

# **The Discovery of Musical Content and Personality Through Picture. Music: Symphony No. 8 „The Unfinished Symphony” by Franz Schubert**

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**Abstract:** *Discovering the content of a musical work through the act of drawing can reveal many hidden aspects and facets of the personality, thus coming to the aid of the therapist. Drawings, along with the form structure and character of the music, have the power to express – at the same time reflecting one’s creativity and sensibility. The sensitive and tender music of Franz Schubert is exceptionally adequate for the following experiment.*

**Keywords:** *music therapy, drawing to music, sensibility, creativity*

## **1. Introduction**

The experiment took place at the Transilvania University of Braşov, the Faculty of Music, within the MA program dedicated to Music Therapy. Its objectives were the amalgamation of active and receptive music therapy techniques with the purpose of developing the creativity of this MA program’s students. During these music therapy sessions the future therapists themselves are also the patients, thus becoming possible for them to empathize with their future patients.

In order to restore someone to health with the aid of music it is very important to have knowledge of the patient’s preferences and sensibilities – which is often more easily obtained through non-verbal methods.

The session lasted for a period of three months. The number of the members in each group, all Music Therapy students, was variable: 6 to 12 persons, between the ages of 23 and 50, mostly females.

During the experiment four meetings took place, each lasting for three hours,

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including active and receptive music therapy exercises, followed by the presentation of certain themes and conclusions. Regarding these various active and receptive music therapy methods and techniques which were presented, the author considers the following to be the most representative:

### **1.1. Active music therapy activities**

- I. A certain type of solfeggio, accomplished with the aid of puppets
- II. Improvisation with undemanding instruments

### **1.2. Receptiv music therapy activities**

(The participants of the exercises described bellow are, in fact, active, only that they are not the ones to *produce* the music)

- I. "Music theater" - movement accompanied by programme music (Music: C. Saint Saëns *The Carnival of the Animals*, with the immitation of the characters' movement)
- II. Discovering the musical content through the act of drawing (Music: Franz Schubert: Symphony no. 8, *The Unfinished Symphony*, part I)
- III. Discovering the gestures in music through movement (Music: individually chosen)
- IV. Discovering the musical content through associations (Music: 5 fragments from the works of S. Prokofiev, followed by written expression of feelings and ideas)

The purpose of the present paper focuses on a receptive music therapy sesion, the discovery of the musical content through the act of drawing. The music chosen for this exercise is the first part of Franz Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*.

## **2. The Unfolding of the Experiment**

Seven students have participated at this music therapy session. All of these students have different occupations and only two of them have musical studies. Their fictional names will be: Florentina, Patricia, Carmen, Steluța, Sânziana, Arabela and Vlad.

The instructions were the following: „*Try to follow the structure of the music through the act of drawing. The drawings can express the movement in the music, even the hidden gestures. In the end, describe in a few words (written) the music you have listened to.*”

The drawings were rendered while the music played, without using colours. In the end the description of the music was discussed by all the participants, but the drawings and personal opinions from the notebooks were not analyzed in front of the group.

### 3. „The Unfinished” by Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

The Symphony in b minor, D 759 [1], known as „*the unfinished*” consists of two parts: *Allegro moderato* and *Andante con moto*. A number of theories exist regarding the unusual structure of the work – two parts instead of four, uncommon for the convention of the epoch. Schubert wrote this symphony in 1822 and by 1823 the two parts were completed. A few measures from the third part, *Scherzo*, have been preserved, but it seems that the composer decided to abandon the continuation. The work was forgotten for a long time, and it was only in 1865 – 42 years after it was composed and 37 years after the composer’s death – that it was rediscovered by the conductor Johann von Herbeck at Anselm Hüttenbrenner, friend of Schubert. The two parts of the work were first performed on 17 December 1865 under the baton of Herbeck. Since then this work has become part of the permanent repertoire of symphony orchestras, carrying something enigmatic, characteristic for the composers’ temperament, a mystery which can only be conveyed through music. Therefore, here lies the reason why this particular work was chosen for the music therapy session: awakening the empathy towards the composer as a human being with the aid of his music and, at the same time, discovering one’s own sensibility.

#### 3.1. The Analysis of the First Part, *Allegro moderato*

Comparing the existing various form analysis one can observe that each of these studies of the structure seem to have been influenced by the mysterious character of the work. We have chosen, as an example, the analysis of part I, after the musicologist Dénes Tóth (Tóth, 1956, p. 234) [2]:

##### Exposition:

„The symphony begins with a slow movement in unison of the basses (cellos, double basses). Following this motif, which rises resembling a sigh, agitation occurs among the stringed instruments, succeeded by the main theme of this part introduced by the oboe and the clarinet.



Fig. 1. Bars 13–19, First Theme

This lyrical and sad melody is interlaced with the rapid movements of the strings. The continuous flow of the melody is interrupted: the chord built on the lingering *d* tone played by the horns and bassoons immediately leads the listener to the G Major chord of the second theme. (In this part the second theme is the one to reveal the deepest thoughts and emotions of the composer.)

The delicate sound of the cello introduces the schubertian melody characterized by great torment.

It is often said that this melody expresses the pain of the composer who foresees his own death. It can be assumed that the profound sadness of the wounded Self is accompanied by the echo of a greater grief, revealed by the delicate sound of the cellos: the Romantic poet gazes at the world which becomes more and more foreign, he stares at the abyss which separates him from the abasement of this earthly world.



Fig. 2. Bars 44–52, Second Theme

The melodic phrase is suddenly interrupted; after an entire measure of silence (in the musical Baroque the general pause could symbolise either eternity or death, n.n.) the tremendous chord of c minor resounds, crushing with the force of thunder the airy world of dreams and fancies. A new chord can be heard, then the clarinets, flutes and oboes echo the harmonies played in the introduction of the second theme (now in minor form). The melody itself appears again, this time separated into parts, in a more dramatic form. The second theme is played once again in the conclusion of the exposition.”

The **development** „begins with the introduction in unison of the symphony, a melodic phrase which dominates the entire section. A remarkable effect of tension is created by the fact that the accompaniment of the second theme is referred to, but the melodic phrase itself is not revealed.”

In the **reprise** „the themes are almost unchanged”, while the **coda** that brings the movement to an end „comprises the varied musical material of the introduction played in unison.”

We have chosen to cite this entire presentation because we believe that it resembles in a striking manner – although, at the same time in a different way – the drawings and explanations of those who participated at this experiment.

#### 4. The drawings and their descriptions

##### 4.1. Florentina

In the case of Florentina the „story” acquired an almost clear and real contour, connected to certain symbols. One can clearly observe the „form analysis” of the work. Each structural section of the music is very precise and occupies a different page.

Here is what the author of the present article has deduced before reading the explanations written by Florentina:

- The first page, the **exposition**, a delicate form resembling a swan appears among the waves.
- The second page has a transitional role, is very confusing, but suggests the contours of the continuation.
- The **development** on the third page leads us to a different world, suggesting the compulsory contact with society (one can discern buildings with 2 or 3 levels), the road is meandering, obstructed by water on one side (as if it were the sea). It seems that there is no way of escaping this scene...
- The **reprise** is on the fourth page: the delicate form from the first page, this time concretised in the form of a very beautiful bird (maybe a swan):

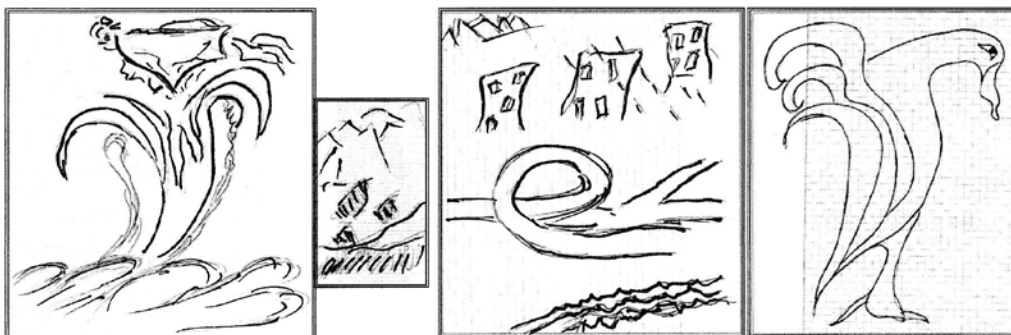


Fig. 3. The drawings of Florentina  
(Exposition – transition – Development - Reprise)

The explanations of Florentina reflected these same ideas:

„The beginning is very dark, tenebrous, suggesting a closed, dark world which lacks light. But because no world can exist without contrasts, this gives birth to a being of light, which sets off in the search of an other world, different from that which is familiar. This entity discovers the world of human beings, a world of contradictions and contrasts, dramatic in its opposition. The madness of this new world will eventually urge the being of light to return to the dark universe which gave birth to it.”

#### 4.2. Sânziana

The ideas encountered in the case of Florentina (2.1.) are similar to those expressed by Sânziana – the dark beginning, then a world full of contrasts and contradictions. However, despite the similarities, the form in which Sânziana chooses to express her thoughts is thoroughly different. The drawing is composed of two distinct parts, placed on different pages.

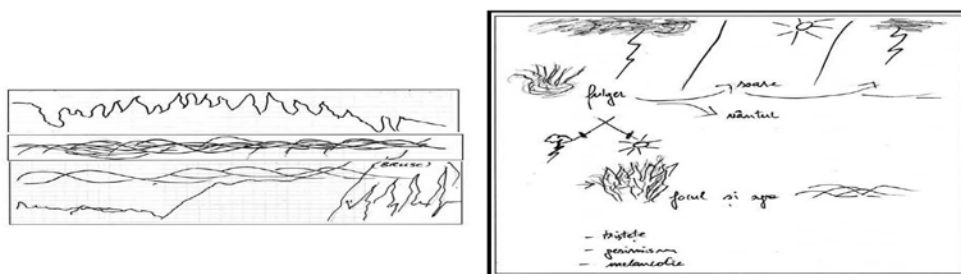


Fig. 4. The drawings of Sânziana

The first part (Figure 4, left) evokes the music in an abstract manner, through lines in a sinusoidal motion, and is subdivided into three sections (downwards), representing the **exposition** of the work, with themes 1 and 2, followed by the „sudden interruption of the melodic phrase; after a general pause the tremendous c minor chord resounds, crushing with the force of thunder the delicate, airy world of dreams and fancies (Tóth, 1956, 234).” The author of this drawing mentions in brackets: SUDDENLY.

The second part (Fig. 4, right) represents in a clear picture the elements of nature mentioned by Sânziana: thunder, sun, wind, fire and water.

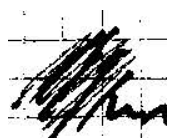
The written characterization of this movement of the symphony, at the bottom of the drawing on the right (*sadness, pessimism, melancholy*), does not entirely reflect what the drawings express: the provocation of opposed aspects and

the dramatic fight between fire and water, while the deeply pessimistic description of the music's atmosphere is contradicted by the apparition of the element *sun*.

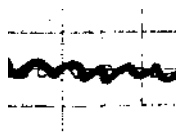
### 4.3. Steluța

In the case of Steluța an electrocardiogram can be observed, which transmits the „pulsation”, the beat of the music (Figure 5). The form structure is clearly distinguishable, the drawing unfolds on four pages. The complexity of the **development**, elements of the **exposition**, as well as others belonging to the **reprise** can be determined. Even the **coda** can be recognized at the bottom of the last page.

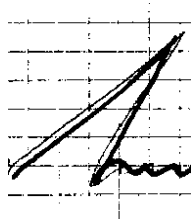
This is the only case where the signs used by the author are explained, as if striving to give these a more human character.



„darkness (shadow)”



„uncertainty, fear (the feeling that something bad will happen)”



„dramatism, breaking point”



„waltz (floating towards something beautiful)”

These statements show the musical and human sensibility of Steluța.



Fig. 5. The four pages (downwards) drawn by Steluța

## 2.4. Patricia and Carmen

In the cases of Patricia (Figure 6) and Carmen (Figure 7) the music is represented through abstract drawings, as in the situation of Steluța (2.3.). However, it is interesting to observe the similarities between the structures and the means of expression employed in these two works.

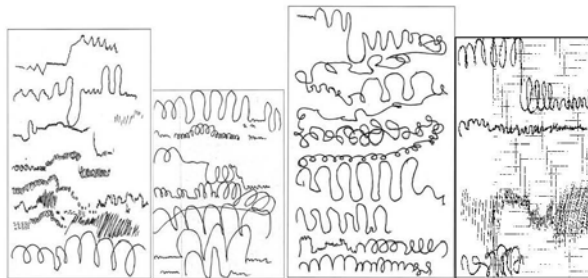


Fig. 6. The illustration of Patricia



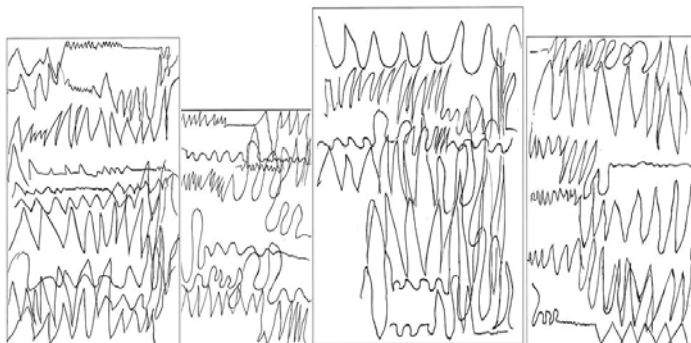


Fig. 7. *The illustration of Carmen*

## 2.5. Arabela and Vlad

The two drawings are similar in that both authors have used a single page for their representations.

Arabela (Figure 8, right) uses the lower part of the page. Her sketch is abstract, but despite this fact, it is very complex and complete.

The illustration of Vlad (Figure 8, left) fills an entire page, while the text characterizes the music of Schubert in beautiful manner: „A butterfly setting off from a flower, flying towards infinity.”

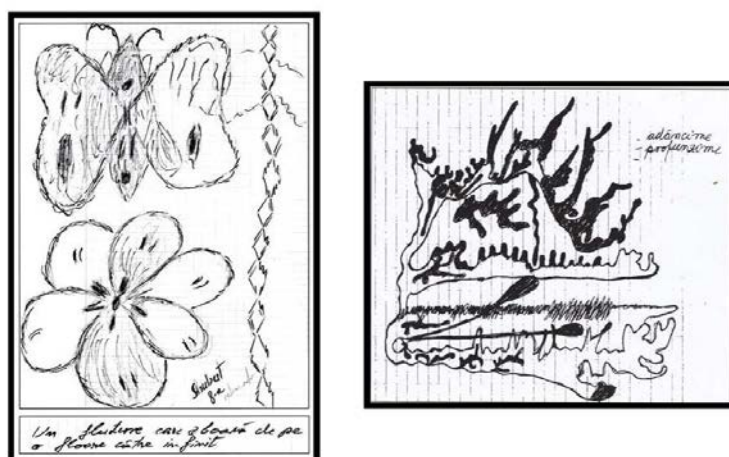


Fig. 8. The illustrations of Arabela (right) and Vlad (left)

### 3. Conclusions

The present investigation offered the possibility to glimpse deep „inside”, behind the thoughts and emotions of the students, thus opening a new perspective towards their correct guidance.

Discovering one’s own sensibility with the aid of music makes the future music therapists capable of discovering the sensibilities of their future patients, while using various active and receptive music therapy techniques.

It is also interesting to observe the manner in which the illustrations were composed and framed. Some of the participants used a different page for each structural section, while others limited their sketches to one or two pages, but none of them used three pages. The advantage of having previous musical studies could not be remarked in the case of this experiment: the majority of the participants with no musical education correctly estimated the form structure as well as the music content, expressing this through the variety of forms used in their depiction, and through the manner in which they chose to divide the page.

The results of the test were very interesting and relevant even to someone unacquainted with music therapy. However, for more complex conclusions regarding an experiment of this kind, it would be recommended that the research team should consist of members with different training backgrounds, such as music, arts, psychology and medical science.

### References

Tóth, Dénes. 1956. *Hangversenykalauz* [Concert Guide]. Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 234.

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