content outside the school framework.*

Key words: *music education, listening to music, aesthetic experience, younger primary school age*

1. INTRODUCTION

The issues of pupils' music education are inspiring for researchers of different profiles. They often scrutinize the goals of music education, methods of learning music, tasks of music (and the related aesthetic) education, the influences of the social environment, family, media, etc. However, most researchers agree on the importance of direct and comprehensive experience of music, with continuous acquisition of theoretical knowledge about a particular work – its means of expression, form, content, historical context and other facts pertaining to its understanding.

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2. TEACHING MUSIC IN LOWER PRIMARY GRADES

Musical art is the basis of musical development, but also an important factor in the pupil's aesthetic, cognitive, moral, psychomotor and social development. As such, it has an irreplaceable educational role, although its educational significance is not the only form of social value (Djordjević 2008).

The wide range of effects of musical art on a person opens numerous perspectives for its implementation in the teaching process. In the primary school educational cycle, the teaching of music significantly contributes to the overall development of pupils, aiming to develop love for music art, sense of beauty and sublimity, and assisting versatile personal development by enriching and beautifying a person's life. The most important goals of music culture are the development of interests, musical sensitivity and creativity, as well as training to understand the possibilities of musical expression and develop sensitivity to musical values by learning about the musical traditions and culture of one's own and other peoples (The Rulebook on the Curricula for the First, Second, Third and Fourth Grade of Primary Education and the Syllabus for the Third Grade of Primary Education). In order to successfully implement the set goals, aside from the valid frameworks (curricula, rulebooks, etc.), it is important for the teacher to carefully examine pupils' musicality, and to continuously provide support to those who do not have distinctive talent or interest in music. The development and cultivation of musical disposition, such as interest, curiosity, musical sensitivity and creativity, should be indispensable elements of the teaching process.

In considering the teaching of music at primary school age, it is very important to bear in mind the fact that its goal is not to educate professional musicians, but to enable pupils to become acquainted with all vital dimensions of music through their personal experience, so they can fully understand and experience musical pieces, and participate in a music event of their choice (Туцањац at all. 2010, 6). However, on the path of music education, it is very important that the body of theoretical knowledge about music (musical components, forms, genres, instruments, etc.) is equally connected with the sound perspective, in order to understand and permanently adopt genuine *musical knowledge*.

Upon an insight into the current curricula¹, it can be stated that in the lower primary grades the emphasis is on listening to music, its performance and creation. The mentioned areas are present through all grades, with greater attention being paid to music literacy in the third and fourth grades. The curricula of music teaching at the level of the 1st and 2nd grade indicate the constant permeation and synergy of all areas and thematic units included in the program. This means that individual areas should not be studied in isolation from each other, i.e. that the adoption of certain contents should not be an end in itself. Quite on the contrary, from the very beginning music should be connected with as many events in the child's life as possible, and preference is given to experiential learning in which students develop a personal relationship with music. Experiential learning within this subject implies active listening to music, personal musical expression of pupils through musical performances and musical creation. Thus, the gradually acquired experience gets rationalized and becomes a theoretical framework, valuable in the formation of the overall picture of musical form and content.

From the 3rd grade on, more attention is paid to the development of critical-analytical thinking, aiming to help pupils replace superficial reasoning by developing a personal

¹ See: The Rulebook for the Programs of Teaching and Learning for the First, Second, Third and Fourth Grade of Primary Education listed in the References.

point of view (based on adequate information) and learning how to articulate their creative and artistic choices (Rulebook on the Teaching and Learning Program for the Third Grade of Primary Education). It is also suggested that pupils should be directed not only to find correct answers, but also to be given the opportunity to be inventive and imaginative in their thinking.

The recommended contents included in the curriculum of music for the 4th grade should provide knowledge and information to pupils to ensure that they can follow, distinguish, experience and evaluate musical values with understanding and joy (Rulebook on the Teaching and Learning Program for the Fourth Grade of Primary Education). The cognitive process in the teaching of music is based on experiencing music through songs and listening to music. Singing by ear is complemented by singing based on the musical notation, but also by songs of the teacher's free choice if they meet the criteria of educational and artistic value.

The complexity of teaching music is reflected in the fact that, aside from music written for children, pupils are also introduced to works that go beyond children's musical repertoire. Getting to know classical music implies good preparation for the emotional, intellectual and perceptual dimension of experiencing different musical forms and styles with the aim of forming pupils' musical competence. It can be stated that in all segments, i.e. teaching areas, the emphasis is on the importance of experience, particularly on the experience that includes understanding, i.e. knowledge (or recognition) of a certain content. This is understandable, given the fact that enjoying the beauty of nature, tones, colors, paintings, sculptures, music, art poetry, ballet and other types of art, implies a personal attitude towards them, i.e. observation of their quality. The ability to perceive also implies certain knowledge in many different areas – without certain knowledge of music, an individual will not be able to understand a composition, to experience it in a specific way, and especially to be critical of it; without certain knowledge in the field of literature, dramatic art or film, one cannot successfully experience and evaluate a literary work or film (Vukasović 1990). The ability to perceive aesthetic features is, therefore, developed gradually, with the development of the ability to perceive the beauty of shapes and colors, sound and words, movement and harmony. That is the responsibility of the teacher (1st to 4th grade teacher, educator) who is in charge of this process.

3. WHY IS THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE OF MUSIC IMPORTANT?

Considering the ultimate goal of music education, music is a means of building and developing the capacities of pupils who become persons who think, know how to listen, express themselves, create and seek beauty in life (Тупањац at all. 2010, 5). Unlike other subjects, music is characterized by an immediate experience during the teaching process. "Teaching music provides an experience of a unique *aesthetic quality*, which is an integral part of it and makes it specific in relation to most subjects in the general curriculum" (Ibid.).

Considerations of the aesthetic experience of music often entail reflections on the emotional echo (Panić 1998, Perlovsky, 2009, Hospers, 1982, Madsen, 1997, Juslin & Sloboda, 2001), but this does not mean that emotionality is its only component. On the contrary, this extremely complex phenomenon includes other factors as well. This attitude is confirmed by Darinka Mitrović (1967, 305) who points to a complex psychological process occurring under the influence of some artistic content (painting, song, book, drama, film, game, ballet, etc.) or something beautiful in nature and the social environment. Aesthetic

experience depends both on the quality of the object (work of art) and on individual sensitivity, interest and culture of the subject or, in other words, the quality and intensity of the aesthetic experience varies depending on the aesthetic content and aesthetic culture of the subject. In addition, it depends on age, personality traits, emotionality and personal affinities. Aesthetic experience is marked by emotionality and wholeness, meaning that the experience of some aesthetic value cannot be cold and indifferent. Emotions that evoke aesthetic values in the subject lay hold of one's consciousness and all psychic processes deeply and completely, entangling an understanding of the content and technique of expression, which indicates that aesthetic experience has two basic components – emotional and intellectual evaluation of the art object (see also: Zdravić Mihailović 2019, 40–49) .

Aesthetic experience is closely related to aesthetic perception, understanding and evaluation. Understanding is important for aesthetic assessment, but these two concepts should not be equated – for assessing certain aspects of what is the subject of listening, a certain amount of understanding is certainly requisite. However, the opinions of pedagogues and psychologists diverge here; music pedagogues generally share the opinion that this ability is innate, so that it is not subject to development and objectively difficult to measure. On the other hand, some psychologists take a stand that “all people, albeit to varying degrees, react to the expressive properties of music, and that this ability can be developed and reliably identified in one of the following ways:

- a) on the basis of the quality of their own performance,
- b) by examining the ability to make valid estimates of the value of a piece of music that has been validated by music experts,
- c) based on the quality of the interpretation of the work ” (Radoš 2010, 82).

The first criterion can be applied only when it comes to musical performance, and the other two can be the subject of direct measurement. Gardner's examination of sensitivity related to musical styles in children of different ages speaks of the possibility of attaining aesthetic assessment through education, showing that some six-year-olds can already assess whether compositions belong to the same musical period or not (Ibid.). Having in mind such research results, it can be concluded that it is possible not only to measure, but also to influence the ability of aesthetic assessment.

Teachers should bear in mind that the aesthetic experience is an individual aesthetic act of the listener, meaning that every pupil's answer about the experience of an art piece (musical work) should be taken into account. Recent conclusions indicate that psycho-musical examinations must definitely focus on the types of musical abilities that have been confirmed to develop in middle childhood as its new legacy, as well as on those related to the earlier decisive period of development – early childhood (from the ages 5–8). It has been asserted that the said period includes the most important critical period, between the ages 5–6 (Ibid., 116), as well as some new types of children's musical abilities, which were previously believed to appear only in older ages (e.g. reacting to expressive qualities of music). All the above results indicate that the children of the mentioned age have exceptional sensitivity, and indirectly point to the important role of music in the development of personality.

One of the important goals of music education is forming the pupils' taste. Some pedagogues rightly point out the fact that it is still undefined in the lower grades of primary education (1st to 4th grade) due to insufficient musical experience, so that can be improved, as part of affective development, under the influence of a stimulating environment, through the cultivation of aesthetic experience of music and quality music

information. This is possible because pupils are flexible and inclined to accept different information and attitudes of adults (Djordjević 2008, 139). The author also reminds that, due to confusion about the subjective and objective, as well as overemphasized emotionality, musical taste in this period of development is characterized by superficial assessments, as a result of the pupil's aesthetic perception which is an elementary form of thinking at that age. Hence, listening to art music is the primary task of teaching, in order to enrich the musical experience of pupils and develop and form their musical taste. It is important to point out here that a considerable number of psychological researches show that continuous listening to a certain type of music increases the preference for that type of music, which means that music of proven quality should be forced. The role of the teacher in this process is to provoke and cultivate the experience of music, and to view the attitude of pupils as a free and independent expression of thoughts and feelings.

Some pedagogues state that primary school pupils are more and more inclined to newly-composed folk and pop music, and less and less to music for children (Djordjević 2009, 48). The author believes that this is the result of the influence of the media and the neglect of institutions that should take care of the proper musical development of children. It turns out that the school is the only place where children encounter valuable musical works (with art music), with a small fund of music classes being a limiting factor for listening to art music. In such circumstances, the media and various commercial events for children come to the fore, with their problematic musical and aesthetic values. Having been left without 'their' music, children are increasingly consuming newly composed folk and pop music.

4. LISTENING TO MUSIC IN TEACHING MUSIC

Although it partially indicates the passive attitude of pupils, this teaching area actually requires great attention of pupils and active focusing on the targeted content. Some researchers believe that listening to music requires conscious cognitive activity, and that it includes focusing on certain musical elements (Hallam 2012, 57), while the curricula state that it is an active mental process, which includes emotional experience and mental activity of pupils.

Recent researches on music listening classes show that there is an evident agreement among authors who study the organization of the flow of directed activities in the field of music listening. Activities are usually composed of introductory, central and final parts, in which the first hearing goes without any questions or information about the work, while subsequent hearings are accompanied by certain tasks, questions or a conversation about one musical characteristic (Соколовић Игњачевић 2019, 51). Such an approach leaves enough space for the musical work to be experienced as beautiful *per se*, without delving into its form, structure, elements of expression and the like. After that, the elements of the musical work are analyzed through discussion and formulation of certain requirements for pupils.

The methodological procedure is somewhat different in the teaching of music in lower grades, as it is focused on pupils' discovery, i.e. recognition of expressive elements. "Pupils can recognize the expressive elements previously presented and explained to them by the teacher in a way similar to the task to be set for them later" (Rulebook on the Curriculum for the First Cycle of Primary Education and the Teaching

and Learning Program for the First Grade of Primary Education), or “the first listening involves going through the entire composition (demonstrative listening), with a pre-set task for listening to music – perceiving the performing medium: instrumental or vocal (solo, group) or orchestral music performance”. Each subsequent listening (three to four times) is fragmentary, involving singling out of remarkable units and analyzing the main elements of the musical work – in the case of literary content (textual analysis), repetition, melody, tempo, rhythm (analytical listening) (Rulebook on the Curriculum for the Second Grade of Primary Education).

Active listening to music emphasizes the aesthetic experience that occupies the pupil’s entire personality, intellect, feelings and will. Such an experience enhances mental activities (attention, imagination, memory), enriches emotions and influences the later development of musical creativity. For the sake of a more complete experience and acquisition of permanent knowledge, it is good to merge and permeate certain arts in practice. Stories illustrated with music, preferably with relatively familiar literary contents, are the most suitable for the first listening and getting familiar with music. Where characters are represented by music, pupils can be invited to give their attitudes as to which voice, tempo or rhythm evokes a particular person.

The teacher’s role in organizing the correct approach to listening to music is important for the aesthetic attitude towards music and for the interpretation and experience of a musical work. In the teaching practice of primary education, it is articulated in two forms: as a special part of the central part of the class within the teaching unit which includes song evaluation (by ear or based on a score) and listening to music within the teaching units planned to observe some of the specific requirements (getting to know certain instruments, instrumental ensembles, musical form, etc.).

The segment of the class involving listening to music consists of two parts: demonstration and analysis of a sound example. Depending on the goals and tasks of listening to examples from the literature, the teacher can start the class with an introductory story about a certain phenomenon (object, animal, etc.), and then play an example. It is always important to direct pupils’ attention towards a specific goal: consideration of the instruments used, chosen tempo, dynamics, melody and rhythm, i.e. consideration of the way in which musical means were used and the effect achieved. The aural experience can also be complemented by visual means (for example, a painting that evokes the idea of the work being heard, etc.). After an insight into all the important elements of a specific work, it is possible to talk about its character (whether it is lyrical or dramatic) and about the overall experience. “The culmination comes right at the moment when pupils involved in the process of analytical listening have gone through several dimensions of the music medium, through its structure, expressive elements, compositional procedure, followed by reflections about the aesthetic domain, which all contributes to gaining complex, multiple experience of man’s musical expressive medium” (Ivanović 2007, 57). As the author further suggests, the teacher can tell the pupils the non-musical content, the genesis of the work, as well as the wider context, so that together they can listen to the work as a whole; ‘guessing’ the title of a composition or program content should not be an end in itself. By setting specific tasks, the pupil becomes an active participant in teaching, which, over time, opens new opportunities for learning and experiencing music, i.e. improving concentration, interest, and the predisposition to experience music of future content (Ibid, 62). So, the aesthetic experience of music does not have to be connected only with listening to music or performing it, but can be combined with the works from the domain of visual or literary art.

The choice of compositions is important when it comes to listening to music. Valuable works of program music are very common in the lower grades – these compositions are appealing to younger pupils due to their descriptive character (picturesqueness) and emotionality, so they are easier to perceive and experience. Since program music has the underlying content (extra-musical meaning), it can be a great basis for boosting children's imagination – its content usually describes or imitates the world around us. Characteristic sounds or literary contents evoke specific emotions in pupils and contribute to a better experience of the work of art. As far as fairy tales are concerned, pupils can be offered well known works such as *Peter and the Wolf* (S. Prokofiev), *Krcko Orašćić* (P. I. Tchaikovsky) and the like. In addition to teaching music, this type of music can also be used in teaching other subjects. For example, program music dedicated to nature (children's songs *Al' je lep ovaj svet*, *Na livadi* or compositions *Vltava*, *Four Seasons*, *Carnival of Animals*...) can arouse appropriate emotions and thus contribute to the development of ecological culture in pupils.

In addition to specific titles from program music and the development of imagination and creativity, one of the important outcomes of listening to music is to influence the perception of melody, rhythm, and harmony. Perception of music is a cognitive ability and the first stage in the perception of music. As such, it is the foundation of musical learning, which is initially based on noticing the difference in pitch between two tones, features of melody and rhythm, and at a later stage on analytical listening of a complex piece of music. Graduality, as well as shifting the focus to different aspects of the musical work while listening to music is very important, because it affects the understanding and adoption of larger parts of the composition, and later its form (Djordjevic 2008, 141).

Pedagogues completely agree about the importance of listening to music, which is not the case when it comes to performing music. Rojko (2012) rejects the attitudes of some pedagogues according to which an individual must, at least at an elementary level, learn to play an instrument (or at least try to do that) in order to be able to fully understand music or to be able to listen to other people's performances on the basis of their own experience. As an argument, the author cites the fact that there are very many amateur musicians who are actively involved in music (for example, in brass orchestras), but have never reached the level of understanding of art music. It follows that performing music is not a prerequisite for understanding and evaluating it. However, this attitude does not mean denying music education or playing school instruments. On the contrary, pupils' music performances in classes often do not reach high levels, but they significantly affect the overall positive attitude towards music (a large number of pupils get the opportunity to play an instrument for the first time in music classes). One study (Sloboda, 1990; cited in Lehmann, Sloboda, and Woody, 2012) indicates that children who experience strong emotions during live performances of music are more likely to play music later in their life, and that milestones occur in environments where the child perceives neither demands nor threats. In such situations, children are influenced by the inherently pleasant nature of music, and as a result, many of them later decide to become musicians or enroll in music school. Since playing an instrument is one of the favorite activities of the pupils attending lower grades, the teacher should support and develop such an attitude of pupils towards active music performing, and direct the gifted towards extracurricular activities, such as choir or orchestra, or suggest attending school for primary music education. In agreement with the parents, the teacher can recommend an instrument or in some other way support the pupil's interest in performing music. So, playing an instrument may not be crucial when it comes to understanding music or training to listen to 'good' music, but

other aspects of its positive effect on the development of musicality or love of music should not be neglected.

The implementation of the goals and tasks of aesthetic and musical education largely depends on the teacher who, in addition to music education, should also have a sense of beauty in music and other arts. Only such a teacher, with the help of adequate forms and methods of teaching, will be able to recognize, develop and cultivate each pupil's interest in beauty in music, and beyond that, to nurture and encourage his creativity and thus enrich his aesthetic experience. The aesthetic experience of a piece of music largely depends on the way it is interpreted. That is why it is very important to offer pupils quality recordings and performances, that is, if the performer is a teacher, he should enable the best possible interpretation, so that the experience would be as complete as possible.

5. CONCLUSION

The positive climate in the classroom and the stimulating atmosphere that enables students to observe, experience and evaluate quality music are the most important features of teaching music. The increasingly popular form of learning 'for assessment', thanks to which students quickly forget the material and do not have enough power to connect different contents, should be suppressed by a kind of *experiential pedagogy*, especially in music teaching, because the importance of aesthetic experience of music is irreplaceable and indispensable.

Music teaching in the lower grades is at the same time a complex mental process, game, fun and pleasure, so it can be concluded that the role of the teacher is very complex and demanding. In addition to the careful implementation of teaching contents, the role of teachers in the field of extracurricular activities of pupils becomes more and more prominent in modern teaching. Here, we especially mean directing pupils towards listening to quality music in their free time. In recent years, there has been an evident decline in the quality of cultural and even musical contents available in various media to which children are exposed. The great imbalance between aesthetic qualities present within the school framework, and numerous contents of dubious quality outside it, is especially reflected on the younger population of pupils who have yet to form their own aesthetic taste and love for (good) music. We assume that this is the reason why the curriculum suggests that students should be trained to give examples of the music present in their everyday life. This opens a significant space for correcting possible contents that are bad or inappropriate in relation to the pupils' age and interests.

Having in mind the psychologists' findings (Mirković Radoš 2010) that musical preferences are formed in early childhood, and that in the same period it is important to form pupils' musical taste (Djordjević 2008), it is particularly important to emphasize the importance of listening to music in teaching, as well as of the analysis of its content as well-thought-out and planned activities. The multiple role of teachers is reflected in the fact that they direct pupils to quality musical (and in general, artistic) works that are not always an integral part of school programs, but also in arousing their interest in broader aesthetic education – visits to concerts, operas, ballets, theater performances and other cultural events.

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ZNAČAJ SLUŠANJA MUZIKE U NASTAVI MUZIČKE KULTURE

U radu se ukazuje na važnost kontinuiranog i planski vođenog slušanja muzike u nastavi Muzičke kulture u mlađem osnovnoškolskom uzrastu. Takođe, ističe se i značaj estetskog doživljaja muzike, kao celovitog i nezamenljivog dela nastavne prakse muzičkog obrazovanja. Različiti konteksti usvajanja muzičkih i estetskih kvaliteta, praćeni estetskim vrednovanjem, doprinose razvoju muzičkih preferencija koji rezultira formiranjem muzičkog ukusa. Ta činjenica je veoma važna, posebno ako se ima u vidu kriza ukusa u sferi estetskih i umetničkih sadržaja kojima smo okruženi. Shodno pomenutim okolnostima, danas je naročito važna uloga nastavnika koji, pored brižljivog sprovođenja plana i programa, treba da usmerava učenike ka izboru kvalitetnih muzičkih sadržaja i izvan školskih okvira.

Ključne reči: *muzičko obrazovanje, slušanje muzike, estetski doživljaj, mlađi školski uzrast*