

Perceiving Music – One of Fundamental Activities at Mass School

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Abstract: The two musical activities – performing and perceiving music in the mass school – are equally important. However, while to perform music after finishing school is random, to work and create in a ‘sounding’ environment is something people do all their lives. That makes the problem of perceiving music very important – what music people are taught to choose, i.e. whether school has set and developed their musical-artistic taste; also how people listen, i.e. if they are trained to listen with understanding. The role of the musical teacher in the school of general education has thus become really important, so the question if the music teacher is well trained to cope with the high-level requirements of his job is crucial. The responsible attitude of the music pedagogue towards perceiving music, which is particularly important for educating cultural listeners of music, would suggest other promising forms of work in class and outside of class.

Keywords: Perceive Music, Have a Musical Rumor, Musical Abilities and Activities, Aesthetic Sense, Emotional Culture

1. Introduction

Listening to (perception) music, although it is a comparatively passive, perceptive activity, is practically the most necessary of the musical activities – all their life people have been surrounded by music, and this implies in general two basic requirements:

- a) Trained ability for orientation and selection;
- b) Assured skills to listen with understanding, i.e. music should be perceived in a way which will provide maximum effect on the listener. That is why this activity is included in each music lesson since first grade.

2. Subject, Aim, Tasks

The subject of this publication is directing the perception of music in the mass school.

The aim is to present, in a synthesized way, methodological approaches in managing the activity perception of music.

In this aspect the following tasks have been specified:

1. Presenting the importance of the activity of perceiving music.

2. Elucidating the conditions required for the purposeful musical education through perceiving music.
3. Choice of methodological approaches to achieve active and efficient perception of music in class.

3. Role of the Activity Perception of Music in the Musical Education Process

The tasks to be fulfilled through perceiving music are:

1. Purposeful work towards building of listening skills and habits. Children have to be convinced that the activity of listening to music is a serious activity, which cannot and should not be combined with other activities. There is background music (while playing gymnastics, doing homework, making commercials, etc.). It is listened for relaxation, fun, mood. Here we exclude for example the film music, which is naturally built-in the plot, and plays an equal part in the whole scenario, revealing at any moment the emotional attitude to the events, experiences the action. People have to listen to music in a way which is equal to reading a novel or watching a

theatre play – following the development carefully so that the content is understood. Active development of students' musical rumor. The higher degree of development, the faster children and adolescents get orientated in the musical work (perceive, rationalize, remember the main themes, follow their development); find the emotional content of the musical themes, their modification and development; realize in more details the significance of the leading components in the musical expression – melody, harmony, timbre, etc; more broadly comprehend the unfolding of the musical form with its structural elements; with more understanding (degree of awareness) and hence - with a deeper emotional resonance they contact the musical work.

2. Accumulation of notions about the elements of the musical expression, representing the personal musical-auditory experience, the wealth of which determines the speed of realizing and rationalizing of the musical-artistic phenomena.
3. Active perception, rationalizing and emotional experience of an artistic work is not based only on the certain artistic abilities (in this case – musical rumor) and the capacity of the artistic experience (in the perception of music – musical-auditory notions), but is also determined by such individual qualities as quickness of associative thinking, speed and wealth of the fantasy images. Associativeness and imagination, besides being prerequisites for the complete perception of the artistic image, through active participation are also unfolded and developed into an artistic apperception.
4. Experiencing of different in their emotional content musical works leads to upbringing the children's emotional culture. It is basically represented in their increased sensibility, raised readiness for emotional reactions, not towards common events like simple everyday life situations, but to higher spheres of social interaction.
5. Students get acquainted with the most significant of the musical culture through skilful selection of the most valuable pearls in the treasury of the world music. Of course, special attention is paid to the purposeful familiarization with national musical culture - folk and professional.
6. Educating students in a true criterion and artistic taste for assessment of the music phenomena through system contact with high artistic musical works. Along with this they also build skills for correct orientation and selection of artistic works for independent listening to music.
7. Contributing to building the musical-performing culture of the students through the perception of works performed by children or adolescent groups with excellent performing achievements.

These tasks have been realized since the first hours of the organized musical activities in the kindergarten and the

primary level of general education.

4. Conditions Necessary for the Effective Conduct of Music Perception

The following conditions are necessary for the effective conduct of the activity - musical rumor, musical memory, figurative-associative thinking, imagination and active artistic participation.

a) Musical rumor is the basis for differential perception of sounding music:

1. The sense for mood and the sense for methrorhythm help to rationalize and highlight the essential musical idea.
2. The presence of preliminary auditory experience facilitates perception, helps to track the musical image that is flowing over time, and, in some cases (with sufficient activity of melodic rumor to the respective intonation style) it has manifested in "pre-hearing" the logical further development of the musical idea.
3. The timbre and dynamic rumor facilitate realizing of the wealth and diversity of timbres, colors, dynamic effects and nuances.
4. The sense of multi-voice allows the differential perception of the sound complexes.
5. The emotional component of the musical abilities helps to perceive and realize the emotional-logical meaning of the means of expression in the musical work.

b) The musical memory helps the main characters in the musical work to be remembered, to be monitored in their repeated complete or fragmentary occurrence, the moments of variance to be heard, and their expressive meaning to be rationalized in the course of active perception of the work.

c) Figurative-associative thinking in perceiving music is represented in the following directions:

1. On the basis of the preliminary auditory experience, on the one hand the elements of the familiar and traditional are identified; on the other hand the new and the original in the music is discovered, which helps both the activity of perception and the correct assessment.
2. Through artistic experience acquired (when perceiving and experiencing works of other arts), and also life experience, associative notion characters evoke (they are always individual), which makes the emotional reaction deeper, more complete and more enduring.
3. The richness of imagination determines such an active experience of the revival and recreation of the musical work that the listener seems to be involved in the creative process.

5. Organizing and Conducting the Perception of Music in Class

It is recommended that the works which set the beginning of the process of forming the listening skills and habits must have onomatopoeic and sound-portraying character. Along with this, little program instrumental works for children can

be successfully included. Associations with familiar phenomena from the surrounding world make such pieces more accessible.

An important condition for the effective perception of music is the preliminary learning of the main themes of the piece, which is to be introduced to the students, by ear (or by notes, if possible). The Initial acquaintance with the main themes should be conducted by listening to a recording that is specifically suited for the purpose. This is necessary because if students get familiar, for example with a theme of a symphony, and they hear only the one-voice melody, it is unlikely that they will get an adequate idea about one of the main musical images of the work. If the theme is perceived in original, the corresponding tempo, timbre, dynamic nuances, articulations, harmony will be heard. This will lead to a more complete and precise defining of the emotional content of the work. With this task, the theme should be heard several times while students make the most accurate characteristics. Next step is to learn the theme by ear (for the voice reproduction altering the register is allowed). Introducing the themes in advance helps the perception through providing support for the hearing – the appearance of a familiar auditory musical image. The lasting memorization of the theme allows every its appearance to be monitored so as any changes in its development to be identified, i.e. the construction and development of the musical work to be rationalized. In partitions with developing characteristics, the presence of theme elements, the mood changes with the theme variations might be revealed – in other words, the dramaturgy of the work to be realized. With senior students it is possible that they define the means of expression, used to recreate the theme character. The first hearing should be accompanied by the teacher's comments on the structural elements of the piece (for example sounds an introduction, follows the first theme, construction with transitory character, etc.). During the next hearing, the teacher may suggest that students react by raising their hand when some of these elements sounds, thus indicating that they have recognized the appearance of an element that is already introduced by the teacher.

It is also necessary during this lesson, or during the following lessons, to be found an opportunity for students to listen to the work independently, without the teacher's interference. For this listening to be active and effective, it must be prepared in advance, with the class recalling the plan of development of the work (introduction, the first theme, etc.), so that each student can track the unfolding of the musical structure individually.

In the next music lessons, there are a number of possibilities for repeatedly listening to the work, for example, in the different types of summary lessons - musical piece with familiar structure, of certain genre, of the same style tendency, etc. Thematic integration of the musical material should be used, which provides big opportunities to go deeply behind in the emotional-figurative content of the musical works. A form of thematic integration of the artistic material in the music lesson, especially at primary school level, is the so called "collecting" of musical works. The

effect is multilateral:

1. Adequate psychological attitude is created for a more complete listening to the musical works. With the inclusion of several pieces in the collection, each is subjected to deeper hearing.
2. Observing works of similar or close imagery provides possibilities for comparisons, not only showing common features, but also (which is particularly important) the details, the nuances of the mood. Detail is very important in art. The artist sculpts the details with the greatest imagination. The feel of the detail is also a creative act, therefore the ability to search and find interesting and important details, to get a deep insight into the artistic object, must be developed at a very early age.
3. Collecting allows the same musical piece to become part of several different collections, since each of them is chosen on the basis of different criterion. This gives the opportunity for different features of the musical image to stand out in multiple perceptions of the work, and also the piece to be considered and rationalized in different aspects. It is obvious that in this way becoming aware and experiencing the masterpieces is realized more thoroughly and fully. In order to develop as a creative person, the student must learn to perceive above all the whole, after that to separate the essential, the basic and then to appreciate the details that distinguish the originality, the uniqueness of the artistic image.

An effective method for stimulating the students' creative thinking is to make a connection between different arts during the music lesson. In fact, this is also one of the most promising forms of using the integrative approach in education not only between different arts, but also between different subjects like history, religion, philosophy, etc. Viewing reproductions of paintings by great artists, listening to poetry, etc., must be applied not only in the case, when there are external and unimportant similarities between the works, like the same title, but also when similarities can be found on a deeper level of their content – a close emotional state is recreated, in which each work of the different arts complements, enriches, stimulates the experience and the understanding of the other works, subject to perception and comparison. Thus, the impressions from different arts add to each other, which significantly boosts the effects of emotional response.

Similar result is achieved by asking the students to draw a picture or write a poem to express the mood of the musical work they have heard.

6. An Example of Applying the Music Percettion in the Classroom

The theme of the lesson is "Spring reflected in music".

The students learn to perform the song "Spring has Come" (figure 1) by Boris Karadimchev and perceive the piano play

"To Spring" by Edward Grieg (figure 2).

Кол-ко мно-го не ща про-лет

та ни до-не-се; раз-но-цвет-ни пъст-ри цве-

тя, бе-ло-снеж-ни я-та.

Figure 1. Boris Karadimchev - "Spring has Come", bars 1 – 10.

Кол-ко мно-го не ща про-лет

та ни до-не-се; раз-но-цвет-ни пъст-ри цве-

тя, бе-ло-снеж-ни я-та.

Figure 2. Edward Grieg - "To Spring", bars 1 – 10.

According to the methodological requirements, the song planned for performance and the play intended for listening have the same emotional coloration – lyrical, gentle, dreamy mood, as each of the two works complement and enrich the emotional experience of the other. This means that their sound in one lesson will allow the spring song to be performed with a fuller empathy and the clavier piece to be perceived with a deeper understanding.

To amplify the emotional impression, two poems are presented on a dashboard. Students are shown also three reproductions of paintings. The poems are dedicated to

spring, but one – "To glorify Spring" has an enthusiastic, hymnic character, and the other - a bright, lyrical. Naturally, students find that the second poem is closer to the sense of the song and the piece, with which students get acquainted with this lesson. From the exposed reproductions of paintings: "Birch Grove" by Ivan Shishkin (figure 3), "Alyonushka" by Victor Vasnetsov (figure 4) and "Blossoming pear tree" by Vincent van Gogh (figure 5), the students hesitated between the first two, but realized that the second, recreates not only the lyrical character of the piano play, but also her dreamy mood.

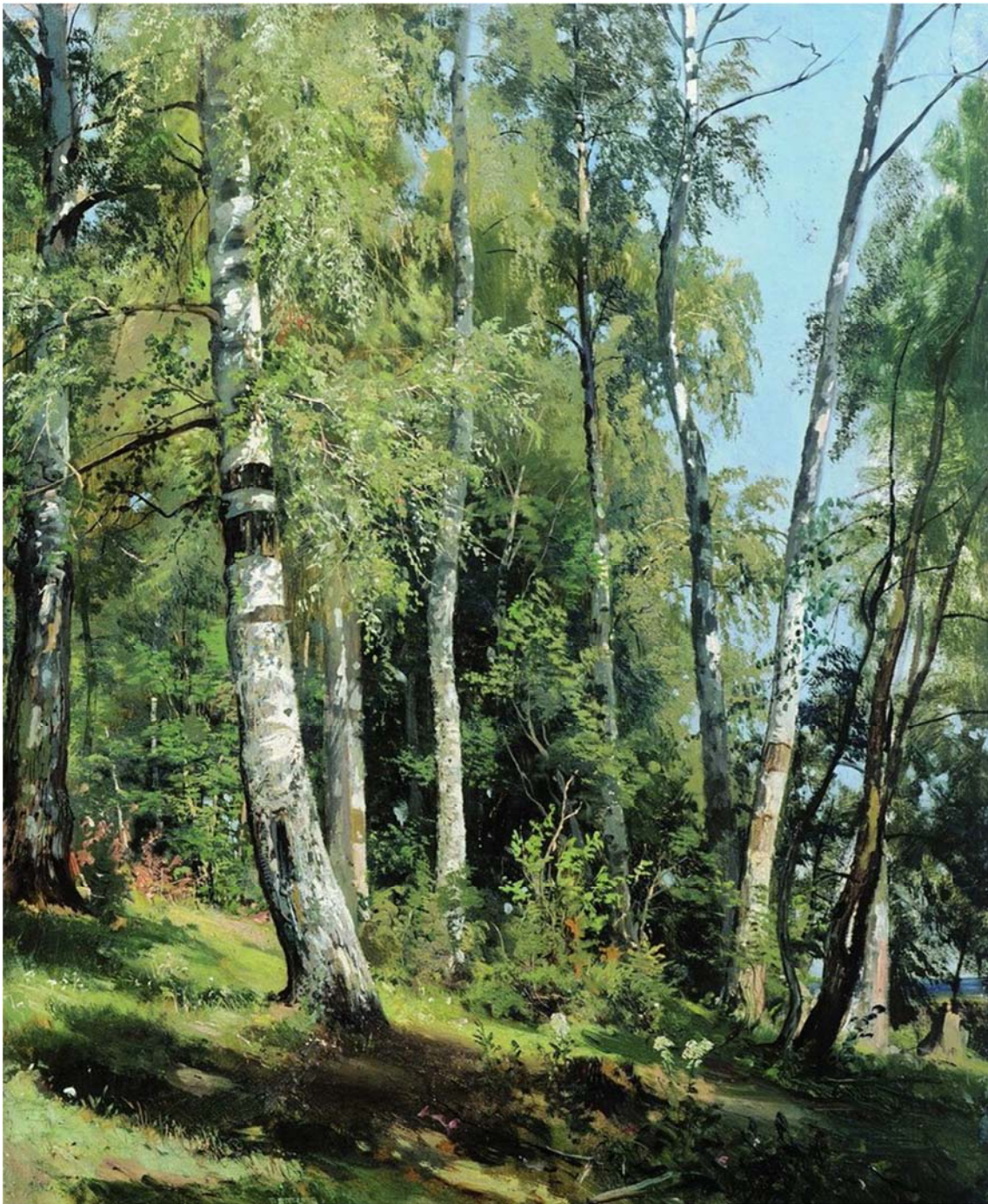


Figure 3. Ivan Shishkin - "Birch Grove".



Figure 4. Victor Vasnetsov - "Alyonushka".

7. Conclusion

The process of introducing a new musical work involves the following stages:

1. Creating an appropriate emotional atmosphere through a talk that includes information about the composer, the age in which he wrote, curious facts about the creation of the work, etc. (for senior students); through fairy tales, riddles and poems (for junior students).
2. Memorizing the main musical themes.
3. Listening to the whole work to form a general idea about it and to define its emotional content.
4. Repeated audition with different tasks – discovering each occurrence of the themes; identifying the differences in each new sounding of a certain thematic material; determining the significance of the discrepancy found and so on.
5. Giving instructions for the listening of the whole work – the teacher points out specific features, more important moments in the development of the musical

image, the specificity of the structure, etc.

6. Independent full audition of the musical work – after the necessary preparatory work, the student listens, checks, compares, rationalizes. The piece affects

him/her directly, which is a result of the “conducted” by the teacher previous perception.

7. Comments, discussions, expressing personal opinion, etc.

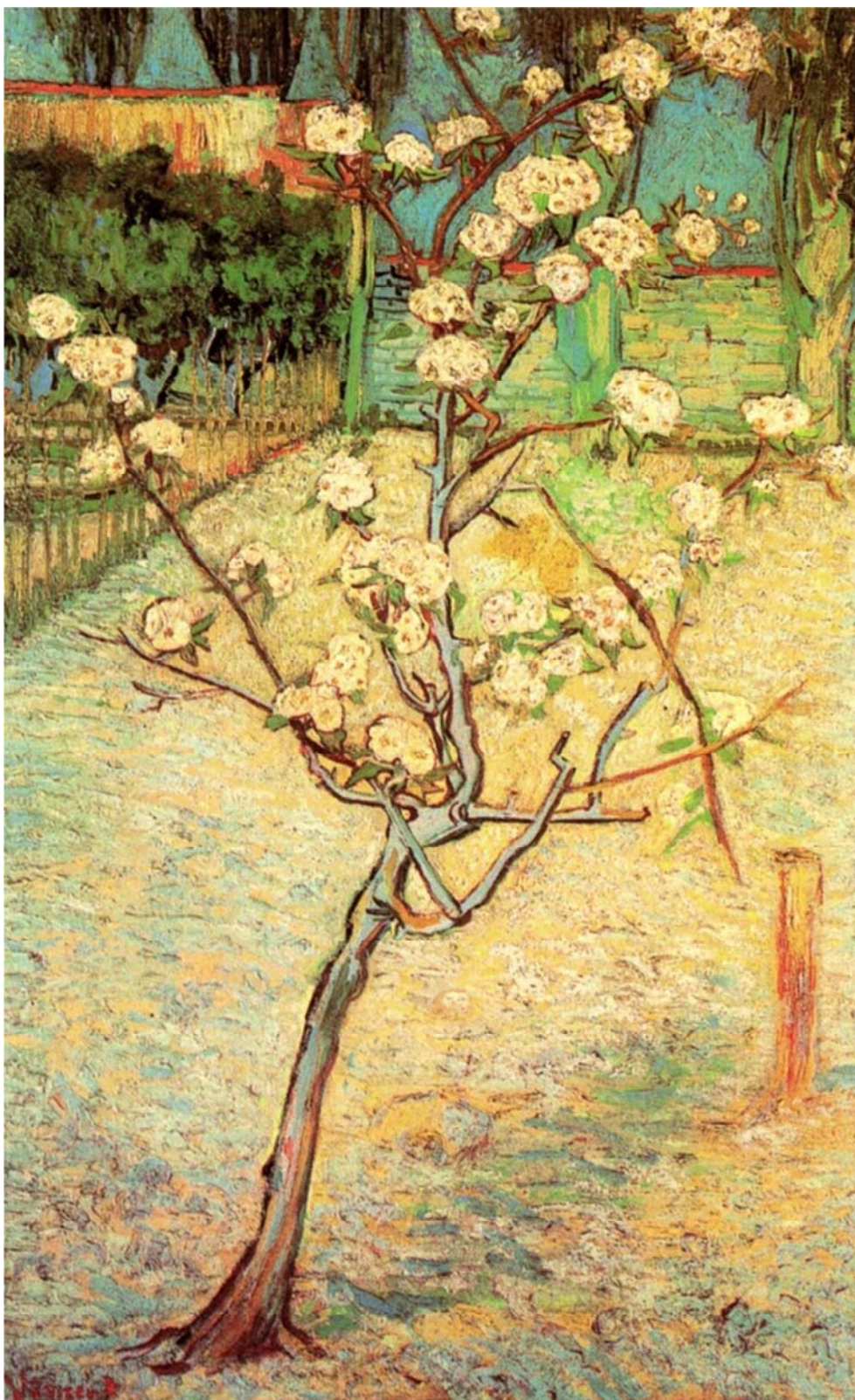


Figure 5. Vincent van Gogh - "Blossoming pear tree".

The responsible attitude of the music pedagogue towards this musical activity, which is particularly important for educating cultural listeners of music, would suggest other promising forms of work in class and outside of class.

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