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Machine-music in preschool education : how to provide music experience with classics?

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Machine-music in Preschool Education. How to Provide Music Experience with Classics?

1. The role of music listening in project pedagogy

An integral part of preschool music education is music-listening. In kindergartens, listening to music traditionally includes a song or instrumental music performed by the preschool teacher(s). Little children need to be deeply attached to the person from whom they get musical experience and accept the cultural creations that are passed on. Through this person's activity, little children get to know and may come to like valuable classical music, either folk or art. This exchange of cultural values is facilitated by the fact that this age-group is very receptive to all impressions. "We should start in preschool because there children can master easily anything which proves too late in elementary school." (Kodály, Zoltán 1974, p. 92). The role of the preschool teacher is crucial since most of the children are short of such experience at home.

Neither Zoltán Kodály nor Katalin Forrai, whose music education concepts for preschools are acknowledged all over the world, have addressed the topic of listening to music played on technical devices. The low number of disc players, CD players, tape recorders, video recorders, televisions or DVD players in contemporary homes did not motivate either of them, especially not Kodály, to focus on this topic. Today families buy such devices and certainly use them. Small children staying at home continually hear some form of music. But what sort?

It is not an overstatement to say that few have the opportunity to enjoy any music that represents real cultural value: music which has survived centuries and we are pleased to listen to it today as well. Though we also find that children don't close their ears to it, it is nonetheless an unfamiliar experience and it leaves them with ambiguous feelings. So we need to dish up to children this spiritual food and believe that it can give, in addition to its values, pleasure to its listeners. If only our preschoolers would go back home with a desire to listen again to the music which they came to like in the kindergarten. Let's dare to use machines in preschools and use them to listen to valuable music. This so-called "machine-music" can bring joy to preschool-age children.

Music education may include carefully assorted music-listening adapted to the whole course of life in kindergarten: there is not an activity to which no machine-music can be attached. Most of the time, only a passage of the selected pieces of music can be made and listened to by our preschoolers, the section cannot last more than 2–3 minutes. This is the average time preschool children are able to focus on unknown music. To make it a lasting experience, it is worth playing the music again several more times.

Preschool age children cannot go without playing and moving. Thus we need to create situations, and movement forms based on a section of valuable music work. The ambition of this selection is to give some ideas in this field as well.

The comments on the composers were inserted into the study to extend the preschool teachers' music literacy. Though I offer recommendations on how to use the passages, we can give experience in other fields as well by them. The preschool teachers' creativity may produce inexhaustible opportunities for use.

A very popular and established method of preschool education and development is Project Pedagogy. This idea gained ground in education around the turn of the 20th century and was first used in the USA. In Hungary it started spreading in the 1960s. In this method, the knowledge of children is extended in such a way that they gain experience, carry out observations and become active participants of learning. This method-

ology gives children a lot of freedom and lasting knowledge through integrated studies that strengthen each other.

Even when the project is selected we can draw on children's individual thoughts. This is done in the kindergarten using the Freinet-method, where selection of the project theme is based on children's proposals. Of course, we need to be careful when doing this – though we hold children as equal partners, the preschool teacher is first among equals.

The integration of learning activities allows music to be built into projects. However, for example, in a project putting in its focus on the "river" as a topic, music references cannot be exhausted by the singing a folk song mentioning some river in its lyrics. The varied ages of music history offer almost inexhaustible opportunities for our preschoolers to get acquainted with the greatest pieces of music literature.

2. Association of the project "Clock" with the development of musical ability through the use of music sections

Let's single out now the *clock project* and find possible music connections.

An opportunity is offered by the even motion of the clock. A selection of the tempo is important but not only a metronome can be used for its determination (which are usually in short supply in preschools) but also by the second hand of our watch. Beat = 60 indicated by the motion of the watch-hand is an ideal tempo for 3–4-year-old children. Older children may feel this tempo "shambling" but if their minds they turn into bears, the problem is circumvented immediately. Even motion of the watch contributes to shaping the sense of the most important rhythmic area, even the pulse.

As first step let's turn to Zoltán Kodály's Pentatonic Music II, the 100 small marching songs in order to prepare pulsation. Take tune 4 from its written version into a tone that can be played on a flute as well, e.g. D = la pentatonic tone. If we record our flute playing on some kind of simple

recorder we are able to control the children's rhythmic walking, marching, in a circle form for a big group (5–6 years olds), in a snail form for a medium group (4–5 years olds), in an irregular form, stepping in a small area, and imitating the motion of the watch-hand for a little group (3–4 years olds).



Kodály, Zoltán Ötfokú zene II. [Pentatonic Music] Zeneműkiadó, Budapest 1958. Lesson 4.

Later, when the children have already forgotten the melody, we could dress it up with a verse, e.g. a children's verse from one of the greatest Hungarian poets, Sándor Weöres, with the line, "Fair is the fir", which with its number of syllables matches this tune particularly well. Other nations' children literature must have also some poems with the proper number of syllables with which the tune can be dressed up.

When Christmas is approaching or on a nice winter day, we may extend our repertoire with a tune to which the children may add a measure by using a triangle in a little group, or they may accompany the preschool teacher's singing with a rhythm-ostinato in a medium or a big group. In our already mentioned project linked to waters another of Sándor Weöres's verses, with the line, "The Flat-boat is standing..." can be sung as well.

After this digression let's turn back to the "clock" project. Children may get to know more clock types if families are willing to bring old clocks, musical clocks by chance, carefully preserved at home. We may associate such lessons with two music sections.

Haydn, "The Clock" Symphony, No. 101 in D Major Movement 2 – *Andante*

The symphony was completed by the composer in 1794. Haydn wrote more than a hundred symphonies, some of which have nicknames (Pándi, Marianne, 1972, p. 38). This symphony acquired its name after the accompanying instrumental part imitating the clock-beating in the second movement. Children will certainly recognize it if we have already prepared well their perception of an even pulse. We can hear the pleasant melody above the rhythmic clock-beating. While listening to the music we may imagine a musical clock in a beautifully carved elegant box. In little groups, it is enough to listen to the first minute and imitate pendulum-movement. Older children may listen to a two-minute part as well. They may find the first approximately one-minute of music exciting, after a shorter diverging section, it returns again, creating the sense of familiarity in the children who in this age are fond of repetitions. During the second hearing we may encourage them, if it is necessary, to accompany the music with the words "tick-tock" and imitate the movement of a clock pendulum with their hands. We should cut the selected part down to no longer than two minutes because not all children are able to listen continuously to music for a longer time period. This should be kept in mind especially when it is listened to for the first time, and the music is not yet connected with movements.

Here are several thoughts on the composer: Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) was a leading figure of the Vienna classics. In his childhood he sang in the boys' choir of the Saint Stephen Cathedral. As an adult he worked as a court musician at counts' and princes' residences. He spent almost three decades at the Prince Eszterházy Family. During his visit to London in 1791–92 and 1794–95 he composed 12 symphonies called the "London Symphonies". He created two classical genres: symphony and string-quartet. He was the first who composed a minuet as movement of 3 of his symphonies. In Hungary we listen to this dance but without using it as a background of any kind of physical education lessons. The reason

for this is that it beats in $\frac{3}{4}$ time while Hungarian folk music, apart from some exceptions, use duple meter rhythms. Other nations, however, where children become acquainted with $\frac{3}{4}$ time folk songs, may use it for physical development. It is certainly worth listening to through more symphonies and finding favourites among the fast-tempo movements 1 and 4, or ones usable as sleeping music among movements 2, including calm and slow music.

Even the motion of the clock can be presented by another symphony as well.

Haydn, "Surprise" Symphony no. 94 G Major Movement 2 – *Andante*

The equally pulsing start of the movement is interrupted by a surprising kettle-drum beat. If we take the introductory part as a sound of a tower clock, the kettle-drum may sound as a bell tolling. We should definitely bang a drum or another instrument with similar effect at this moment of the music. This symphony was composed by Haydn in 1791 (Pándi, Marianne, 1972, p. 39), in the year when Mozart, in his last year, wrote his Magic Flute. This is also a "London Symphony" and is given its name "Surprise" by the London audience just because of the kettle-drum beat.

In this passage we may get the children to observe the difference between the quiet and the loud as well. The topic can be also adapted to make children recognize the question–reply, opening–closing parts, or in other words the period. On Music Day we may get the children to listen to this part of the movement again. It is also suitable for developing form ability. By the end of the antecedent phrase we are opening the door of a baby kitchen or truck, and at the moment the kettle-drum beats we close the doors. On the days of the "Clock Project" we are opening the door of our wall clock and close it immediately when the consequent phrase of the period is sounding. It is important not to let the project supersede the regular every-day music developments. We should find opportunities to insert the development of rhythmical, vocal and form

abilities into the course of observations and learning. The project may always provide these developments with more playful elements.

And now let's sing or play on the flute this part of the symphony. Let's do this during our preparation but we can also play the topic of this symphony movement before our group after listening to the music.

Antecedent part – opening



Consequent part – closing



The third composition passage is more vivid in its tempo therefore it should be got heard another day. We may march with game-soldiers or puppets, magically creating the figures of the tower moving on the music.

Zoltán Kodály: Háy János Suite – Movement 2 (Frank, Oszkár, 1986, p. 157–159)

The Hungarian folk opera called Háy János was adapted from János Garay's work "The Veteran" and its first performance took place in the Hungarian Opera House in Budapest in 1926. Following this opera, a suite with an identical name was composed by Kodály, including the Viennese Musical Clock Play in movement 2 (Suite – a series of stylized dances and character plays). While listening to the music, we may be reminded of the musical figurative tower clocks of the larger metropolises. If we visit the Kecskemét Play House, don't let us forget to stand in front of the City Hall and listen to the chime of the bells (the Hungarian folk song that starts "Kecskemét is equipping..." can be heard in it). Musical tower clocks can be naturally encountered in other European cities as well, see the Orjol in the Old Town of Prague.

The topic of the opus also has a periodic form, so just as in the case of the symphony, we may adapt it for development of form ability. Inherently here the marching soldiers can be used as tools. We may suggest the articulation of the form by changing direction.



As this topic consists of a double period, we shall take care of changing the direction at every four-beat metre. We can be the guards of the Presidential or Royal Palace and march saluting to the music. Unfortunately we rarely see children walking correctly in a good posture. Do something to change it!

Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967) (Körber, Tivadar, 2000) is respected by music-lovers and Hungarian children as a composer, ethnographer and culture politician. In addition to this play, he produced choir opuses, folk song adaptations, instrumental and oratory works of outstanding quality as well. Out of the latter ones stands out his work called *Psalmus Hungaricus* written in 1923 for the 50th anniversary of the union of Pest and Buda using Kecskeméti Vég Mihály's translation of Psalm no. 55. Out of his orchestra works the most well-known is the *Dances of Galánta* which commemorates his childhood years. For preschool age children he composed the *Songs of Little People* in which he dressed up his melodies representing the sound register of the children's songs in Hungarian poets' verses.

Now let's see another project!

3. Encounter of the music and environmental education in the project "Spring"

Of seasons, *spring* can be selected as a project theme arousing sympathy in all age-groups. Since this topic may evoke uncountable folk songs and there is no better way of music-listening than that of the pre-

school teacher's nice singing, now we recommend no more than two music passages. Though they resemble each other in their character and sound, almost two-hundred years passed between the dates of their composition. One of them has a good reputation and is popular among the public, while the other one is almost unknown. The first was composed by Antonio Vivaldi (1675–1741) (Pécsi, Géza, 2003, p. 169–170) who is a violinist and composer from Italy. He started his career as a violinist of the Saint Mark Church in Venice; he then entered the holy orders. While he formed the genre of modern violin concerto, he achieved considerable successes as a composer of operas as well. In the last period of his life he was the director of the conservatoire of the Saint Mark Church in Venice and established an ensemble, unique in the age and recognized by all of Europe, consisting of orphanage girls.

Though many may believe that out of the compositions addressing the four seasons of Vivaldi's opus, including its movement 1 dedicated to Spring, is already too trivial, we should consider that small children have not necessarily yet met this masterpiece. (However we shall take care not to make our group listen to this opus every year.) Vivaldi's four violin concertos are the first remarkable programme music in the history of music. The works are supplied with sonnets written most probably by Vivaldi. He inserted the verse lines in the partition just before the appropriate music parts.

<p>Giunt' è la Primavera e festosetti La Salutan gl' Augei con lieto canto, E i fonti allo Spirar de' Zeffiretti Con dolce mormorio Scorrano intanto:</p>	<p>Springtime is upon us. The birds celebrate her return with festive song, and murmuring streams are softly caressed by the breezes.</p>
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The original key in E Major. Transformation makes it playable on flute as well.

This movement is the music of perfect nature. The starting theme reveals to us the joy-bringing world of spring. We can encourage children

to move freely and they surely will be jumping cheerfully when the music starts playing.

This music has got a programme, therefore the violin solo representing the bird twitter also delights the children.

Since the rule of the performance of the Baroque music is the terraced dynamics in which the repeating parts have adverse volume, the difference between the perception of the quiet and the loud can be well observed (just as in the case of the “Surprise” Symphony) by the children if they listen to it several more times. This music really represents the “re-joicing bird song”, suggesting that we could choose the bird flock as a tool. When the topic sounds loud, the childrens’ hands should be raised and they fly high like a flock of birds. When the music is lowered, the birds may fly down onto the grass and start pecking quietly. We may also fabricate a simple story in which the small singing-birds escape from the wild predatory eagle, flying high and twittering loud, then when danger has passed they fly down in peace.

The Baroque violin concertos have 3 movements, as does Vivaldi’s opus. The order of movements is determined: movement 1 is fast, movement 2 is slow, movement 3 is again fast.

Beethoven Spring Sonata – Movement 1

The energy and high spirits of spring are emanated by movement 1 of this violin–piano sonata. First the beauty and delicacy of the flourishing meadow, then the wild gallop of the forest’s game appear in the music, which is dissolved again in peace and tranquillity. The sounds of the violin are like the twittering of a bird.



Pándi, Marianne Hangversenykalauz III. Kamaraművek. [Concert Guide. Chamber Works] Zeneműkiadó Budapest 1975, p. 147–148.

The first movement starts with the theme of the violin bending down from the high and skipping up again. The spontaneous naturalism of the first half of the melody, resembling a bird-song, reproduces the atmosphere of spring in us.

We can tell the children this through a story constructed by us, which can be followed by an approx. 2-minute music-listening from the beginning of the movement.

On another day we can use it to develop music ability. Recognition of the various sounds and tones shall be practised by all group-ages. In little groups it is enough to achieve that children can make a difference between the alternating violin and piano. We can give three of them a violin picture/drawing and another three a piano picture/drawing. Pictures shall be held high when the given instrument can be heard. But it is much more interesting if the two instruments are represented by a bird group each, and the group hearing their instrument shall fly with their closed fingers in the air imitating bird-flight. The preschool teacher may be helped by the fact that the solo of the violin lasts approximately 20 seconds and then that of the piano lasts around the same time. After the two solos, the instruments produce some thunder and at approximately one-and-a-half minutes later the birds come back.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) (Körber, Tivadar, 2000) was the offspring of a family of musicians, a pianist and author. The classical master was an unrivalled composer of the music history with his nine symphonies, only one opera (*Fidelio*), only one violin concerto, piano concertos, string-quartets, without mentioning his other works. His notable melody is the "Ode to Joy", from the last movement of his Symphony 9, known as the European Union's hymn.

4. Links between music and tale dramatization in preschool education

An important element of the preschool-age children's world is story-telling. The returning themes of folk tales are evil and good, and their

conflict. Numerous works of music literature contain sections representing this conflict. Let's put together several elements of this kind. The tales are selected from Hungarian folklore but similar topics can be taken from all nations' treasure troves of tales by local preschool teachers.

The first tale is the *Seven Ravens* (Illyés, Gyula, 2010). The wicked character is the witch with an iron nose who transforms seven young men into a raven. The good is represented by a girl who saves her enchanted brothers. If we dramatize the tale with children, we can find music passages, each for the two characters, which can follow the main figures' act.

The good can be represented by a section of *Tchaikovsky's Sleeping Beauty Suite 1*. The string-orchestra sound gives the music a soft character. The medium fast, almost sweeping tempo models the youthful dynamism.

Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky (1840–1893), a Russian composer became a musician after he had completed his legal studies. In his works, the European classical tradition mingles healthily with the typical Russian intonation. The inexhaustible exuberance in melodies makes his works extraordinarily popular. His opera (*Onegin*) and symphonies are complemented with his dance plays which are the pearls of Russian ballet-literature.

The wicked can be represented by a piece of another Russian composer: the Russian dance from *Stravinsky's Petrushka* (*Orfeusz Hangzó Zenetörténet 7*). He was inspired by the world famous choreographer Gadilev to compose the story of the tragic Russian folk tale figure in a dance play. The harsh rustic music can evoke impressively the witch with the iron nose. The effect is increased by the starting drum beat and the following symmetric pulsation.

Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971) is a composer of Russian origin, who became a real cosmopolitan. His early works were encouraged by the master of the Russian Ballet, the above mentioned Gadilev: the *Fire Bird*, *Petrushka* and the *Rite of Spring*. His style shifted and he produced e.g. *The Soldier's Tale*, *Pulcinella*, *Psalm Symphony*, *Oedipus Rex*, *The Rake's Progress*.

In another tale, evil can be associated with the picture representing Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuylet in *Mussorgsky and Ravel's* joint composition, *The Pictures at an Exhibition*, in which Samuel is the evil in the interpretation of the picture as well. The theme is played by stringed instruments resulting in a very frightening effect.



The good and gentle character on the other hand can be represented by a part of *Ferenc Farkas' Old Hungarian Dances* (Pécsi, Géza, 2003. p. 251). The piece evokes the world of the Renaissance, elegant, definitive and very tensely formed music, fits the positive character of a Hungarian folk tale.



At the end of the music, when everything eventually turns out for the best and all of the figures start dancing, our preschool children may join the dance as well. We may perform the dance with very simple step combination (the best is the two-step czardas) for Ferenc Farkas' music or any of the Hungarian dances of the 16–17th century.

Telling, learning and dramatizing a tale require a time period of at least two weeks. It is necessary to connect this process to a constant element like a musical invitation to the "tale-telling corner". Let me recommend a work which would be surely welcomed by children: a piece composed by Robert Schumann (1810–56). He was an excellent figure of the German Romantics who achieved his first successes as a piano artist at a young age. As a composer he was acknowledged for his miniature character plays and songs written primarily for the piano. His opus "Kinderszenen" (op. 15) is played on a piano as well. We recommend as a piece of music that invites story-telling the first episode of the composition consisting of 13 various stories with different a character.



The singing in an upper voice is made transparent by the triplet rhythmical sound-decompositions of the bass. It has a magical effect enhanced by the pleasantly quiet sound. We can have a real “once upon a time” feeling if we get to hear it.

But not only section 1 can be associated with story-telling. Meditation on the titles (1. Of Foreign Lands and People; 2. A Curious Story; 3. Blind Man’s Bluff; 4. Pleading Child; 5. Happy Enough; 6. An Important Event; 7. Dreaming; 8. At the Fireside; 9. Knight of the Hobbyhorse; 10. Almost Too Serious; 11. Frightening; 12. A Child Falling Asleep; 13. The Poet Speaks) may inspire us to make our own short stories for the small movements. And it cannot be excluded that our preschool children also want to create their own tales under our supervision. Let’s make use our fantasy!

5. Summary

Our last example also shows that a composition or a section of it may include a lot of opportunities which can be exploited by careful listening. The most important function of music listening in the framework of a preschool activity or project is to give children the experience of music which they may not receive at home from their parents. These experiences shape children’s abilities, especially their sense of form and music-recollection, which have a considerable impact on other areas: logical and motion faculties, and the ability to memorize.

Music sections incorporated in projects create in children the need to explore the world around them, not only in details but in the larger context of the phenomena, and they become aware of the beauty reflected by their lives.

By this method, the transfer impact of music can be easily detected and it depends only on the preschool teachers’ creativity how children’s life will be influenced by the selected ‘music’.

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Abstract:

Our ancestors' cultural heritage should be passed down to all generations. This process can begin as early as the preschool age.

The materials of music-listening in preschool education can be performed by the teachers. In this age, music experience is more effective and long lasting if children can see personally the performer as well. The development of the technical instruments nowadays, however, gives us the opportunity to listen to records of good quality in kindergartens. Children may receive no other valuable compositions, and most preschool teachers need help in the selection. This study's ambition is to give some recommendations in this field.

Several opuses have been selected to complement certain activities of project pedagogy. The study also shows other possible usages by providing supplements on music history, form and the style characters of the passages, as well as assistance in achieving favourable outcomes in relation to music-listening with methodological advices. The selected projects – clock and spring – represent important knowledge, and with the experience given by music-listening we are able to bring these topics closer to children.

Another important area of preschool education is listening to stories and the learning of stories. When tales are dramatized, all branches of arts can be linked together. A carefully selected passage of music may help to create a more impressive performance for the stories.

Keywords: music-listening, project pedagogy, tale dramatization

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