

## PARALLELS AND DIFFERENCES IN TRENDS IN MUSIC PEDAGOGY IN THE 20TH CENTURY – THE PLACE OF THE KODÁLY CONCEPT IN EUROPEAN MUSIC PEDAGOGY OF THE LAST CENTURY –

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**SUMMARY.** The practical renewal of Zoltán Kodály's world-famous pedagogical tradition is once again a question enjoying significant dominance and a widely researched field in Hungary. Various institutes, workshops and studies deal with the theoretical background of this question and the possibilities of practical implementation. Studying the current renewal trends affecting the Kodály concept and method, as well as the different music pedagogic methods of the last century, it can be said that there are many parallels and similarities between them. We could also say that these methods of the 20th century served as a model and may even serve as a model in the future for the methodological further development of school singing and music education based on the Kodály concept. That is why it is worth getting to know the different trends so that we can draw ideas from them and integrate them into our own activities.

**Keywords:** alternative music pedagogy, 20th century models, experiential music learning, Kodály's concept

### „Prelude” - History, 20th century models

Beginning in the thirties of the 20th century, traditional structured music education underwent a transformation. Several music pedagogues across Europe have been involved in reforming the structure and methodological tools of music teaching. Almost at the same time, they started

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to publish their ideal music education basic ideas: Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967), Émile Jaques Dalcroze (1865-1950), Carl Orff (1895-1982), Shinichi Suzuki (1898-1998), Maria Montessori (1870-1952), Justine Bayard Ward (1879—1975), Edgar Willems (1895-1978) Maurice Martenot (1898-1980) and Klára Kokas (1929-2010).

The results of their work live on as methods used worldwide in today's music pedagogy. Within the framework of this paper, I would like to highlight only a few of them - and apart from presenting them individually, I would rather direct the attention of the audience to the parallels, interactions, or even differences between the individual systems.

I would like to summarize the results of my research by presenting the following 7 areas:

- 1. Basic principles**
- 2. Musical material**
- 3. Musical reading and writing**
- 4. Listening development**
- 5. Movement-rhythm**
- 6. Use of instruments**
- 7. Improvisation**

### **1. Basic principles**

The consensus of the different methods is that music is one of the most suitable tools that can help the harmonious development of human beings. They all recognize and emphasize the role of early childhood and the importance of early music learning:

- Kodály puts it this way: *"Only a happy child can become a happy adult, and only these can make a happy country."*<sup>2</sup> Kodály also attributes a great role to high-class music in the formation of taste: *"The bad taste of adults can hardly be corrected. Good taste developed early, on the other hand, is difficult to spoil later."*<sup>3</sup>

- according to Willems, musical education should begin in the cradle, referring to Plato, who says that the mother should begin the musical education of a child by singing to her child.

- Suzuki's students start their violin lessons at the age of 3 - sometimes even earlier - but their musical education - thanks to their mother's violin playing - already begins at a fetal age. This idea resonates

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<sup>2</sup> Kodály, Zoltán. *Visszatekintés (Retrospection) I. kötet* (edit. Bónis Ferenc). Zeneműkiadó Vállalat, Budapest, 1964.

<sup>3</sup> Idem

with Kodály's vision, who goes even further on this issue: *"not even the child: the child's musical education begins nine months before the mother's birth. (...) Because the mother not only gives her body to her child, but also gives her soul from her own."*<sup>4</sup>

As a further parallel, we can see that they all prioritize musical activity, active participation in the musical process, over a theoretical approach. Consequently, all music teaching systems are based on perception:

- musical experience can only be gained through active participation, and this must come before learning an instrument, says Orff.

- according to Montessori's view, only after the discovery of silence is the child's hearing prepared for perceptual education, which is why she pays extra attention to the use of silence.

- everyone can sing - says Kodály - through this you can get closer to music, get to know, and understand it, and through active music education you can move from the barren soil of passive listening to the rich garden of music education.

Kodály's and Willems' concepts have the same goal: starting from valuable music, through musical knowledge - e.g., by listening training - to lead to valuable music, to a higher level of musical experience. However, the practical goal is different: while Kodály had a concept of educating a nation and reaching out to the masses, Willems created an extracurricular music school, in which, after about 3 years of preparation at an early age, everyone learns to play the piano and a melodic instrument and joins a choir, while continuing to study music literacy. Both also emphasize the role of listening to music with an artistic value as providing experience and as a way of developing hearing.

Orff's ideal is liberation through versatile musical and other activities, the joyful participation of the individual in making music. All of this, however, is realized in a rather narrow world of musical sound and content, while Kodály's musical world is broader and more complex, and includes a variety of music as well as great masters from the past and present ... Orff's ideas fit into Kodály's concept - however, it cannot be implemented the other way around (not least because of the wider musical world).

All of them (the methods of Dalcroze, Kodály, Willems, Martenot and Montessori) work according to detailed principles. Orff rather inspires, gives ideas, examples, and advice. Orff-Schulwerk should not be interpreted as a rigid educational method, since it is an approach to music that can be used to develop and embed new ideas in students. The Kodály music pedagogy

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<sup>4</sup> Kodály, Zoltán. *Visszatekintés (Retrospection) I. kötet* (edit. Bónis Ferenc). Zeneműkiadó Vállalat, Budapest, 1964, p. 246.

concept does not form a unified closed system either. Kodály did not summarize his ideas in a pedagogical work but entrusted the development and methodological implementation of his ideas to his colleagues.

**Peculiarities:**

The aim of Émile Jaques-Dalcroze's method is to harmonize the intellectual and physical abilities of the individual with the help of music. The peculiarity of his Eurythmic practice is that he develops musical sense and awareness through body movement. The rhythmic movement does not want to replace teaching, but to supplement it: it was born from the teaching of solfège, created by a composer and made music its primary component. According to Dalcroze, the study of rhythmicity finds its natural place in childhood and thus contributes to the harmonious development of young people.

Although Dalcroze had a great influence on the development of Orff's teaching method, there is still a difference in the approach of the two, e.g.: Orff considers it more important to give the child an opportunity for spontaneous expression and awaken the ability to invent. In Orff's method, the unity of music, dance and speech is important, a kind of "total art" at the children's level: their own bodies "take care" of instruments (clapping, clicking, drumming, etc.), they tell and sing short, improvised stories according to their own ideas, with a variety of accents, with tempo, intonation, internal repetitions, dynamic construction.

An important part of Willems' work is teaching music to retarded and disabled children.

## **2. Musical material**

Kodály and Willems emphasize the importance of folk music, and Orff, like them, bases his teaching on folk music, because he considers this to be the natural way of musical acceptance for children. Starting from pentatony, Kodály and Orff do all this by first teaching the songs of small scope ("so-me") and the most characteristic motifs. All three highlight the importance of children's folklore and children's play songs. According to Martenot's view: musical education is characterized by expanding the possibilities of perception, but this activity can be facilitated if the musical language proposed for the child is at his own level. Kodály and Willems convey material of artistic value to their students, while Dalcroze's vocal material reflects the sound world of the French school at the beginning of the century. And the improvisation of the Orff approach - in the absence of sufficient knowledge and experience - sometimes carries little artistic value.

In the case of Orff, we must distinguish between two types of musical material:

1. in the Günther school, the adult/young students had to show what the music inspired them with their movements and dances to the romantic music played on the piano. Orff felt that this music was not appropriate for this function, so he thought that the students should create their own music and at the same time find their own means of expression in movement and dance.

2. the musical material of the Schulwerk booklets was specially prepared for children, and while the former was instrumental material, the latter basically used to sing and speech. Sung game songs, calls, verses that can be said while playing, and nursery rhymes were included in the curriculum. From a formal point of view, they used material that is simple, not too complicated for the children, and can be produced by themselves (e.g., ostinato, rondo).

Willems opens the doors to avant-garde music and leaves the system of the tempered, diatonic, or chromatic scale in the creation of rhythm, free singing, and the use of intra-tonal bells. He penetrates a new world of musical sound through improvisations, rhythmic and melodic creations, and at the same time opens the way for the reception of modern music. In addition to the diatonic scale, he also uses the old modes and the pentatonic scale. Its fundamental method is the singing approach to learning music; is open and supports the free access and processing of each country's own music. Due to their musical background, they have been dealing with sounds and sound resolutions from the beginning.

Kodály moves from monophonic to simple vocal polyphony (two-, three-, four-part), while Orff already recommends the melody sung in polyphony accompanied by a Bourdon part, in other cases he creates simple polyphony with ostinato accompaniment.

In addition to rhythmic gymnastics, Dalcroze also emphasized singing, composing around 600 songs for teaching purposes (monophonic and polyphonic, some with piano accompaniment).

### **3. Musical reading and writing**

All music educators recognize the key importance of this element, but they use it in different ways and with different dominance.

According to Kodály: *"Musical culture today cannot exist without reading and writing, just like literary culture."*<sup>5</sup> The acquisition of these musical skills is aided by relative solmization, which *"... takes you more quickly to fluent sheet music reading"*. In his writings, he repeatedly highlights the need to practice and teach rhythm. According to his idea, if this work starts already in kindergarten, then *"...reading sheet music in elementary school will no longer be an illusion."* Beginning in 1937, he wrote and published pedagogical works to facilitate the work.

Orff believes as follows: *"Children must play everything from memory - this is the only way to ensure complete freedom - but we cannot ignore notation either; on the contrary, it should be introduced at the beginning (together with the speech elements, the rhythm of which is sufficient to be noted down), and the child can write down the rhythms and melodies that come to mind."*<sup>6</sup> In Orff's method, the sounds are primarily represented by movement, but graphic diagrams are also created in the form of individual signs. Later, they also learn the basic principles of traditional notation.

Dalcroze's students do not start learning music by reading sheet music, but by listening to and identifying musical sounds and processes. Thus, reacting to music precedes the process of reading and writing sheet music. For children, musical notation (recording) is therefore a storage and connection of ideas, not an exclusive goal.

In Martenot's method, the notation is initially relative, because it only indicates the direction of the melody, like the neumes, in the form of a drawing. Transposed into the five-line system, the first notes are made on the notes F – G - A, unlike traditional French solfège teaching, in which Do = C is the first stage of note awareness.

Learning to read and write music can be achieved most directly with an instrument accessible to everyone, the human voice itself. For Kodály, the means of musical reading and writing is first and foremost relative solmization. Dalcroze and Willems teach absolute solmization, while Orff has less emphasis in this area, and the teacher can choose between the two musical writing systems at his own discretion. When teaching musical reading and writing, Willems starts from the sound *dó*, which, according to him, is the central sound of Western systems (in the history of music, Do - Ut - is like the number 1 or the letter A). He marks degrees with Roman numerals and uses Arabic numerals to mark intervals.

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<sup>5</sup> Előszó Szőnyi Erzsébet könyvéhez (Preface to the book by Erzsébet Szőnyi) Erzsébet Szőnyi (1954) *A zenei írás-olvasás módszertana* (The methodology of musical reading and writing).

<sup>6</sup> Szőnyi. Erzsébet. *Zenei nevelési irányzatok a XX. században. (Music education trends in the XX. Century)*. Tankönyvkiadó. Budapest, 1988.

There is also a difference in the solmization names of the sounds. The French tradition does not express the alterations during continuous solmization singing (the sounds C-D, Ces-D, C-Cis, etc. are said equally as Do-Re), on the other hand, Martenot uses the following: for the flat modification B adds a letter to the end of the syllable (B minor): Dob, Reb, Mib, Fab, Sob, Lab, Sib; abbreviation # (sharp) at the cross: Do#, Re#, Mi#, Fa#, So#, La#, Si#.

The advantage is that students can better understand the sounds of sharp ("#") and flat ("b"), but the disadvantage is that it makes continuous singing very difficult.

Montessori used a green wooden board with a black line system to develop the skill of reading sheet music and used it as a puzzle or patience game.

#### **4. Listening development**

The focus of Dalcroze's solfège lessons is the development of inner hearing (silent singing, skipping beats, etc.), which is controlled by the teacher on the piano.

With Willems, singing prepares the listening, rhythmic and movement exercises. Listening education is done with vocals and instruments. During the introduction to music (indulgence for children), various materials are used to develop the ability to listen to music: bells, whistles, hummingbirds, xylophones, metallophones, flutes, and all kinds of percussion instruments are put in the hands of the children. The child first listens to them, then learns to recognize them based on timbre, pitch, or other characteristics, and finally reproduces them himself.

While Kodály's listening, development is of prime importance, Orff's direct listening development is not, or only to a small extent, given a place.

#### **5. Movement-rhythm**

Experience shows that musical activities combined with movement (playful, creative singing, active music listening) contribute to the analytical understanding of musical processes, which - even before the acquisition of reading skills - have an impact on the development of cognitive areas such as language skills, memory, and attention. Recognizing this, the various European music pedagogic methods of the 20th century emphasize the importance of movement. Rhythm and movement are intimately connected to each other, musical rhythm is included in our movements.

In Willems's music lessons, for example, he devotes 20 minutes each to singing and exercise.

Dalcroze was the first to question the basic rhythmic dogmas of European music, re-introduced the ancient theory of rhythm creation, and used the polyrhythms of the Far East. According to his concept, the practice of musical rhythm should begin with movements, such as walking, running, jumping, drawing a melody, playing a ball, clapping, drumming, etc. The various physical actions promote the simultaneous development of the sense of rhythm, musical hearing, musical sound, and muscle coordination. Its basic principle is the following: rhythmic movement should precede learning an instrument! This rhythmic movement cannot be separated from the in-depth teaching of solfège, because then the whole concept goes astray. The rhythmic movements are connected to the teacher's improvised piano playing. The teacher alternates the improvisation, and the children adapt their own movements to it - this activity makes the children pay attention.

However, according to Maurice Martenot, it is not correct to start teaching rhythm with rhythmic gymnastics or pacing, because due to inexperience with weights and the movement of the limbs, the pulsation of the rhythm takes the form of too large movements and because of this, the tempo will be too slow if the child raises his limbs precisely. If the pulsation of the rhythm becomes heavy because of the movement and becomes deformed, it loses all its vitality and, at the same time, its artistic and educational value. According to Martenot's experience, games in which the rhythm starts from a natural basis - e.g., shouts, syllables, rhythmic and movement-expressed calls - even in less advantaged persons, they promote the rapid awakening of the rhythmic sense. *"Is not the child who, in the impulse of emotion, sings the joy of life in a few more or less false cries or sounds, is much nearer to art than one who sings a solfège exercise with perfect precision and tempo, but without life?"* Martenot asks.<sup>7</sup>

The Swiss Émile Jaques-Dalcroze method helps in learning rhythm. Timing, clapping, and tapping make it easier to practice rhythmic elements.

But while in Dalcroze's method rhythm is always associated with movement, in Kodály it relates to singing. Kodály describes that *"the rhythm ... should be practiced much earlier and much more deeply than is customary nowadays, and also in two parts"*,<sup>8</sup> however, he warns against the excessive cult of rhythm. Kodály basically uses vocal material, the main musical medium of which is the human voice (the cheapest instrument). Kodály

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<sup>7</sup> Szőnyi, Erzsébet. *Zenei nevelési irányzatok a XX. században. (Music education trends in the XX. Century)* Tankönyvkiadó. Budapest, 1988.

<sup>8</sup> Kodály, Zoltán. *Énekeljünk tisztán! (Let's sing clear)*. Magyar Kórus Művek, Budapest, 1941.



doubted movement to music as a way of "perceiving" music. In his opinion, on this path we will remain on the surface of the works. For him, movement basically means the importance of teaching and cultivating the song dance and children's dance (folk dance).

## **6. Use of instruments**

The pedagogy of Kodály and Willems is basically a vocal approach. Kodály recommends the xylophone only as an auxiliary instrument (see Pentatonic scale music booklet II.) and prioritizes the flute.

While Kodály does not recommend the use of the piano at all, in the method of Dalcroze and Willems this instrument (piano accompaniment) is just as indispensable as the teacher who excels at improvising on the piano. The improvised piano playing is easier to synchronize with the child's movements (since the child only learns to apply his own movements to the music later). At the same time, the child must also make certain adjustments, watching and observing the changes in the music, reacting to rhythmic, dynamic, tempo and other changes.

Montessori creates special instruments for different musical experiences. In his opinion, the best are the two series of bells (13 each), which hang from a wooden frame, have a range of A-á' and contain chromatic notes. The double series includes four hammers: if one of the bells in the first series is struck, the child must find the sound in the other. Other musical instruments used by Montessori: the monochord and a special tuned wooden dulcimer, related to the marimba, whose sounds can be moved, highlighted, and composed.

In the Günther school - which was founded in 1924 by Carl Orff and Dorothee Günther - to help the musical accompaniment of the students' movements, in addition to the body instruments, some melodic-rhythmic instruments were made (mainly based on medieval and Eastern prototypes). Xylophone, glockenspiel, and metallophone equipped with wooden and metal plates were made in soprano, alto, tenor and bass ranges, on which plates the name of the corresponding note was also written. The line-up was completed by other percussion instruments (drums, gongs, cymbals) and strings (cellos, viola da gambas) to play the bass notes. Later, wind instruments were added to the repertoire (recorder, dulcimer, psaltery, and other folk instruments).

## **7. Improvisation**

Important music educators of the 20th century all recognize the importance of improvisation, but its application is conceptualized with varying degrees of emphasis.

Willems' program includes e.g., group improvisation and free improvisation, like Dalcroze's and Orff's systems, in which - although singing is an important part of the teaching - the starting point is body vibrations and movement, which leads to the development of improvisation skills at an elementary level. With Orff, the emphasis is on rhythmic improvisation.

Improvisation plays a major role in connection with the Kodály concept, but Kodály always highlights the dangers associated with improvisation. If improvisation is not preceded by thorough musical studies, improvisational processes can often become self-serving and without a framework, which does not serve the student's musical development.

### Overall

As an overall of this brief overview, it can be said that the basic principles and main aspirations (both in terms of musical material and skill development) contain many common features in the main music pedagogic trends of the 20th century. It can also be said that these educational concepts, which are still in use today, do not stop at the gates of schools, but also play an important role in children's lives outside of school. The "Kodály concept" is not only an educational program, but also a new "life program" that wants to fill the everyday lives of children and adults with music, giving everyone "spiritual nourishment".

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