

The G. Dima Philharmonic in Braşov at the service of creative education in Music, in the years 1984–88

Maria-Ecaterina HANKE¹

Abstract: *In 1984 the art institutions in Romania were compelled to cross over to self-financing to a large extent. Desperate actions were taken to be able to ensure the wages of the employees. But these difficult times also opened an unexpected path toward inventiveness: at the “G. Dima” Philharmonic in Braşov, initiation courses were started for preschool and school children, in three languages: Romanian, Hungarian, and German, held by instrumentalists of the symphonic orchestra. In 1987-88, the course participants of the Hungarian groups, led by the author of this article, became the “actors” of the educational concerts held by the symphonic orchestra of the Philharmonic in Sf. Gheorghe and in Braşov. Thus, the course participants of the “musical kindergarten” received complex education in music and got to know representative works of the music literature through this “theatre with music”, and the children in the audience came much more easily close to the symphonic music through these little “actors”.*

Keywords: *education in music, creativity, educational concerts, theatre with music*

1. Introduction

The idea of the topic was outlined following some experiences in music education, gathered by the author of this paper within the courses for initiation in music and within the educational concerts which took place at the “Gh. Dima” Philharmonic in Braşov between 1984 and 1988.

Since 1984 the closure of arts institutions in Romania has been systematically attempted. The number of education institutions with an arts profile has been reduced (in Braşov, the 3-year pedagogical institute was first closed, then also the Arts High School), and the performing show institutions were forced to cross over to self-financing to a large extent (70%). These institutions made desperate efforts for survival. At the Philharmonic in Braşov, for instance, movies with Bruce Lee and karate were beamed after the rehearsals (until these movies were prohibited), for which the instrumentalists were checking the tickets at the entry... But this difficult time also opened an unexpected path to inventiveness. At the initiative of Astrid

¹PhD, Transilvania University of Braşov, hankekati@unitbv.ro

Philippi, a violist in the orchestra of the “Gh. Dima” Philharmonic in Braşov, initiation courses for preschool and school children were set up here, in three languages: Romanian, German, and Hungarian. The first groups were led by Tereza Cristian (Romanian), Astrid Philippi (German), and Ecaterina Hanke, the author of this paper (Hungarian), all instrumentalists of the symphonic orchestra.

2. Goals

2.1. Press Reports

2.1.1. In Romanian

We can find out details referring to this period from the article *A Valuable Experience in the Domain of Artistic Education* by Ermil Rădulescu:

«We are glad (...) to note the remarkable effort of the “Gh. Dima” Philharmonic to prepare the audience of tomorrow (but also of today) and, why not, to cultivate the love for beauty. We must stress that how actions are taken involves a diverse and effective work programme. Let us also systematically go over the Philharmonic’s valuable experience. First, we must signal the music initiation courses destined for preschool and school children, organised in six groups. Instrumentalists with pedagogical endowment, like Delia Bunea, Emilia Brînduşan, Astrid Philippi, Gertrude Şalău and Ecaterina Hanke introduce the children to the musical alphabet, teach them the instruments, and songs, last, but not least. Then there are the lesson-concerts, differentiated according to age groups. (...) For, artistic education is a matter of moral responsibility from the part of performing show institutions, and a task of highest importance, that cannot be replaced in any way by *extra-artistic “phantasies”*; these, too, welcome from a different viewpoint. We have our audience just as we educate and shape it.» (László 1985)

If we know how to read between the lines, we can notice what the article’s author refers to when he speaks of *extra-artistic “phantasies”* ...



Fig. 1. Heading of the newspaper „Drum nou” (New Way) and title of the article

2.1.2. In German

Wolfgang Wittstock develops the same idea in his article in the local weekly newspaper *Karpatenrundschau*, under the emblem of the idea *Educational Concerts Create a School / Musical Education Is of High Importance at the Dima Philharmonic*:

“It is known that each thing has two sides. When the theaters and Philharmonics were switched to self-financing in early 1984, the impacted art institutions started to feverishly look for additional sources of income. This was also the case at the Philharmonic in Braşov, which made a virtue out of its misery and remembered categories of their audience that had been neglected until now, especially the young generation – more clearly than in other places, or so it seems. Now, they started here to approach the youngest part of the audience in a variety of ways. The forms of musical education that have been discovered and tested over the past two-three years show the phantasy and willingness to commit of the philharmonic’s instrumentalists involved in these actions. [...]

The use of these multilateral musical education activities is obvious, as a solid aesthetic education represents an essential factor for the shaping and education of multilaterally developed persons, open to beauty, truth, and goodness.” (Rădulescu 1988)



Fig. 2. Heading of the newspaper „Karpater Rundschau” and excerpts from Wolfgang Wittstock’s article, 1988

Photo caption: „For the scene configuration of the educational concerts led by her, Katalin Hanke turns to the children from two groups for musical education at an early age. Our photo shows an aspect from the show with “Pictures from an exhibition” by Mussorgski/ Ravel in Sf. Gheorghe, in a similar way – with quite an effort – performances of Saint-Saëns’s “Carnival of the Animals”, “Little Peter and the Wolf” by Prokofjev and Tchajkovski’s “Nutcracker” were given. Photo: Maria Hanke”

2.1.3. In Hungarian

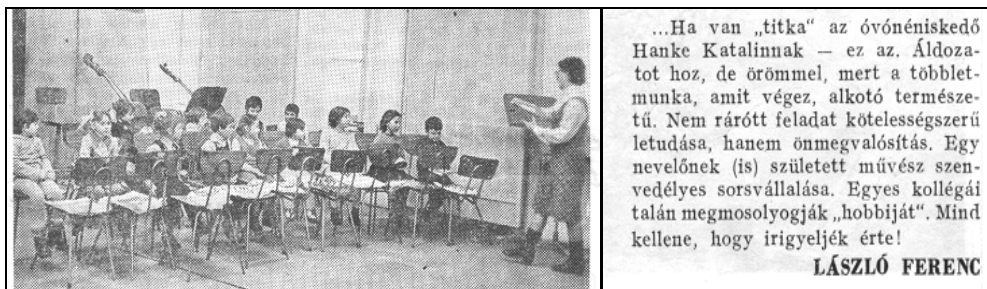
The March 1985 article of the musicologist Ferenc László in *Művelődés* (Culture), the magazine of the National Festival *Cântarea României* (Praising Romania with Singing), presents the beginnings of the musical initiation courses. The photo under the magazine heading shows how the first 14 xylophones, bought from the “Socialist trade”, are converted to usable musical instruments. Built from a valuable type of wood with good sound resonance, but without taking into account any kind of musical criterion, the first step was to take them apart, then to tune the blades – through cutting and/ or sharpening – in order to obtain the music scale.



Fig. 3. *Heading of the magazine „Művelődés (Culture) ” and beginning of the article „Kindergarten at the Philharmonic”*

On the photo: Ecaterina Hanke and Imre Lay, rebuilding xylophones

The article's author mentions: «...If there is any “secret” to Hanke Katalin, who is acting as a kindergarten teacher – then this is it. She brings sacrifices, but joyfully, as this additional work is of a creative nature. Not carrying out a compulsory task, but self-achievement. This mission has been passionately taken on by an artist who is (also) a born pedagogue. Perhaps some colleagues look on this “hobby” of hers smilingly. All should envy her for it.» (Wittstock 1988)



On the photo: the first course participants in 1984, the Hungarian language group led by K. Hanke

Fig. 4. *Ending of the article in the magazine „Művelődés“*

On the photo in figure 4 one can see the work conditions at the courses: the room was the rehearsal hall of the Philharmonic, chairs are used instead of small tables, and the contrabasses can be noticed at the back.

3. Type of activities

In this given framework there existed two basic lines of musical education: the active type (musical education with instrument playing and singing for preschool children) and the receptive type (educational concerts, performed by the course participants of the musical initiation groups together with the symphonic orchestra, in the form of a theatre with music).

3.1. “Musical kindergarten”

The courses in three languages – Romanian, Hungarian, German – were held in parallel in different rooms (I was leading the Hungarian group) – so we could not even get inspiration from the other two colleagues, each of us needed to invent her own teaching methods. Thus, the author of this paper can firstly report about her own methods, mainly inspired from her own experience.

When the courses started, not even the children’s parents were very clear about the “admission” criteria to these music courses. Thus, the first group (after a selection made by the very parents) was made up of children with special musical endowment – which was not bad, but this was not the initial goal of the “musical initiation”. After a year, a reversed selection started (also by the parents): children with complexes began to appear, who “express themselves” with more difficulty – probably the “freeing” character of these activities became known, and additionally, the admission of children to these courses was made simply on a registration basis, without skill tests.

After several experimented variants, the most efficient proved to be that with two weekly sessions of one hour each, of which the first without allowing the parents to enter the room (with songs and musical games), and the second with the parents' mandatory presence (with note-reading proper and home assignments).

As the symphonic orchestra was at hand, the children also got to know the instruments well. This is a table which was drawn during the courses:

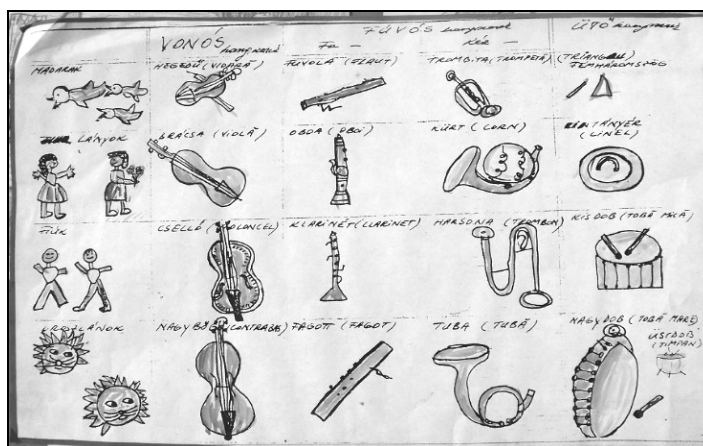


Fig. no. 5. Table of the instruments, drawn by a course participant

The instruments are put into 4 categories: of birdies, girls, boys, and lions – according to their register. In this context, the strings, woodwinds, and brass winds are distributed by their pitch into these four categories. Thus, at the string and bow instruments, the violin goes to the birds, the viola to the girls, the cello to the boys, and the contrabass to the lions. The flute belongs to the birdies, the oboe to the girls, the clarinet to the boys, and the bassoon to the lions. At the brass winds, the trumpet goes to the birds, the horn to the girls, the trombone to the boys, and the tuba to the lions. The family of percussion instruments is far more numerous, so we find only examples for each register category in the table: triangle – cymbal – snare drum – base drum.

3.2. Theatre with Music

Quote from the article *Educational Concerts Create a School* by Wolfgang Wittstock:

«In the current school year, the Dima Philharmonic begins a similar concert cycle in Sf. Gheorghe, designed for pupils of the 5th to 8th grades. The violinist Katalin Hanke is responsible for it, as well as for the bilingual – Romanian-Hungarian – text. Hanke includes the children from both her

groups for musical education at an early age in the making of these concerts with great success. Recently there are educational concerts in Hungarian for middle school pupils in Brasov, too, also led by Katalin Hanke.» (Rădulescu 1988)

The first educational concert with involving the children was “Little Peter and the Wolf” by Sergej Prokofjev. The solo instruments were placed in front of the orchestra to be followed more easily. The flute had the part of a birdie, the oboe that of a small duck, the clarinet played the cat, the bassoon was the grandfather, the horn had the role of the wolf – every musical character received a child to “accompany” it: the children wore each a small vest with a drawing of the character, and they moved to the music of the corresponding instrument.

At the next concert, with the “Nutcracker” by Tchajkovski, 21 children participated already... The fascinating thing about it: the “theatre troupe” included children of very different ages – from 5 to 14 years – and they behave extraordinarily together.



Fig. 6. „The “Nutcracker” by Tchajkovski, January 15th, 1988, at the Dramatic Theatre in Braşov

Through these educational concerts, the course participants in the “musical kindergarten” enjoyed complex and creative musical education. The roles performed were based on discovering the musical structure and allowed free space for phantasy and creativity at the same time. They got to know many musical masterpieces and they conveyed to the children in the audience that this music is accessible, through the visual performance of the musical storytelling.

The drawing contests proved that the audience, besides from following the musical stories, was attentive and retained many details referring to the instruments, the conductor, and the performers.



Fig. 7. An example from the drawing contest, Sf. Gheorghe, 1988

4. Conclusion

To me, as an author of this article, both the initiation courses in music and the educational concerts with involving the course participants in the “theatre with music” have brought satisfactions that have been at least equivalent to those of a practicing instrumentalist.

In 1984 I had a work experience of 8 years as an instrumentalist (violin) in the Philharmonic orchestra and I found out from the newspaper that the Philharmonic was going to provide courses in three languages. Thus, in the beginning, I was practically forced to run these activities, without any previous training. But I can state that, without this experience, I would not understand music as I do today. With the help of the children I discovered unnoticed aspects of the relationship between humans and music. I consider that the creative teaching of music is as important for the pupil or student as it is for the pedagogue.

5. References

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