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SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES IN NON-PROFESSIONALS MUSIC EDUCATION¹⁷

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Abstract: *This report presents a variety of techniques in music education, which, based on successful realization, can be called successful practices. By their very nature, they aim to actively enhance creative thinking and contribute to the development of pure musical-hearing qualities such as a sense of timbre, rhythm, tempo, dynamics and melodic line development. Some of the practices are created by the author, others are modified for the needs of the practical musical preparation of students - future teachers.*

Keywords: *music education, development of creativity, successful music practices.*

INTRODUCTION

The music education of non-professionals poses specific challenges to the music teacher. The category of non-professionals comprises different age groups marked by the common feature of a missing focus on music as a professional specialty. This report describes specific practices tested with the help of students-future teachers. They can be successfully applied in the form of tasks, exercise and game playing to primary school children and some of them even to kindergarten children. The individual approach is an important factor for achieving the expected results because it allows for the development of creativity in a delicate and unostentatious manner, providing in addition the opportunity to demonstrate one's own taste and preferences.

EXPOSURE

The discussed musical practices have been differentiated into the following categories:

1. Musical practices that may promote note writing skills;
2. Musical practices that may help develop a sense of timbre;
3. Musical practices that may promote the skills of improvising by using metric and rhythmic models;
4. Musical practices that may trigger the music creation potential by awareness of relation to literature.

The first category: *musical practices that may promote note writing skills* may include various *tales about the notes* to illustrate by pictures the pitch relations of notes in order to impress students' imagination for durable memorization of note names and the relevant terminology. A good practice would be for the tale to be composed by the teacher or with the help of students themselves. This will be beneficial for keeping the pursuit of logical sequence, activity, and for stimulating the creativity of each student. It is advisable to try to act out the tale on stage by giving each note a verbal characterization based on the way it sounds and then by the actor's presentation. Notes may be illustrated using dolls made by the children themselves, distinguishable by different colors and/or size.

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Unlike the students attending specialized musical school education who study sol-fa, harmony, musical analysis, etc., the students attending comprehensive school education are unfamiliar with the play of any instrument, are unable to record a melody they have heard, and are even less capable of recording graphically a melody they have created themselves. The learning of such skills is not included in the educational program and its mastering even seems almost impossible unless specific and purposeful efforts are made in this respect. The author's personal experience have shown good results with the composition and note writing of a melody by means of the teacher using graphic images in the beginning. This will help avoid the imitation of teacher's example, instead the students are given the opportunity to choose suitable melodic strokes that they may dress into sounds on their own. Following the selected sound pitch relations, the melody shall gain integrity and completeness. At this stage, each mark (symbol) in the sound pitch graphic may be colored differently so as to correspond to a particular note – the colors may correspond to the colors of the musical instrument *metallophone* but they may also be determined in advance to an arrangement that students would like. In this way, the melody would be written and it would be possible to transfer it to the note sheet. The music teacher's assistance should be directed mainly to helping students consider the melody tonality when writing it down and/or the need to make alterations. In addition to just singing the melody, it may also be played by a melodious instrument such as a block flute (recorder). This practice gives students the opportunity to learn note reading skills, while mastering time skills to note-write played music. This way, without even realizing it, students themselves will become authors of melodic compositions.

The second category: *musical practices that may help develop a sense of timbre* includes the so called education in natural environment. Speaking about the diversity of sounds, it would be appropriate to give students the opportunity to observe nature by asking them to describe in words every sound that catches their attention. Not all seasons are appropriate for this type of experiments. Nevertheless, they can be substituted by previously recorded real and synthesized sounds. A successful musical practice with impressive results regarding the awareness of timbre diversity may be implemented as follows: the music teacher is to select a number of animal and nature sounds (forest, sea, storm, wind, etc.), musical instruments and/or pieces of musical works from different genres. On assigning a task, it would be better for the students to work in teams, therefore the class should be divided into groups, consisting of 3-4 students each. Each group is to hear carefully all the examples recorded in advance (minimum 3 – maximum 6), not being allowed to tamper with the sequence of sounds (except for maybe one, if too many). The task would be for every team to create a verbal expression (a fairy-tale or a poem) by following the logic of produced sounds. This type of creativity tasks allows students to stretch their imagination by becoming aware of the specific features of the different musical instruments (string, wind, percussion, keyboard; folklore or classic, etc.), as well as to become able to differentiate the instrumental musical works in terms of their genre. The composed piece of literature (a fairy-tale) may be either realistic or fantastic, absurdist, humoristic, romantic, etc. Each team shall be free to choose how to present its idea (work), the only requirement in this respect being to produce the recorded sounds simultaneously.

The sense of timbre may also be successfully promoted by the use of different sound sources such as metal, wood, plastic material, water, glass, etc. serving as an alternative for the musical instruments of unspecified pitch. It would be a good practice to combine the sound sources into one whole installation. In addition to challenging one's imagination, such a "musical instrument" may be directly associated with a particular piece of music.¹⁸ It would also be a good idea to create an "orchestra" of non-traditional, alternative instruments in order to stimulate sound associations and take the team composition of music to a new level.

¹⁸ The author has published a number of articles where the non-traditional music instruments are referred to as alternative instruments. They contain detailed description of different alternative percussion instruments, including the process of their creation and the sound production.

The third category: *musical practices that may promote the skills of improvising by using metric and rhythmic models.* It would be a good practice to recreate a text, preferably a rhymed text, by measuring its rhythmic pulsation in a sequence of 2s and 3s. It is recommended to implement this task once again in team divisions, one group being charged with the task to measure the rhythms while the text is presented and the other – to demonstrate the steps of 2- and 3-tact pulsation while the text is presented. The performance of this task is complicated by the need to match the text with a musical work having the same metric pulsation. For younger students it is advisable to prepare suitable visualization. For the *rhythmic models* a possible approach would be to use verbal improvisation again, following Carl Orff's method, for instance by asking musical riddles (e.g. about the musical instruments) or by presenting a text dealing with a new musical concept. The rhythmization of a piece of literature is an activity that students love very much. To give it an educational touch, students need to realize the rhythmic sequences it creates. This may also be represented graphically by means of various symbols.

The fourth category: *musical practices that may trigger the music creation potential by awareness of relation to literature* includes almost all musical practices described above related to literature pieces or verbal expression of a musical task. A detailed attention deserves to be given to the sound-tracking of a piece of literature by musical means. This practice would enable the students not only to express simple sound associations such as wind, rain, etc. but also to depict a whole completed picture in terms of meaningful content, sound and visualization. In this case, the piece of literature would have leading role only at a first glance – its purpose would be to guide students' imagination to certain direction and the sound-track would give it colorful vividness and meaningful content.¹⁹ As mentioned above, when creating a picture of sounds meaningfully connected with a particular piece of literature, it would be better to include not only traditional musical instruments for children but also some alternative sound sources and synthesized sounds. The literature piece should not be chosen on a random basis either – in practice we usually pick such "music" literature pieces that are loaded with the potential to prompt one's imagination to the formation of a sound. And vice versa, nearly all tales may be presented by sounds provided the student's imagination has been accustomed to perceive and to look for the overall effect of the work of art through the syncretism of arts.

SUMMARY

Most of the musical practices discussed herein were developed by the author herself as a consequence of the author's research in the field of better awareness and thorough perception of studied music matter and principles of musical preparation by non-professionals. This is exactly the kind of music education offered in general education schools. The musical practices have proven their high level of effectiveness for the mastering of knowledge and skills, and may also be effective if included into the educational program. For the purpose of easily mastering the required set of terminology as well as acquiring a few particular musical skills, some attractive and competently selected methods will be necessary. Furthermore, opportunities should be created and favorable conditions should be provided for individual creative expression. This in itself guarantees successful education of independently thinking creative persons who are confident of their abilities supported by the necessary knowledge.

¹⁹ In her article entitled "Sound-tracking of a literary piece by musical means" the author lays a focus on steps and possibilities to implement this practice with a particular piece of literature.

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