

TEACHING THE HISTORY OF MUSIC IN PRIMARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

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SUMMARY. The study hereby aims to draw attention on the importance of teaching the history of music in primary and middle school, which is also part of the aesthetic education offered by the school. Besides naming the main criteria for teaching, the history of music the study presents an excerpt of the teaching material and draws attention upon the importance of active listening to Music.

Keywords: the history of music, periods in the history of music, discussions on musical forms, illustration, listening to music.

Teaching the history of music is an important factor in the aesthetic education offered by the school. The aim is to make pupils interested in music, providing them with more knowledge and systematization of that knowledge, creating an interest for music, making them love music and forming their good taste in music. Therefore, teachers shall not teach the history of music in an abstract manner, but familiarize pupils with the oeuvre of the great masters of the classical literature of music and the greatest pieces of contemporary music.

In music, teaching one of the objectives that need to be accomplished is to present – as far as teaching circumstances make it possible – pupils a full picture of the development and history of music, of its close relations with society and the development of the society. When leaving middle school, pupils need to have a general picture of the history of European music, musical genres, and the structural changes the musical forms underwent throughout history. Familiarizing themselves with the most specific product of every period of the literature of music, pupils will have a guideline to help know their way in the jungle of the literature of music.

Learning the history of music can easily turn into an aesthetic experience if the teacher instead of lengthily discussing the biography of the composer and enumerating all of its works, applies a more illustrative method and offers pupils the opportunity to hear a musical piece for themselves during each

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class. Thus, pupils will get to orientate themselves well in the various styles and trends of the history of music and develop an ability to form an independent opinion of any musical piece.

1. Main Criteria in Teaching the History of Music

a) When discussing a unit of the history of music the teacher will use a fragment of a musical piece as a starting point. Musical pieces to be presented to pupils need to be artistic, explicit, easy to understand as far as contents are concerned and not very lengthy. Results will be obtained only by teaching using an illustrative method.

b) Among the pieces of information presented on the history of music the teacher will also present the period when the musical piece was written, the social picture of the period, the social standing of the composer.

c) An even more complete presentation will be provided by using visual, illustrative teaching aids. Illustration can be provided by presenting a portrait of the composer, pictures of instruments, pictures of works of art in architecture or the fine arts, a picture of the manuscript of the musical piece.

d) When presenting the work of a composer, the teacher should also give pupils specific data on the musical style of the period, on the means of expression in music, on the audience, on important literary writers of the period and important literary works.

e) Presentation regarding the history of music should be an exciting experience for pupils. Few, but pedagogically aimed data can enrich pupils both intellectually and emotionally.

f) Maintaining certain gradualism the teacher should organize extra curricular activities as well, like concerts, operas, choir singing, and collective music using children's instruments. Then the experiences gained during these events should be shared together. Memories of first hand experiences and independently formed opinions will be reproduced by students even after they have long forgotten all the data and numbers which they simply had to learn without any kind of experience. We interiorize only knowledge that has been acquired through not only our receptors, but also the constructive work of our intellect.

g) Theory and practice should interweave in the process of teaching. Explanations regarding musical phenomena and issues on musical form, definition of specific elements need to be immediately followed by a practical presentation or a listening exercise. Thus the teacher takes pupils to the very core of composition, makes all the elements and logic of musical structure palpable to them, exemplifying every important stage of the development of a certain musical phenomenon. In addition, when pupils have learnt all this, they will be able to actively hear out an entire musical piece.

h) Instead of delivering a lengthy theoretical lecture on the topic, the teacher will rather sensitively direct the thinking of pupils toward getting to know the many facets of music. This activity needs a fully active attitude, attention, and the hearing and intellectual concentration both from the teacher and the pupils. Understanding a musical piece shall be the result of joint labour. The teacher should not offer solutions in his or her explanations, but rather have pupils discover these solutions through their own continuous work by hearing the musical piece and giving it some thought.

2. Teaching Material of the History of Music

In the case of the history of music, the material is so vast that it is impossible to present it during primary and middle school classes; therefore, a wary selection has to be done when establishing a curriculum in this domain.

One of the important topics is establishment of the various periods in the history of music, which in fact, follows the division of general history and the history of literature and of arts. Within each historical period, i.e. a distinguished style, considered from a musical viewpoint, the teacher will have time to present in detail only one or two composers having outstanding achievements and to present the general features of the respective style. There is no place for lengthy biographies. Instead, it is more practical to have pupils have a reading on various topic related subjects.

Another topic that can be presented along history concerns the development of the various genres. E.g. stages of development of the sonata as a genre and musical form, the development of the opera.

Contemporary zeitgeist and technical development makes it possible that factual data be downloaded from the Internet. The benefit of this procedure is not only that pupils will gather the necessary data themselves, but also that it provides more time for listening.

a) *The Beginning of Music, the Music of Ancient Cultures*

The development of ancient cultures can be deduced based on the results of archaeological research and the data provided by ethnomusicology. First plainsongs were sung, accompanied by primitive instruments. To present these the teacher can use photographs of instruments or remains of instruments dug up by archaeologists or the pictures of instrumentalists presented as ornaments on remaining ancient objects and the few tunes and fragments of tunes some of which are included also in the textbooks. E.g. *An Ancient Chinese Hymn, Ancient Hebrew Song, Ode of Pyndaros*.

b) *Church and Lay Music in the Middle Ages*

The music of the Middle Ages will be observed on two levels: on the one hand the teacher will present the development of church music, highlighting the role played by Pope Gregory I in collecting and systematizing church songs

and in writing down music; on the other hand he or she will deal with the development of lay music, the lyric of troubadours, trouvères, minnesingers and mastersingers. Pupils may learn a few tunes from the repertory consisting of the popular genres of the time: the lied, the chanson, the pastoral. E.g. *Troubadour song from the 13th century, Old French Canon; the song entitled L'homme armé.*

c) The Renaissance

When presenting the musical culture of the Renaissance genres of vocal polyphony should be highlighted. The teacher should present the specific features of genres like the madrigal, the motet, the mass, then he or she should present a few details regarding the homophonic and polyphonic structure of polyphonic musical pieces, having pupils also listen to the relevant musical examples. The teacher can have pupils sing or listen to choruses composed by Palestrina, Lassus, Marenzio or Monteverdi. As far as Hungarian Renaissance music is concerned, the teacher should necessarily present Sebestyén Tinódi Lantos, the famous Hungarian chronicler, Franciscan monk János Kájoni and composer and performer Bálint Bakfark.

d) The Baroque

This cultural period lasting for almost 150 years has brought many novelties as far as instruments, genres and structures are concerned. Pupils ought to be familiarized with the most famous masters of instrument making and the most famous workshops, for this period introduces a large number of instruments: the viola, the violin, the oboe, the violoncello, the bassoon, the flute, the trumpet, the horn, and the clavichord. Naturally, development of the instruments brings along an upturn in instrumental music as well.

As far as Baroque genres are concerned the suite, the rondo, the concerto grosso, the solo concerto need to be presented to the pupils through pieces composed by Händel, Bach, Couperin, Scarlatti, Rameau, Vivaldi, Corelli, Purcell, Lully or Schütz. The specific genre of the period, the Baroque fugue, and its structure will be presented by making an analysis of the parts of J.S. Bach's *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier*.

Development stages of genres that involve also singing like the opera, the oratorio, the cantata and the passion need to be presented as well using the proper musical material, e.g. the development of the opera is inseparable from the work of Lully, Purcell and Händel; while the oratorio, the cantata and the passion are reflected most in the oeuvre of J.S. Bach and G.F. Händel.

e) The Classicism

Classicism aimed for simplicity and the unity of form and content. These characteristics and the structural features of the most important instrumental genres of the period, the sonata and the symphony and later chamber music

and classical concerto are to be found most typically in the work of the masters of classical music of Vienna: Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. Along with the clarification of genres also musical forms were transformed. Since already familiar with the two-part Baroque sonata, pupils will have the opportunity to get to know the three-part classical sonata and through analysis they will also realize that not every classical sonata follows the presented classical pattern, the works of Beethoven already bear the features of Romanticism.

As far as genres that involve also singing are concerned, the teacher will present pupils some classical oratorios and operas so they can understand how these developed and changed compared to the previous cultural period. Listening to and analyzing Haydn's oratorio, *The Seasons*, Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and the overture of Beethoven's opera, *Fidelio* pupils will identify the signs of development.

f) Romanticism

Amidst the great social changes of the first half of the 19th century, new genres were created: the Romantic lied, character pieces, the symphonic poem and the national romantic opera.

Through the works of Frederic Chopin, pupils will get to know some of the finest pieces of musical literature for the piano: his ballads, mazurkas, sonatas, polonaises, concerto etudes, preludes and the two piano concertos he wrote bear the features of Polish folk music.

The teacher will also present the pupils the most famous lieds and piano works of Franz Schubert. His tunes reminding of Austrian folk music are characterized by lyricism, abundance in tunes and variety. Using his lieds and instrumental music Henrik Berté composed an operetta entitled *Három a kislány* (*Three Girls*), a new genre for the pupils to familiarize with.

From the compositions for the piano of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, the teacher should highlight a specific genre: the lied with no lyrics.

From among Robert Schumann's works the teacher will present two compositions for piano made up of smaller pieces, *Papillons* and *Scenes from Childhood* and his *piano concerto in A-minor*.

In the case of Johannes Brahms, besides his famous lullaby pupils will need to familiarize with his violin concerto and his symphonies. They will also get to know and analyze piano concertos from the abundant oeuvre of Tchaikovsky and Grieg and the concerto etudes by Franz Liszt and Paganini.

The new sonority of the romantic opera and specific features of the national operas will be presented through works by Weber, Wagner, Rossini, Verdi, Puccini, Bizet, Smetana, Borodin, Musorgski. Besides presenting the action of each opera, the teacher will also teach pupils to sing some of the easier themes.

Literature and the fine arts have a stronger effect on music in this period. The teacher will present pupils the literary or historical background of a symphonic poem or program suite and then have them recognize the musical devices by which the so-called program is expressed by Liszt, Berlioz, Smetana, Musorgski, Rimski-Korsakov, Grieg, Mendelssohn, or even Tchaikovsky. Some of the musical devices are new sound effects produced by the English horn, the bass clarinet, the contrabassoon, the tuba and various percussion instruments.

g) Impressionism

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century a new musical trend started up, which formulated momentary effects, so called impressions by the means of music. The teacher will present the music of this period mainly through the works of Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel.

h) Contemporary Music

The music of the 20th century includes the art of many important composers. Several trends with a strong effect, composers having contrasting views are present in the world of music simultaneously. Pupils need to understand that a great variety of styles is specific to this period. In order to make this more concrete the teacher will present them Igor Stravinsky's suite and ballet *Firebird*; his dance suite and ballet *Petrushka*; Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet* and Benjamin Britten's work of art for educational purposes *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell*.

In the case of the history of Hungarian 20th century music, the teacher will familiarize pupils with two theatrical works of Zoltán Kodály *Háry János* and the *Székelyfőnök (The Transylvanian Spinning Room)* and one of his ecclesiastic works, the *Psalmus Hungaricus*. They also need to know about Béla Bartók's ballet inspired from a fairy tale, *The Wooden Prince* and his opera, *Bluebeard's Castle* and about the *Cantata Profana*.

From the presentation of the great variety of 20th century music cannot be omitted the American composer who lifted jazz music to symphonic level, George Gershwin with his *Rhapsody in Blue* and his *An American in Paris*. Besides the American music, the pupils need to know also about the Armenian music of Aram Hacıaturian. Pupils will listen to the fragment entitled *Dance of the Swords* from his ballet music entitled *Spartacus*.

In order that pupils' knowledge in the history of music to be complete the life and oeuvre of a few more composers need to be presented. These are: Arthur Honegger's (a French composer of Swiss origin) best known work, the oratorio *Joan of Arc on the Stake*; Italian composer Ottorino Respighi's symphonic works *Fountains of Rome*, *Pines of Rome*; from among the works of

world famous Romanian composer George Enescu the *Orchestral Suite no. 3 (Suite Villageois)* and *Orchestral Suite no. 1* and his opera entitled *Oedipe*; Ciprian Porumbescu's operetta *Crai nou (New Moon)*; Gherase Dendrino's *Lysistrata*; Paul Constantinescu's *Piano Concerto*; Marțian Negrea's *In the Apuseni Mountains*; Gh. Dumitrașcu's *Tudor Vladimirescu* and Sigismund Toduță's *Miorița*.

Teaching the history of music is complete only if it is associated with active listening. Self-aware listening requires the ability to analyze and differentiate, it develops concentration and inner consciousness. Objectives related to emotional development require that listening to music associated with teaching the history of music should be a cathartic experience for pupils.

(Translated from Hungarian by Borbély-Bartalis Zsuzsa)

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