

IMPROVING THE ABILITY OF VOCAL INTERPRETATION OF CHILDREN'S SONGS AMONG STUDENTS PRESCHOOL TEACHERS WITHIN PROJECT ACTIVITIES



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Abstract. *Music education plays a pivotal role in shaping a child's personality. Educators with comprehensive musical knowledge are crucial. Vocal and instrumental instruction, including music theory, solfeggio, and piano training, is highly valuable. Specific songs and exercises effectively teach music theory concepts to future educators, showcasing a practical and comprehensive approach. Mastering vocal and instrumental interpretation techniques enables the seamless integration of musical elements into educational activities, enriching new knowledge and experiences. Music fosters better integration among activities and forms a cohesive whole within thematic projects.*

Key words: *music activities, singing, implementation, project planning*

1. INTRODUCTION

Music stimulates the overall development of children, enriching their emotional and social lives, and playing a significant role in their daily experiences. Through organized activities in preschool institutions, equal opportunities are provided for acquiring basic knowledge in music as well as in other areas. Musical education is a planned influence on the formation of a child's personality, stimulating their interests, needs, abilities, and aesthetic appreciation of music. Musical activities, along with other educational areas and

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types of activities, contribute to the comprehensive development of children through goals and tasks (Domonji, 1986). Working with preschool-age children should focus on intellectual, moral, and aesthetic education.

Singing, as one of the most common forms of musical expression, stimulates emotional and cognitive activities in children, promoting other mental processes involved in creative thinking and creation. By using songs with lyrics, a specific impact is achieved on the development of musical taste and the ability to recognize and differentiate songs of various characters. Singing also fosters the development of all musical abilities, enhancing hearing, rhythm, and musical memory, thereby fulfilling the educational and developmental objectives of music education in preschool institutions (Đurković-Pantelić, 1998). It is essential to cultivate predispositions into abilities, whether for expression through tones themselves, or through the influence of tones combined with words or images. Children should be encouraged to explore composers, performers, and musical instruments, fostering a lifelong interest in music. Music serves as a means of aesthetic upbringing, shaping moral personality, activating intellectual abilities, and influencing the psychophysical development of children, particularly during preschool age. Musical development is manifested in emotions, feelings, perceptions, and hearing, from distinguishing individual sounds to recognizing wholes, including pitch, color, rhythm, and dynamics. It is important to nurture the performance of vocal-instrumental compositions, vocal interpretations of specific songs, and vocal improvisation, whether on a known melody and text, or through spontaneous expression with a certain rhythm, dynamics, expressiveness, and sensitivity. Through music, children achieve holistic development, relax, build aesthetic values in art, encourage active participation, and maintain attention and continuity in activities that interest them (Krnjaja, Pavlovic-Breneselovic, 2022).

Carefully designed and creatively guided activities by educators and other professionals contribute to children's positive dispositions, sense of beauty and harmony, and sparks their curiosity for exploration and satisfaction. By introducing children to the world of music through play and fun, these activities stimulate internal motivation for active participation in musical games, singing, playing instruments, dancing and other games. This approach fosters an emotional experience of music, encourages free and creative expression, and supports holistic development of children, laying the foundation for an integrated educational system in the Year of Ascension (Pavlović-Breneselović, Krnjaja, Jovanović, Sjeničić, 2022).

Through vocalization, whether by imitating sounds from nature, or through musical and non-musical sounds, singing can unite and explain everything, from every sound to every tone or melody. Clapping hands, tapping knees, or snapping fingers brings rhythm into play, with the body acting as an instrument. The educator's voice can be used for speaking, humming or singing; hands can clap, snap or tap. Here, the body serves as an instrument - voice as melody, hands and feet as rhythm. This approach encourages problem-solving on the go. If an institution lacks musical instruments, educators and children can create percussion instruments themselves from natural or recycled materials.

In striving to educate and cultivate children through music, it is crucial for educators, particularly caregivers, to be adequately trained and competent. They should be musically educated, well-versed in music theory and history, and adept in practical execution of activities and vocal and instrumental interpretation. To achieve certain goals, it is essential to understand the predetermined tasks of the educational process and focus on problem-solving and skill development. As teachers and educators, we need to foster active listeners,

connoisseurs, and music lovers in children, enabling them to appreciate music in all its beauty and value.

During the pilot research conducted in April 2024 at kindergartens in „Our Child” in Vranje, caregivers reported on selected project topics, with 80% being non-musical and only 20% related to music. This highlights the need for further theoretical research and practical solutions, as there was no project topic that was entirely non-musical yet incorporated elements of music for explanation or enhancement of other concepts and educational activities. There is a clear need for better integration of musical in educational topics. To address these challenges, it is essential to improve the music education of caregivers, and future educators, ensuring they are equipped to integrate music into their work effectively. Since the human voice is the most accessible instrument, we will focus on issues of vocal interpretation for students and future caregivers.

2. VOCAL INTERPRETATION OF CHILDREN'S SONGS

The aim of the vocal-instrumental teaching program at the High School for Educators is to empower students to interrupt songs with lyrics, which they will later apply in their work with preschool children as future educators. Students learn to play children's songs on the piano and sing the lyrics. In practice, it has been observed that many students entering this profession often lack previous musical education or experience and do not typically participate in group music activities, such as choir or orchestras. Therefore, vocal-instrumental lessons focus on first musically literating students and then enabling them to become independent performers capable of reproducing children's songs.

Vocal-instrumental teaching encompasses three main areas:

- 1) Basics of music theory,
- 2) Initial solfeggio instruction,
- 3) Initial piano instruction.

In the field of music theory, the following teaching units are covered:

- Establishing basic pitch levels using model songs,
- Scales, tetrachords, degrees, steps, and half steps
- Note durations and rests
- Meter, measure, and time signatures 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 6/8, conducting,
- Tempo markings, character, dynamics, and articulation,
- Intervals,
- Key signatures, the circle of fifths and fourths, and major and minor scales with sharps and flats.

Solfeggio instruction is integrated with music theory instruction from the very beginning. Establishing basic pitch levels starts with singing, followed by explanations and definitions. Students learn to perceive individual tones within shorter melodic motifs, and practice their intonation. All elements of music theory are taught through songs, which are then reviewed and explained.

Piano lessons begin with an introduction to the instrument, its origin, technical and expressive possibilities, and the proper position of the body and hands. From the outset of vocal-instrumental lessons, as students establish basic pitch heights, they simultaneously learn the corresponding tones on the piano and their positions on the keyboard. This

approach provides a comprehensive of what they hear, how they sing, how they play, and where they notate. Students start with individual tones in the first and small octave, gradually expanding their range to include the second and large octave. They practice short melodic motives, focusing on exercises for both hands, and eventually integrate left and right-hand playing through various exercises and songs.

For explaining basic music theory concepts, several key texts are used, including works by M. Tajčević, M. Jelenić, and Z.M. Vasiljević. M. Jelenić's music theory book offers simplified explanations and visuals that aid students without a musical background. The Music ABC book Z.M. Vasiljević is particularly effective, featuring illustrative displays and systematic, gradual instruction tailored for beginners. The book *We Sing Intervals* by Lj. Pantović and V. Kršić-Sekulić is also valuable, following a progression that aligns with melody range and interval size, emphasizing impactful beginnings. The repertoire for singing is drawn primarily from the Song Collection by V. Zdravković, which includes a comprehensive range of children's songs supplemented by selections from Lj. Pantović and V. Kršić-Sekulić, as well as songs from M. Gavrilović *I Love Solfeggio*.

Elementary piano teaching involves familiarization with the basic pitch heights and their positions on the keyboard within the first and small octave, followed by the second and large octave, according to the notes taught in the treble and bass clefs. Students start with short melodic motifs, particularly focusing on playing hands separately, before advancing to combined playing. Gradually, concepts such as note duration, rests, melodic jumps, and fingerings are integrated. Exercises from Lili Petrović's Level A and Level B, are utilized alongside exercises from Jela Kršić's book, tailored to address specific challenges that arise during practicing. In the final phase, students engage with songs for both playing and singing from the Song Collection of V. Zdravković and J. Vučkovski, esteemed music educators from the Pedagogical Faculty.

3. THE COURSE OF TEACHING AND PROBLEMS THAT ARISE

As mentioned earlier, students in higher education programs for preschool teachers generally lack prior music education, and, in many cases, do not possess most musical talent. This poses challenges in achieving educational goals and creates difficulties during teaching. The basic pitch heights are established through songs by model Miodrag Vasiljević, which are learned by ear. The starting tone and initial syllable are emphasized, and the isolated tone is notated in both the treble and bass clefs, covering the first and small octaves, and displayed on the piano. Once all tones in these octaves are mastered, students learn scales and scale elements, starting with the C major scale on the piano, first with the right hand and then with the left. As they learn the basic tones and model songs, the repertoire is expanded with other songs that fit the melodic range and simple rhythmic structure, as well as exercises designed for teaching needs, sung using solmization. Rhythm, meter, and beat are explained as model songs and other pieces, learned by ear and sung with lyrics, are then performed with solmization accompanied by rhythmic clapping. Piano exercises follow music theory and solfeggio elements, focusing on rhythmic accuracy, as the songs and exercises tend to have a limited range and longer note values. Students in the initial playing phase may inadvertently shorten or lengthen note durations, but as exercises become progressively more demanding in melodic and rhythmic content, this issue diminishes as they concentrate more on rhythm. In terms of expressiveness,

precision, and tempo, errors can occur because students primarily practice on small synthesizers and do not have enough opportunity to practice on the piano. When mistakes arise during practice and song performance, the problematic measure, double bar, or phrase is identified, and pre-exercises are conducted, first in a parlando style, then played. Issues can relate to rhythm, melody, finger spacing, articulation, and dynamics.

Regarding singing and intonation, the learning process transitions from familiar to unfamiliar, from sound to explanation. Initially, the song is sung with lyrics, then with solmization, and new elements are isolated and explained in terms of rhythmic figures or melodic movements. Interestingly, students tend to intonate larger melodic leaps more accurately, but struggle with whole and half steps. In these cases, exercises are presented as separate, short models (rhythmic, melodic, melodic-rhythmic, as needed), along with solfeggio exercises by Borivoje Popović that correspond to the problematic areas. When singing with lyrics, imprecise melisma performance can occur, even with just two tones on one syllable. In such cases, it is essential to isolate sections, beats, or phrases, practice them at a slower pace, use neutral syllables and/or solmization, and then return to the song lyrics, gradually increasing to the appropriate performance tempo. We will provide an overview of specific problems encountered in vocal interpretation with students, along with possible solutions and exercises to help them overcome these challenges. The examples provided are drawn from the literature mentioned, with exercises designed to address specific issue attributed to Borivoje Popović and the author of this work. In the song "Leptiriću šareniću", students often exhibit unstable intonation when transitioning from the dominant to the upper tonic (g^1-c^2). This issue is addressed using melodic-rhythmic models and exercises by Borivoje Popović.

Students frequently face difficulties with larger melodic intervals and intricate jumps, prompting the development of specialized exercises to tackle these challenges. Special attention is also given to resolving issues related to vocal interpretation, particularly in the rendition of "Leptiriću šareniću" where students demonstrate inconsistent intonation during the transitioning from the dominant to the upper tonic (g^1-c^2). Tailored melodic-rhythmic exercises are employed as a targeted remedy for this specific issue.

Лептирићу, шаренићу

Весело Дечја песма

Ле - пти - ри - ћу, ша - ре - ни - ћу, до - ђи ме - ни а - мо,
 з Е - во и - мам ле - пу ру - жу по - ми - ри - ши са - мо

Examples for practising:

1. Exercises No1, M.S.



2. Exercises No2, Borivoje Popović

2.1



2.2.



2.3.



2.4.



During the composition of the song “Nova godina”, there is uncertainty in the singing during the jumps of the dominant - tonic. The above exercises can be used, as well as the examples given below the song.

НОВА ГОДИНА

Ст. Коруновић

Allegretto

C

Ве - ју, ве - ју па - ху - љи - це, мраз по ста - клу ша - ра
Сти - же Но - ва го - ди - на, а од - ла - зи ста - ра.

3. Exercises No3, M.S.

3.1.

During the processing of the “Prolećna pesma”, there may be intonation problems when I - VI jumps up and I - V down. To troubleshoot these jumps, the examples listed below the song can be used.

ПРОЛЕЋНА ПЕСМА

Moderato

Непознати аутор

C F C G C F C

Слу-ша-о сам је-дно јут-ро пти-чи - цу, про-ле-ћу је из-ви-ја-ла пе-сми-цу.
Ћи-ју, ћи-ју, ...

4. Exercises No4, M.S.



4.1.



4.2.



4.3.



4.4.



To cover the A minor scale, the songs "Kiša pada", „Tiho zvezde gazite” and "Tajanstvena planeta" are used:

Киша пада

Ки - ша па - да тра - ва рас - те, го - ра зе - ле - ни,
ки - ша па - да, тра - ва рас - те го - ра зе - ле - ни.

У тој гори расте дрво
Танко, високо,
У тој гори, расте дрво
Танко, високо.

Под њим седи моја драга
А ја поред ње,
Под њим седи моја драга,
А ја поред ње.

5. Exercises No5, M.S. for naturale a minor scale

5.2.

5.3. Exercises from Borivoje Popović:

5.4.

5.5.



Тихо, звезде, газите

Љиљана Пантовић
Десанка Максимовић

Лагано

p Ти - хо, звез - де, га - зи - те, к'о да о - блак пу - ту - је
mf ти - хо, ти - хо, па - зи - те *tr* да нас зем - ља не чу - је. *p*

5.6. M.S. Exercises for harmonic a minor



5.7.



5.8.



5.9. Exercises from Borivoje Popović:

Тајанствена планета

Љиљана Пантовић



У све-ми-ру на и-ви-ци све - та и-ма јед-на ма-јш-на пла - не - та.

На њој су вам - истина је права -
Тулипани границе држава.

Кад путујеш, као пасош важи
срце - само руком га покажи.

5.10. M.S. Exercises for melodic a minor:

5.11.



5.12. Exercises from Borivoje Popović:



The importance of addressing intonation issues in children's songs cannot be overstated. We must present and implement effective solutions tailored to students' predispositions, capabilities, and needs. It is essential for students to develop the skills to tackle these challenges, enabling them to overcome obstacles while engaging in activities with preschool children. Equally important is the transmission of these essential skills to the children they work with. Addressing intonation issues is crucial for performing vocal-instrumental compositions for preschoolers. This focus supports their musical upbringing and education, fosters a love for music, enhances aesthetic experiences, and promotes musical engagement from an early age.

Progress in this area will facilitate lifelong learning and the continuous improvement of skills and abilities, whether innate or acquired through environmental influences. We must not only nurture predispositions but also transform them into concrete abilities. Children should be encouraged and motivated to explore composers, performers, and musical instruments. Music serves as a powerful tool for aesthetic education, shaping moral character, activating mental abilities, and influencing the psycho-physical development of children, especially during their preschool years.

While preparation, implementation, and improvisation during project activities can flow smoothly, challenges may arise in generating ideas and connecting educational elements. To address potential problems, this work offers suggestions to assist both students and educators. Music possesses a unique power that can be utilized in various ways, serving as a medium for relaxation, connection, facilitation, explanation, and artistic creation. It plays a vital role in the holistic development of children.

4. CONCLUSION

Several possible solutions have been proposed for the issues that arise in various songs, tailored to the predispositions, capabilities, and needs of students. When students learn to solve problems independently during preparations and exercises, they develop skills that will help them address challenges in their activities with preschool children. Over time, these skills will also be passed on to the children they work with. As primary educators, preschool teachers lay the foundation for children's upbringing and education. Key elements include providing love, security, a desire for self-discovery of knowledge, motivation for new ideas, exploration, and opportunities for free expression in all areas of creativity. The professional development of teacher competencies can significantly impact their personal growth, fostering needs for belonging and recognition, enhancing internal motivation, building self-confidence and increasing job satisfaction (Đurić, Stanojević, 2022). This is essential for educators at all levels, including preschool teachers, regardless of their work experience. Every change in teaching methods necessitates ongoing education and skill enhancement.

Addressing intonation problems in the performance of important children's songs is crucial for the effective presentation of vocal-instrumental compositions performance in preschool settings. This focus is vital for music education, as it nurtures a love for music, develops aesthetic experiences and evaluations, and encourages children to engage with music from an early age. By resolving these issues and continuously advancing, we promote lifelong learning and the improvement of skills and abilities, whether innate or developed through environmental influences.

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RAD NA UNAPREĐIVANJU SPOSOBNOSTI VOKALNE INTERPRETACIJE DEČIJIH PESAMA KOD STUDENATA VASPITAČA ZA POTREBE PROJEKTNIH AKTIVNOSTI

Muzičko obrazovanje igra ključnu ulogu u oblikovanju ličnosti deteta. Od ključne važnosti su vaspitači sa sveobuhvatnim muzičkim znanjem. Vokalna i instrumentalna instrukcija, uključujući teoriju muzike, solfežo i obuku klavira, veoma je dragocena. Specifične pesme i vežbe efikasno podučavaju i koriste budućim vaspitačima, kroz koncept teorije muzike, pokazujući praktičan i sveobuhvatan pristup. Ovladavanje tehnikama vokalne i instrumentalne interpretacije omogućava besprekornu integraciju muzičkih elemenata u obrazovne aktivnosti, olakšavajući i obogaćujući nova znanja i iskustva. Muzika podstiče bolju integraciju aktivnosti i čini kohezivnu celinu u okviru tematskih projekata.

Ključne reči: muzičke aktivnosti, pevanje, implementacija, projektno planiranje