

## ENRICHMENT OF CHILDREN'S CREATIVE POTENTIAL THROUGH MUSIC GAMES <sup>1</sup>

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***Abstract:** The process of mastering children's music games in themselves creates the conditions for learning skills and knowledge that stimulate non-standard thinking and creative expression of children from an early age. The interest in the game, suitably selected musical games, the teacher's ability to select pre-training methods, prompt the child's imagination to unexpected relations and reactions that can gradually turn into artistic and creative inventive arts. This report looks at different aspects of creativity through children's music games by offering working methods and specific creative tasks related to each stage of the pedagogical process.*

***Keywords:** music education, music games, methods of music education, pedagogical process.*

### INTRODUCTION

Children's music games in their essence are very attractive for children, as games are meant to enable a child to imagine living different roles, to feel familiar situations from a new, different perspective, to recreate existing accumulated knowledge and acquire new experiences. "The child becomes capable of taking part in creative games on the threshold between early childhood and preschool age. In the second half of the preschool period, such activity becomes leading and creates the most suitable conditions for complete personality growth. Games have fundamental meaning and significance. This is a socially determined process, as the game reflects the summarized social experience of the child." (Doncheva, 2014, p. 16).

Children's music games, being part of rhythmic musical movements alongside with preparatory movements and dances, can be considered as a main musical activity. "In the system of early childhood and preschool musical education, rhythmical music activity is a key component, a music performing activity in the conditions of which the musical development of children makes its progress." (Atanasova - Vukova, 1995, p. 114). On the other hand, "movements with music are always present in children's listening and creative musical activities; therefore, defining them as a separate or main musical activity is provisional. It has become popular in methodology books because of their large significance for the musical and general psychological and physical development of children at preschool age". (Burdeva, 2012, p.101).

### STATEMENT

The possibilities for early childhood development through music games have many aspects. First, musicality is developed: singing in tune when performing music games, ensemble performance, musical memory, feeling the rhythm, tempo and dynamics. It is very important to develop the ability to comprehend the abstract side of music related to games with instrumental music, and the possibility to visualise through movements, gestures, facial expressions and partnering. The artistic quality of the performance, the performance of the child, and character unfolding can be manifested in their completeness through children's music games, hence in dances. It is exactly in the game, without too much didacticism, that the child gets basic knowledge of different kinds of dances, their genre features, as well as knowledge of the characteristics of some basic styles and skills in performing them. "The emotional and creative development of

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children requires continuous improvement of their plasticity, agility, posture, movement coordination and other features that reveal their personality, character, self-confidence, mood, independence of actions, etc.“ (Nikolova, 1993, p. 81).

Music games and preparatory movement activities precede the moment when children really start dancing. Music games, in turn, can be identified as storytelling and dancing (of the chain dance type, according to A. Atanasova). One of the key tasks of performing storytelling games is “to recreate a specific character’s features”.

With instrumental music, storytelling games provide another development and performance opportunity: to recreate the story, the characters and their interrelations by following the changes in music related to the means of expression. (Atanasova, 1995, p. 117).

Although dependent on music, physical activities are also an important element of children's music games. Moreover, music as well as sport activities are part of the educational process in the kindergarten. Preparatory sport activities aiming at mastering basic sporting skills are compulsory and are also taught through exercises and games. “They are a vehicle to improve natural body movements, develop movement skills and habits that children will creatively perform by themselves under varying conditions”. (Momchilova et al., 2013, p. 5).

Movements that are part of musical activities and are always present in performing songs have different functions. When listening to music, for example, movements are performed mostly in order to visualise the abstract music idea and make its elements more specific. "Knowledge about the tempo as a means of expression can be successfully achieved through movements related to the story and the characters of a particular music piece" (Burdeva, 2012, p. 103). Musical modelling enables the comprehension of the artistic musical character through prompting intellectual activities related to the process of perceiving music. “...modelling is a specific form of children’s thinking development, and it is one of the most powerful factors of preschool children's mental development” (Burdeva, 2012, p. 102). It is known that there can be musical accompaniment in movement games and activities, but the role of music in such case is subordinate. Good physical skills and improved sets of movements are especially important in the musical performance of games. When this is achieved, it is much easier to develop further artistic skills in performing movements and steps that the children have already learned.

The progress in building movement competence enables teaching movement improvisations and combinations that are fully influenced by the emotional characteristics of the music. That way, self-expression of children in the musical, artistic and physical aspect is motivated, and that is an illustration of the all-embracing applicability and the numerous positive effects of music games. “Summarized motifs can be latent, and can be triggered to a real, active state under certain conditions. There is a need behind every motif, but the same need can find its expression through different motifs" (Ilieva, 2012, p. 20).

Such syncretic approach is offered by one of the best respected musical education systems: Carl Orff’s. According to the key principles of the said system, music, speech and dance (dancing movements) exist in unity and can be generated by each other. That way, exactly by showing certain movements and/or rhythmical responses, children can improvise a melody or a text. Children are particularly attracted by word games in which, along with the existing rhymed text, the progress of improvisation opens a place for syllables or combinations of syllables that may, at that phase, seem to be void of any clear meaning. They act as a game and exercise the speech apparatus. Keeping the focus on the melody, they can be used to create a huge diversity of vocal intonations.

By performing vocal improvisation games with funny, absurd or even random texts, children learn to take different challenges related to musical improvisations. The teacher can certainly clarify or support the child’s idea so that it can grow into a musical expression. The habit to improvise is also developed by the performing experience the children gradually accumulate. The folklore music games with songs that are largely popular in the kindergartens are reiterations of the same melody with different texts and changes in the movements. That makes it easier for the children to memorize the melody and build a rich fund of intonations. *That way, a music game*

*can become a teamwork product in which all elements are born by children's imagination and by the knowledge and skills children accumulate.*

There are different approaches to create a melody improvisation. It is worth mentioning that the accumulated life and game experience can help the child's imagination to go the way from the mental picture to the action and then to find a translation in the language of music. That way, by giving a particular theme (action), rhyme, riddle, etc., through its unique perceptions, the child presents a particular association of a movement. Example: *The doll is winking - winking eyes*. That is followed by some "time of silence" - short silence in which everyone can feel their own mental picture - to activate the associative perception. The next phase can be a demonstration using a movement. The next step of the game is to make a melody of the movement, usually based on the rhythm of the preceding demonstration phase.



Example 1



Example 2

The theme of the above examples (examples 1 and 2) is *Friends* (example 1), and a *Lullaby* (example 2). Originally, there is no text, just different syllables. The movements are imitations. The following text is added to the first melody:

Bunny's running quickly  
And the bear is sleeping.  
The kitten is playing  
With the dog in front of the fireplace.  
They are old friends.  
There is peace in the house.  
Let's play together,  
Let's hold our hands,  
Let's make a chain,  
Let's catch up with a bunny.

The second example of a melody goes with the following text:

Sleep, my sweet little doll,  
Sandman is on his way to you.  
He will get you by the hand  
And will fly like a bird.

The music game follows the following pattern:

- The theme is suggested.
- After a short moment of silence, the movements related to the participants' idea about the theme are shown.
- The rhythm is demonstrated by clapping.
- Text is added.
- The melody is suggested.

The examples were created during classes of students in teaching as part of the course in Musical Culture Methodology. It is part of the general courses of the bachelor's program in Preschool and Elementary School Teaching, and Elementary School Teaching and Foreign Language Teaching of the University of Ruse. Furthermore, they have been experimented in the framework of club activities. The students in the music club assisted to the text writing. The work with them was focused on experimenting combinations of words based on rhythmic patterns performed in different tempos. The process started with the music game theme, followed by comments on the genre and its characteristics, and then a rhythm was performed in different tempos.

The themes that are identified in the beginning can be coordinated with the teaching practice of recurrent daily activities based on the Montessori Method. Example: "Moving something with a spoon from one vessel to another" (Bobrova, N. *Montessori vkashti*, 2015, p. 22). That way, the direct and indirect goals of the exercise can be used to make a music improvisation by imitating the sound produced by the action, giving rhythm to the action, and adding a melody, with or without a text. The example text and melody can be reiterated, of a simple nature similar to the action that is being performed. The special thing in this case is that the tasks to be performed at home can just as well be performed in the group environment of a children's establishment, while the routine (already learned) actions create conditions for a musical performance.

## CONCLUSIONS

Numerous themes are adequate for children's music games. Inspiration can be found in nearly any activity, object, fairytale character, toy, situation, phenomena in the surrounding environment that the child already knows, and so on. When the process of creating a music game is in progress, the teacher can be inventive and change the sequence of the components used for a creative solution:

*Text→melody/music/→rhythm→movements;*

*Movements→rhythmical syllables→intonation improvisations→melody, and so on.*

As a result, the child learns to improvise although the artistic quality may vary, and also learns to match movements to melody and vice versa by binding them in theme games or recurrent daily activities. The practice of different ordinary life activities being accompanied by songs has its roots in the folklore tradition of the Bulgarian daily life folksongs. The focus in the suggested approach to making children's music games is on preschool children, and the expected outcome is a significant change in children's musical thinking and art, a desire for immediate performance shown by the children and a possibility to perform, better musical competences of everybody in the team, and a contribution to the holistic approach in musical education.

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