

Predominant Mental Processes in Musical Activities

Ana Maria PAVEL¹

Abstract: *Considering the complexity of knowledge that lies between science and art but also that of self - knowledge and human creation, with a direct impact which is music, the main role is taken by the teacher. This one has to have a clear vision of how he teach each student starting with picking up the violin, from the earliest possible age, to the concert with a symphony orchestra both as a soloist and as a member of the orchestra. It is the teacher's duty to nourish and under his/her direct surveillance, with patience and professionalism to improve the student's skills. The evolution of the young instrumentalist depends on the tact of the pedagogue and the way of handling mental processes*

Key-words: *knowledge process, interpretation, skills, development, methodology.*

1. Introduction

In the work of developing a valuable musical interpretation, the psychological factor has a decisive role that does not need to be proved. Therefore, the posture of the hands is less important than that of the head, or, in other words, the participation of creative thinking, of stage attention, of concentrated attention, both in the elaboration phase and in the stage support phase, is decisive, it is truly indisputable.

Indeed, the study of the violin requires intense, rational intellectual work in which self-control plays a very important role; in the absence of self-observation the student can only develop and consolidate his mistakes.

There are a series of psychological factors: imagination, internal auditory representation of sound, memory, concentration, attention or will. Emotion and passion play a vital role in musical activity.

¹ Violin teacher "Victor Giuleanu" Arts High School Râmnicu Vâlcea, cucu.ana1992@gmail.com

2. Interpretation technique

In the process of training the technical skills of interpretation, three phases are distinguished:

The first is that of irradiation, because the excitement that the cerebral cortex registers radiate more and more. It is a phase of knowledge of the activity, of probable familiarization with the subject of action.

This phase is characterized by inconsistent operations, imprecise movements, mistakes, unnecessary operations. It is a phase of functional disharmony after which an inhibitory block occurs. The isolated elements, various kinds of dynamic stereotypes, corresponding to older habits, already consolidated, are collected in a new order.

As the practice progresses, the interpretative instrumental dependencies enter a second phase, that of the inhibition that naturally follows any irradiation process. It is a phase of organization and systematization. Forming in this way, motifs, phrases, periods, sound chains from simple to complex. After the broad phenomenon of irradiation, which has as its first consequence the tendency of lack of precision, unnecessary movements-inhibition brings about the elimination of useless gestures, the economy of movements, the removal of excitement processes spread unnecessarily on the cortex. There is a gradual concentration of excitement in the motor analyzer.

We, thus, enter the third phase of the stereotype of automation. The lability characters encountered in the first two phases disappear. We enter a phase of stability in which the components of the execution are automated, the movements are unified, the operations are linked, the speed and quality of the exercise increases, the errors and unnecessary movements disappear.

The results of the instrumental study are largely determined by the discerning choice of specific teaching principles and methods, suitable according to the abilities, temperament and character of each individual student. This task falls to the teacher, who educates, instructs, cultivates, organizes, perfects, directs, exhorts, corrects and evaluates the entire process of training and perfecting the qualities of tomorrow's interpreter.

Who do we teach? (Scheeser 1984, 5), we first ask ourselves as instrument teachers.

Each of us has different points of view, but I think the best is the one according to which instrumental pedagogy must be addressed to all levels of talent - from children with little gifts to exceptional talents. However, I have noticed that not every child can become a professional. Despite the great efforts made by the teacher in his work with the less gifted students, with all their concern, only

modest results can be obtained, unlike the gifted students, who make great and rapid progress with relatively less effort.

An innate psycho-physical endowment, if educated, gives birth to an aptitude. An aptitude can only be appreciated in the case of good and very good results obtained in a certain field, and its development is directly influenced by the living conditions and education that the student benefits from (Răducanu 1994, 16).

In summary, the process of training technical skills of interpretation involves three phases: irradiation, inhibition, and automation. The first phase is characterized by inconsistent operations, imprecise movements, mistakes, and unnecessary operations. The second phase is a phase of organization and systematization where motifs, phrases, periods, and sound chains are formed. The third phase is the stereotype of automation where the movements are automated, linked, and errors and unnecessary movements disappear. The results of the instrumental study are largely determined by the teacher's discerning choice of specific teaching principles and methods suitable for the abilities, temperament, and character of each individual student. The task of the instrument teacher is to educate, instruct, cultivate, organize, perfect, direct, exhort, correct, and evaluate the entire process of training and perfecting the qualities of tomorrow's interpreter.

3. Capacity

The skills can appear earlier or later, not influencing their development at the highest level, but, in the present case, referring to the instrumental skills, it should be known that the achievement of interpretative performances depends on their early development.

Musical capacity is a trait of personality that allows for successful musical activity. A person with musical aptitude shows a special interest and inclination for music, sings, easily learns songs, and wants to know as much as possible about music. Musical talent consists of developing musical aptitude to a higher level, characterized by originality and creative ability. Indicators of musical aptitude include good auditory acuity, the ability to perceive the pitch, intensity, rhythm, harmony, and timing of sounds, as well as understanding of sounds and harmony. In order to become a musical talent, a person must put in intense and systematic work and create original music that expresses deep human ideas, feelings, and desires.

Musical capacity is a specific combination of sensory, intellectual, emotional and volitional traits that allows a person to successfully engage in musical activities. Musical talent is the superior development of musical aptitude, characterized by

originality and creative ability. The text emphasizes the importance of creative imagination in music, through which musicians can unify various sounds into a strongly influential melodic structure, and that musical talent refers not just to creating music, but also to original interpretation.

Musical capacity refers to a specific combination of sensory, intellectual, emotional, and volitional traits that allows a person to successfully engage in musical activities. Musical talent is defined as the superior development of musical aptitude, characterized by originality and creative ability. The text also emphasizes the importance of good auditory acuity and understanding of music in the development of musical capacity.

4. Talent

Talent is born as a result of the harmonious combination of psycho-physical abilities reached at different levels of development. Musical talent consists in the development of musical ability at a higher level, characterized by originality and creative capacity. Talent, like skills, is a capacity in the making, which can be continuously perfected within learning activities (Scheeser 1984, 6-7). Musical hearing, rhythmic sense, memory, sensitivity, normal physical development, are the first indications of musical talent, followed by the ease of acquiring instrumental skills, emotional strength, degree of affectivity and sensitivity, fantasy, imagination and understanding.

In general, musical talent refers to a combination of psychic-physical abilities, such as musical hearing, rhythm sense, memory, sensitivity, physical development, and the ability to learn and improve interpretive technique. The development of musical talent can be divided into three stages: in the first stage, the child discovers the pleasure of singing, in the next stage, the goal is to improve interpretive technique, and in the final stage, it aims to individualize and personalize performance. It is important to take into account the child's or adult's disposition, as it can influence how music is perceived and interpreted

Specialized literature defines musical aptitude in terms of musical competence. Musical performance involves complex sensorimotor skills. In music, both absolute and relational musical properties need to be encoded. In the case of music, we talk about 7 properties: pitch, rhythm, tempo, melodic contour, timbre, intensity and spatial location.

And yet, in order to become a perfect performer, because that is where every student who chooses to study the instrument must aim, only the skills mentioned above are not enough. These must be completed with the intense and

permanent concern for study, interest, will, power of concentration and consistency, in a word, the commitment shown in the instrumental field, a fact confirmed in my teaching experience.

5. Habits

Skills are automated components of the activity. By skills is understood the skill, consolidated through exercise, to perform different actions, and by skill, the ability to put theoretical knowledge into practice.

Necessary conditions for the formation of instrumental skills (Scheeser 1984, 45-52):

1. Knowing the purpose

The student's clear awareness of the goal leads to its achievement faster. The student must be helped in clearly specifying the goal he is aiming for during the study, thus removing the acquisition of unnecessary and wrong movements.

In a first phase, the goal must be to achieve a quality sound, and in a more advanced phase, the goal will be to reveal the emotional-expressive content of the musical works, content that will always be in the attention of the student instrumentalist, who chooses, under the guidance of the teacher, the appropriate technical methods, thus achieving an artistic and not mechanical interpretation. Regarding the artistic interpretation, we mention the fact that good results begin to appear only after the age of twelve.

2. Making perceptions and representations

The mental representation of the movement, before it is performed, leads to a correct and prompt execution. The more correctly and quickly each separate movement is executed, the more correctly and quickly the skills are formed. The anticipatory representation must constitute the artistic impulse that triggers the corresponding movements. In the formation of instrumental skills, we will associate both auditory, visual and kinesthetic perceptions, starting from the musical requirements that represent the final goal of instrumental education, and not from teaching the movements themselves. Seen as a means of making music, technique will be subordinated to it, and hearing will be the one that alerts sight and muscular sense to possible mistakes in posture and movement.

3. Exercise - fundamental and indispensable condition in the formation of skills.

In order to give maximum performance, we can take into account some recommendations: the exercise must not consist of a simple mechanical repetition of some movements, but of their permanent improvement through control and analysis, the student must work "slowly, carefully and with love of work" (Costin 1964, 200) . The use of various processes of simplification (studying in equal values, with disconnected notes) or making it difficult (rhythmic distortions), staggered study, in stages intertitions with other activities, were also recommended by George Enescu, who said: "Take a rest from work by work".

4. Transfer and interference

Specific to the instrumental study is the fact that the new skills can include, in addition to new elements, elements that are part of the skills already formed. The positive influence, when the old habits help the formation of the new ones, is called transfer, and in the case of the negative influence of one habit on the formation of another, we talk about interference. In the case of interference, the teacher must draw the student's attention to the differences in form and content between the two actions, interference can be combated by studying and improving both skills (Răducanu 1994, 62).

The creative assimilation of art and the leadership of the individual as a creator of beauty constitute the practical-applicative side of aesthetic culture. It is based on a stock of skills or aesthetic abilities.

Along with relatively simple school skills: reading, writing, speaking or listening, playing a musical instrument, artistic interpretation, involves the formation of complex skills and abilities based on a whole series of knowledge from several fields.

Skills are components of conscious activities, developed through practice. As a result of the exercise, the actions, operations of the complex conscious activity are systematized and reach a certain degree of automation and independence from the conscious activity as a whole.

Learning is a moment of human activity, and in the work of mastering a musical work, learning is an effect of learning, an automated component of musical activity. In this activity, skills occupy a much more important place than one would think at first analysis. We cannot speak of a limited, stabilized field, which the skills in musical activity would occupy, because there is a continuous restructuring, usually an increase in their number due to the character of an organized and generalized link operation of the learning process

Always, even where there is an active inhibition of cortical activity, in the case of musical skills a mobile and simple dynamic of continuous transitions from the state of excitement to that of inhibition is felt.

Skills do not act in isolation from each other but influence each other. This interaction can in some cases hinder the formation of new skills. This is what we call interference.

The development of musical memory, through singing by heart, from the beginning of studying the instrument, must be one of the important concerns of modern pedagogy. Neglecting the development of memory, whatever the student's natural abilities, will be a brake on the pace required today in the violinist's training process. A well-developed memory will be able to reduce the time of acquiring any skill. Singing on the outside creates the psychic conditions for a free and creative development, so categorically claimed by any artistic activity. In order that this may be achieved, from the very beginning it will be perseveringly pursued that both the technical exercises and the studies are exposed externally, and it will not be limited to the external singing of the concert pieces only.

The young violinist will have to consider playing from memory as an intelligent way of studying, which can help him enormously, saving him a lot of effort on the way he will have to travel.

To obtain a cursive execution of a study or pieces, several procedures can be used. We show one of those that gave effective results.

If all the more difficult passages have been worked on, the prerequisites for a coherent execution have been created.

In order to achieve practical fluency, a slower tempo will be chosen, during which the violinist will be able to discern what he aims to perform, think about the gesture created for it and control the effect produced. Controlling the effect is of particular importance in raising the quality of the execution. Gaining this is achieved through sustained effort.

6. The personality

"Personality is the dynamic organization of the psycho -physical system that determines the unique adaptation of the individual to the environment" (Allport, 1937, p.48, apud. Macsinga. 2003). At a general level, we can establish that personality is the totality of stable patterns over time, emotions, thoughts, actions that determine the stable functioning of the individual.

Temperament is the dynamic-energetic side, character is the socio-moral structure, and skills represent a complex of processes and individual psycho-

physical attributes, components that, following interaction, organization, and relationship with each other, are ranked and give rise to personality.

The peculiarity of instrumental education is that of working in the classroom with only one student, leaving the opportunity for the pedagogue to discover and shape the personality of his students, not just to train them practically to become good instrumentalists. What leads to the double instructive-educational role of the instrument teacher (Răducanu 1994, 13), is the role he cannot play without thorough specialized knowledge, without the desire for continuous improvement, without dedication, without the love for beauty and not in last line, without the joy of sharing his experience.

The teacher who does not discover, respect and shape the personality of his students will prevent the interpretative-creative development, which can be overshadowed by the lack of confidence in one's own strengths. Unique personalities, continuously developing and passing through different age areas, are general characteristics of the students, which the teacher will know and to which they will report their complete evolution. Knowing the personality, the "psycho-physical formula of the student is a condition without which persuasion can neither be directed nor dosed" (Răducanu 1994, 19).

But, by what methods can the teacher know the personality of his students?

The first and most important method is the direct and active observation of the students, through the performance of instrumental activities within the instrument class, individual study, auditions, recitals, exams, competitions. Of course, in addition to these activities, their personality also manifests itself in general culture classes, in relationships with other colleagues, in the family, on the street or playing, etc.

The conversation within the class and outside it, is another method to know the psychological qualities of the student, being an effective means, through which we can discover the feelings, motivations, joys, troubles of the student, the attitude he has towards the instrument or face school.

Subjective opinions and the great mobility of the student's personality, which is constantly changing and developing, can lead to superficiality in the interpretation of students' acts of conduct. Not every isolated fact, recorded by the educator, has a deep and lasting coverage in the student's internal structure. Its confirmation as a defining, significant fact is done through repetition, appearing several times or being noticed by other people. Therefore, all we have to do is to be receptive to the smallest change in discovering and outlining a complete and correct analysis, through an objective assessment of the information regarding the psychological characteristics of the students.

This information will lead to the knowledge of the individuality of each student and will serve to carry out the educational act, in accordance with the real possibilities of the students and to establish lines of perspective regarding their school and professional orientation.

Since each student has his general ability, special skills, emotional, temperamental and character background, family, school and social environment, all these intervene in their own way in the structuring of his personality.

The results obtained by the teacher on the behavior manifestations, in different situations of the students, are usually recorded in the principal's notebook or in the psycho-pedagogical record. It is known that in general culture education, filling out the psycho-pedagogical paper is part of the mandatory duties of the head teacher. In turn, the instrument teacher fulfills the role of conductor, but in our case for the instrument class, the psycho-pedagogical paper can help us decipher the personality of our students and select the most suitable teaching-learning-evaluation methods, for successful guidance of the instrumental study.

In summary, the goal of instrumental education is not just to train students to become good instrumentalists, but also to discover and shape their personalities. The teacher plays a crucial role in this process by observing the students through their performance and behavior, as well as engaging in conversation with them to understand their feelings, motivations, and attitudes towards the instrument and school. The teacher should also be aware that the student's personality is constantly changing and developing, and therefore should approach analysis and evaluation of the student's behavior with objectivity. This knowledge of the student's individuality can help the teacher tailor the educational act to the student's abilities and guide them towards appropriate school and professional orientations. Overall, the teacher should always strive for thorough specialized knowledge, continuous improvement, dedication, love for beauty, and joy of sharing their experience with their students.

7. Conclusions

Building a violin career does not happen by itself. Objective talent and aptitude for the instrument do not automatically lead to recognized career advance. They are considered to be of valuable potential.

It is necessary to carefully notice the behavioral tendencies of each student and, as a result, to develop the possibilities of action of the two hands with the ideal of equalizing them, creating skills that ensure independence as well as their good coordination, in the sense of unhindered rendering of all commands coming

from inner hearing the formation of instrumental skills involves knowing the purpose, making perceptions and representations, exercising, and managing transfer and interference. Knowing the purpose of the study helps the student achieve their goal faster and avoid unnecessary and wrong movements. Making perceptions and representations of the movement before it is performed leads to a correct and prompt execution, while exercise is a fundamental and indispensable condition for the formation of skills. Transfer refers to when old habits help the formation of new ones, while interference refers to when old habits negatively impact the formation of new ones. In addition to simple school skills, artistic interpretation involves the formation of complex skills and abilities based on knowledge from several fields. Learning to play a musical instrument is not just about mastering a musical work, it is also about developing the student's ability to create beauty and becoming a creator.

The primacy of the auditory sphere in relation to the motor centers also corresponds to the autogenetic development process of man. Vernick 's place in the brain, where the auditory center is located, develops in children before Brocca 's center , where the speech center is located. If a child is born deaf, he will necessarily also be mute, because without receiving any external impulse, the motor center of speech cannot develop. The way in which the child learns to speak must be used as a model in the art of instrumental interpretation and in advanced instrumental pedagogy, which tends to the constitution of the auditory determinant.

References

- Costin, Maximilian. 1964. *Vioara, maeștrii și arta ei* [The violin, the masters and its art]. București: Editura Muzicală.
- Macsinga, Irina. 2003. *Psihologia diferențială a personalității* [Differential psychology of personality]. Timișoara: Editura Mirton.
- Răducanu, Mircea Dan. 1994. *Principii de didactică instrumentală* [Principles of instrumental teaching]. Iași: Editura Moldova.
- Scheeser, Reinhold. 1984. *Metodica studiului și predării instrumentelor cu coarde*, [Methodology for the study and teaching of stringed instruments]. Iași: Editura Conservatorul George Enescu.