

## Building Competencies through Perception of Music in Early Childhood and Primary School Education

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**Abstract:** Music undoubtedly affects the visual and emotional sensitivity of a person. It stimulates various sensations, thoughts, images and sensations that cause a desire for free expression of the personality. Through the conscious perception of music, knowledge, skills and relationships are created that develop imagination, fantasy and creativity, especially in children of preschool and primary school age. This nurtures qualities and competences, preparing the future personal, professional and social development of the child. The proposed article examines in a theoretical aspect: categories of skills formulated by Seth Godin - self-control, productivity, wisdom, perception, impact; elements of the communicative process based on Lasswell – communicator, receiver, channel of communication between the source and receiver, means of transmitting the message, effect of transmitting the message; phases of creative development according to Desev and Brik - logical analysis, intuitive decision, verbalization of the intuitive decision, formalization of the verbalized decision. The listed theoretical justifications have been transferred and adapted to the perception of music in preschool and primary school age. The development of figurative, emotional and logical thinking through listening to music provokes and activates children's curiosity and inquisitiveness to enrich and expand not only the informational sound field, but also to search for meaningful connections between phenomena, actions, relationships, to create skills and competencies in various life and, in the future, professional situations, to cultivate emotional intelligence and activate the desire for creativity.

**Keywords:** Perception of music, Competencies, Skills, Preschool and primary school age

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### Introduction

In one of his lectures, Rudolf Steiner noted that "music is the most comprehensible thing for the soul, for the immediately perceptive psyche, and on the other hand, it is something difficult to understand for those who want to understand its impact. If we want to compare music with other arts, we must say: All other arts have a model in the physical world." (Steiner, 2019)

Music undoubtedly affects the visual and emotional sensitivity of a person. It stimulates various sensations, thoughts, images and sensations that cause a desire for free expression of the personality. Through the conscious perception of music, knowledge, skills and attitudes are created that develop imagination, fantasy and creativity, especially in children of preschool and primary school age. This nurtures qualities and competences, preparing the future personal, professional and social development of the child.

The main musical activities underlying music education in preschool and primary school age are: perception (listening); reproduction (performance, interpretation); creativity (improvisation). Perceiving music is a basic musical activity. It is the basis of the other two. Without receiving (listening to) a piece of music, it is not possible to perform and interpret or improvise it. The perception of music stimulates and develops the emotionality of the listener, his abstract thinking, his imagery.

The Russian musicologist Nazaikinsky (1972) defines various reasons affecting perception: age, profession, habits, environment, nationality, etc. He examines several factors that prepare the foundation for making sense of the content of the music being listened to:

- communication experience - communicative: the relationship of the musical work and its character with the life context, distinguishing various communication situations that the child encounters when listening to music;
- speech and motor experience - speech as a special tool for communication, expressed in singing through voice and text; motor experience - helps both to differentiate dance music by genre, and to differentiate and highlight individual means of expression in the musical fabric itself;
- sensory experience - spatial and visual sensations and ideas - two-way relationship of auditory and visual perception. (Nazaikinskii, 1972)

In this sense, it can be noted that listening to music in childhood and primary school age helps to create skills/competencies in the field of: native language; learning; initiative and entrepreneurship; socialization; citizenship; culture and creativity.

### **Competences and Skills**

“Competences are basic characteristics of people, determining ways of behavior or thinking, manifested in different situations and sustainable for a relatively long period of time. These include motives (the things an individual thinks or wants that cause them to act), traits (physical characteristics and consistent responses to situations or information), self-image (attitudes, values, or self-concept), cognitions (information in certain content areas) and skills (the ability to perform certain physical or mental tasks). The last two are visible and can be developed relatively quickly. The rest, especially the motives, values and attitudes are not directly expressed, may be unconscious and, therefore, are more difficult and slow to develop.” (Pozharliev, 2022)

“Competence is a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes. It should be seen as an expression of the individual's

ability and experience to combine and integrate in his behavior various elements of professional and personal qualities that are necessary for the performance of a specific task.“ (Angelov, 2018)

Seth Godin defines 5 five large categories of skills that are closely related to competence and its development:

Self-Control — Once you've decided something is important, can you keep doing it without letting distractions and bad habits stop you? The ability to do things in the long term that you may not be able to do in the short term. Productivity — Are you good at what you do? Are you able to use your knowledge, observations and dedication to move things forward? The ability to perform tasks that are not necessarily standard and measurable.

Wisdom — Have you learned things that are hard to convey in a textbook or manual? Experience makes us adults and mature people.

Perception — Do you have the necessary experience and practice to see the world and processes clearly? The ability to notice things before others point them out. Influence - Have you developed the necessary skills to persuade other people to take action? Charisma is only one manifestation of this skill. (Godin, 2017)

#### *Formation of Competences in Children and Students through Perception of Music*

The formulation of the listed above skills can be successfully and expediently adapted to the perception of music by children and students of preschool and primary school age:

Self-control - related to: the patience to listen - educates in ethics and develops emotional intelligence; understanding - desire to make sense of the musical language, carrier of content, grasping ideas.

Productivity - related to: lateral thinking - direction, tendency, striving for new and different thinking through the emotional impact of musical expressiveness; focus and attention to detail.

Wisdom - related to: empathy - towards people and situations; formation of critical thinking - towards oneself and others; sensitivity to the artistic musical impact - figurative emotionality.

Perception - related to: creative thinking - through musical images; evaluation of people and situations by gaining experience through the sound presentation of life images and events; quick and multifaceted thinking by analyzing and interpreting musical content based on expressive means.

Impact - related to: personal inspiration from listening to music, passed on to others; persuasiveness of language and speech, influencing those around; management and control over personal capabilities and skills, through resourcefulness in their use and presentation.

Music undoubtedly affects the visual and emotional sensitivity of a person. It stimulates various sensations, thoughts, images and sensations that cause a desire for free expression of the personality. Music is part of human emotions, moods, conscious or unconscious needs, hopes, fantasies. It is also the background of personal thoughts or of routine activities and actions. In its perfection, music is present in the creative processes developing inside the person and manifesting externally through its interpretation - performing or listening. The tripartite connection of music is a set of author's intention, realized by a performer and reached through their interpretation to the thought and sensibility of the listener. This type of communication is an invisible, imperceptibly realized process of a set idea (author), realized, and presented subjectively (interpreter), perceived and understood also subjectively (listener).

According to Lasswell (in Baltadzhieva, 2001), the communicative process is composed of five elements:

1. „Communicator – source of the message.“

In music, it is the composer who has expressed his thoughts, feelings and ideas through the sounding musical fabric, "materialized" by means of the musical text.

2. „Recipient - recipient of the message.“

When perceiving music, it is the listener - the one for whom the written work is intended.

3. „A communication channel between the source and the receiver.“

The performer is the one who makes the connection between the author's intention and the recipient.

4. „Means of conveying the message.“

Musical means of expression in their diversity are the path along which the "message" passes, coming from the author's concept, passing the analysis and realization of the interpreter, reaching the imagination and emotionality of the listener.

5. „Effect of delivery of the message.“

The musical "message" that reaches the audience is understood meaningfully by the recipients. In accordance with their age, life experience and knowledge, character, freedom of thought and feelings, intelligence, the significance, influence and impact of the message is determined - a subjective reflection of the author's confession, presented by the performer, interpreted by the listener.

Dessev and team note that any activity can be creative if the subject performs it in a non-stereotypical, unorthodox way and shows originality, resourcefulness, unexpectedness, inventiveness. (Dessev & al., 2011)

The same authors characterize the phases of creative development:

- logical analysis (conscious work) – preparation, active state of the subject, which is a prerequisite for a glimpse of a new original idea;
- intuitive solution (unconscious work on the problem) - maturation of an idea;
- verbalization of the intuitive decision (transition from the unconscious to consciousness) - hypothesis, idea;
- formalization of the verbalized decision (conscious work) – logical, finished form. (2011, p. 229)

Related to the perception of music in preschool and primary school age, these phases can be considered as follows:

- logical analysis – selection of appropriate figurative musical works, whose sound imagery is close to children's thinking, based on accumulated life experience; asking questions appropriate to the topic or indirectly preparing

the imagery in children's thinking, related to the content, character, emotionality and the means by which they are achieved;

- intuitive decision - when listening to the musical work, through the guidelines indicated in advance, children intuitively connect their ideas about reality with the sounding music, which affects and provokes the imagination and imagery;
- verbalization of the intuitive decision - after listening to the musical work, according to the given guidelines, the children explain, narrate, share their mental and visual impressions;
- formalization of the verbalized decision – as a result of exchanged opinions, ideas, emotions and thoughts, the imagery in the listened musical work is summarized or conclusions are drawn regarding the content, imagery, suggestion and impact of the invisible musical image.

## Methods

How, through the conscious perception of music, are knowledge, skills and relationships created that develop the imagination, fantasy and creativity, especially in the listeners, through the education of qualities and competences, preparing the future personal, professional and social development of the child?

The development of the auditory apparatus through the activity of music perception increases sensibility and sensitivity to sound, revealing new possibilities for intentional expression and sound modifications to stimulate rational and irrational thinking and perception of the surrounding world. Listening to music with the setting of certain tasks is an important component not only in music education in kindergarten and primary school, but also a factor leading to the development of both musical hearing and memory, as well as practical application of the accumulated musical-auditory and musical -images.

Tracing the musical thought expressed through the melody, its character, tempo, dynamics, rhythm of the work, develop the intellect, analytical thinking, creative nature of the child, educate and exercise the correct interpretation of the logic of the individual elements of musical expressiveness, making up the musical fabric and language. Understanding the essence and meaning of the means of expression in music is part of the preparation of children and students. Their sense, sensitivity, based on knowledge and understanding of the components of imagery in music, are a guideline for cultivated and intelligent interpretation of sound art. All this implies the development of:

- auditory control and self-control - listening skills and focus of attention, or its allocation:
- skills for understanding/distinguishing the small (detail, motive – e.g. element of musical expression) and the big (whole – e.g. idea, content, feelings);
- speaking skills, expression – oral explanations, expressing an opinion, alternating speech and melody;
- logical thinking skills - analysis and synthesis, summary;
- time allocation.

The word is an integral part of everyday life. The musical word is not always easy to understand. For the correct

awareness and perception of the musical language, children sometimes need the concreteness and clarity of the word to direct and stimulate their imaginative thought. The role of the teacher, who not only tells the music, is extremely important and constructive. It provokes dialogue in the class, stimulates the expression of personal opinion and defense of one's thesis, supports children's opinion and imagination, expressed in pure, beautiful, accurate Bulgarian language. There are various ways of developing children's speech, based on the emotional and visual perception of music:

- description of sound pictures and natural noises;
- analyzing the musical means of expression, which are the conductor of the content;
- a narrative based on a given piece of music;
- discussion, conversation;
- description of images, feelings, moods provoked by the sounding music, etc.

Thus, over time, competences in the field of the native language are formed - mastering it as an expression, as richness and color, as a means of intelligent and/or emotional communication. Penetrating (in many cases unconsciously) into the depths of the enigmatic musical language, the child usually intuitively reaches the emotionality, the imagery of the sound mass, conditioned by the sense, memory, reflex for various feelings, images, colors, moods based on the child's experience.

Often, the perception of music leads to empathizing with the emotions, feelings and thoughts embedded in the author's intention. Empathy is the ability to sensibly understand and empathize with the implication and impact of the composer's thoughts and consciousness. This inner listening insight could provoke both the attitude towards music and the interest of children and students in the time in which it was created; the society for which it was intended; the events that led to its creation. Of course, the way to the adequate perception of a musical work relates to a long and purposeful work concerning the creation of an understanding and attitude towards the various manifestations of musical thought. Its duration depends both on the degree of sensibility, sensitivity, and intelligence of the children, and on the tireless educational, professional and awakening work of the teacher, provoking the interest, fantasy and creative thought of the future listeners. The awakening of children's interest, imagination, logic, creativity depends on its artistic interpretation.

Integration with the other arts not only enhances the emotional impact of music. It expands the imagery, visualization, color of children's imagination. The information contained in the word or the picture, in the movement of the dance, in the suggestion of the architecture, leads to the expansion of the horizon, to cultural, historical, traditional, social knowledge. And this, in turn, builds cultural, social and civic competences. Discussions, conversations, talks related to the various arts, adapted to the age of the children, are an endless window to past worlds and a touch of the immensity of cultural knowledge, which, combined with the present, draw new directions and ideas in children's thinking and imagination.

"There are two important tasks of childhood - training the hand and training the heart. Together they lay the

solid foundation for training the mind.” (Oppenheimer, 2018) The activity of perceiving music is not directly related to training the hand, but it certainly trains the heart and mind. And from this direction of impact, listening to music forms social and civic skills and competences:

- listening skill - to hear others, to hear yourself;
- tolerance - respect for foreign/group opinion, respect for traditions and culture of ethnic groups; responsibility – personal/group;
- confidence, courage - expression of personal/group opinion;
- communication - verbal/non-verbal, assessment of the group's reaction, acceptance of criticism;
- team work - with group tasks; overcoming tension;
- understanding one's own and others' emotions.

Of course, there is no well-defined boundary between the characteristics of the various skills leading to competencies. The wide range of personal or group color does not draw postulates for defining areas of competence. The most significant share in the formation of competences through the perception of music falls on cultural, as well as on the skills of expression through creativity. The development of visual thinking through listening to music, familiarization with various examples of folklore, national and world musical heritage, integration with other arts, leads to serious accumulation of knowledge, ideas, observations, conclusions. This, in turn, provokes children's curiosity and inquisitiveness to enrich and expand not only the informational sound field, but also for searches in the field of various arts. The greater the range of knowledge, interest, awareness of children, the more their desire for creativity is activated - interpreting ideas generated by imagination. The role of the teacher as a person, educator, professional is to stimulate, develop, initiate the creative beginning and spirit in each and every child. Ken Robinson notes the three main things that "great" teachers give students:

- Inspiration. With their passion, they ignite their interest in the subject being taught and inspire them to achieve the best they are capable of.

- Confidence. They help them develop skills and habits that give them confidence that they will be able to develop their expertise in the future.

- Creativity. They provide them with the opportunity to experiment, explore, ask questions and develop skills and attitudes for original thinking. (Robinson, 2017)

## **Conclusion**

Music, as an art form with a thousand-year history, influences and affects man. It teaches, educates, ennobles. In many cases the power of music gives rise to sensations, thoughts and feelings that instill in man an understanding of himself - of the invisible threads between the sound and the vibrations of the heart, of the joy of the excitement caused by the tonal color, of the connection between our true nature and perfection of the soul.

These music-induced reflections on one's own essence and depth have an impact on a person's relationships and connections with other people and society.

Listening to music is as much a natural act of human nature as it is a serious and sometimes difficult way to make sense of the music that is listened to, to embody it in an artistic image, to cultivate taste, attitude and preferences. The immensity of sound art includes knowledge - about the content, meaning, emotionality of musical imagery and expressiveness; for the information it carries, passed through the experience, culture and knowledge of the time. "In every culture we know, arranging sound for auditory pleasure is a common way to improve the quality of life." (Csikszentmihalyi, 2021)

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