

MEANS AND AIMS IN THE APPROACH OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN MUSIC

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***Abstract:** Non-verbal communication in the music discourse is presented both on an affective-inductive level as well as a conceptual, idea-based level. Decoding the meaning of this language is the aim of music education, and it is accessible to all human beings as all music systems have a rational basis and a psycho-physiological one. Music has therapeutic power, is conducive to discipline, contributes to the development of intelligence and stimulates learning, being an indicator for success as well as a solution to school abandonment.*

***Key words:** art, communication, language, semantics, education, training.*

1. Introduction

Of all the non-verbal communication systems, the language of music in essence reveals the substance and affectivity on a spiritual level. Non-verbal communication in the music discourse is less evident than the verbal one but no less rigorous, on the contrary, it is more thought provoking and stimulating. It also leads to a greater level of emotional involvement on the part of the listener, thus widening the sphere of information transmitted, from the conceptual, idea-based level to the imaginary-visual, sensitive and emotional levels.

Emotion, for example, is a spontaneous, irrational, passing state, which triggers bodily reactions and inner sensations, not conceptualized forms. Emotion, as an effect of spiritual-religious music, specific to all religious forms, is the result of a series of mental processes with a strong

power of internal induction, generating a state of peace in the human soul conducive to meditation and the union of man with divinity.

The inductive-affective side of music communication enables the connection of communities and human beings to the same feelings and emotions – albeit religious, patriotic, mournful or entertaining. On the other hand, the informational side of music communication is addressed, through its specific language parameters, to the cerebral side: memory, intelligence or imagination. From a neural-psychical point of view, the brain areas involved in the perception of emotion and feelings are different from those engaged in the perception of conceptual language, the two brain hemispheres having different means of analysis. It is difficult to express in words the states that music induces in us but one feels its message in the deepest

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areas of one's self. This is why the meaning of music must be identified in the music itself not in the comments that might come along with it.

Music education, a vital component of aesthetic education, has an essential contribution to the harmonious development of the human personality, opening one's way towards understanding reality by means of sound images. An omnipresent part of our daily life, music is an example of manifestation of the human spirit, a means of communication that is predominantly sentimental, or affective, between people.

The development of the level of personal knowledge in the sphere of music and art is the main goal of art education because the value of music is directly proportional to the personality of the listener. The more complex this is in terms of social and cultural education, the more of resonance music has in the mind of the listener. Thus, every listener attaches to the musical message values according to their own personal demands, in contrast with the general image transmitted to all the listeners. Unlike verbal communication, musical communication has a general, universal, character with a lot more nuances and possibilities of interpretation. This is why the meaning of music can never be totally explained through words. The musical language is not only an innate talent; it must be rediscovered, learned and internalized so that it can be used as a means of communication.

In order to stimulate the development of abilities to operate with this language, it is necessary that the learning of the specific serigraphy be made as early as possible.

The element that lies at the basis of music as a language is the musical sound, graphically expressed by means of the *musical note*, which Pierre Schaeffer considers to be a *minimal unit* capable of developing musical syntaxes. As an

objective semantic unit, the musical note has a temporal significance, defined as *duration*, and a spatial one defined as *pitch*. The orderly, diachronic succession of several durations gives rise to rhythm, and the combination of musical rhythm with the orderly succession of the pitch of sounds produces the melody, a spatial-temporal dimension of the musical language.

Musical rhythm finds an artistic correspondence at the psychological level of organic rhythms, forming the first level of semantic articulation, the second being determined by the melodic configuration of the intervals. The communicative power of the musical language is the result of the superimposition of these two semiotic systems, to which two more can be added, *intensity* and *tone*. The latter are subjective semantic units, quanta fields of energy and information which display expressivity of content that is highlighted, by means of the rendition, during the concert.

In other words, the creative blend of the qualities of the musical sound, based on a generative musical idea, leads to the melody – a thematic unit with a well defined significance – the equivalent of the sentence in spoken or written language.

If rhythm and pitch represent the constructive side of a melody, its communicative and aesthetic value is given by the cumulative expressivity of the elements that form the musical language, by means of the ideas and feelings transmitted to the listener.

The semantic decoding of this language is the aim of music education. The teacher's role is to make students aware of the essence of the musical phenomenon, developing and improving their musical abilities, teaching them to use sounds in their temporal (rhythm) and spatial (pitch) dimension.

As a physical reality, music systems have an acoustic basis and a psycho-

physiologic one; the ratio between sounds is numerical – frequency ratio, beat ratio, intensity ratio – whose expressive value is conveyed through sensations and emotions. The perception of a succession of sounds implies a series of mental statistic operations of analysis and association whereby sounds are compared by abstraction in the subconscious – *mathematical relations of a binary, ternary and quaternary type* – the only ones that govern both the metric-rhythmic system and the interval-melodic one.

The rational basis of the musical language has been discussed ever since the classical Greek and Roman antiquity in the writings of Plato, Pythagoras, Isidore of Seville, Boethius and Cassiodorus, who divide the seven liberal arts (*septem artes liberales*) into *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric and dialectic) and *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, **music** and astronomy).

Here is an observation and an argument which can sustain the possibility of approaching the musical language at the level of the community, on a rational basis.

The structure of the musical rhythm has a binary and ternary numerical structure whose development, through division and addition, is based on the set theory; while the perception of musical intervals is a cultural asset determined by the practice of rendition and the relative perception of the pitch of sounds.

The structural classification and the value appreciation attributed to certain elements of the musical language, content and form, are based on the comparative cerebral analysis of the elements specific to each one of them.

There are interdependent connections between the form characteristics of creation and the verbal significance that it generates, as there are stable connections between the content of the musical language and the brain mechanism by means of which we perceive, classify and

interpret the sounds or add value and meaning to the relationships between them.

In this sense, the recurring structural elements in the musical work of a composer constitute individual invariable landmarks in the thinking and sensibility of the composer. By enlarging the sphere of appreciation to the level of artistic communication specific to all arts, the folk motives typical of a human community (expressed via the poetic, musical, artistic or ethnographic language and defined as *archetypes* of community spirituality) express the inner structure, the authentic image of the intelligence and sensibility of the anonymous author.

2. Approaches to the musical language – from the stage of pre notation to that of notation

The great challenge that music faculty graduates are confronted with is the reality of being face-to-face with generations of young people and adults to whom they will have to reveal the secrets of decoding the musical language. Personally, I have been faced with this challenge along the years, with youngsters or adults, and I believe in the possibility of achieving efficient musical education amongst all those who have average or excellent musical abilities, if they want this and show a consistent attitude through study and practice.

Without presenting a complete overview of the approaches to musical education, I will refer to the experience acquired when forming a choir, at the school level and adult level. These categories present both advantages and disadvantages, but in general the challenges are the same.

Choral performance where the repertoire is for multiple voices and at a high level of expectation requires approaching the score by means of solemnization. The formation of a choir, as a performing entity, is a long-term process with a progressive evolution

regarding the difficulty of the repertoire as well as the solemnization ability of the choir members. Every time somebody is interested in singing in the choir, my selection is based on two principles: the respective person must have suitable vocal skills as well as the wish / will to develop their solemnization abilities. All those who had the will and attempted this, managed to become integrated in the choir because inborn intuition, practical experience and logical thinking, coupled with the personal emotional involvement, have been the key elements that determined the assimilation of the technique of musical language.

The stages covered in acquiring the musical language came as a natural succession, combining the imitative approach with that of logical awareness. Spoken language is learned by imitation, the child sensing the sound differences and the different meanings of the words. Similarly, in the stage of pre-notation, intuitive thinking must get used to operating with the sound and rhythm in simple and meaningful combinations.

By using a practical approach, in logical succession, the elements of musical language will gradually take shape in the mind of the choir member, who will be able to tell apart its various components, its meaning, and to reproduce them.

For children, the ability to differentiate between sounds appears around the age of 4-6, this also being the most efficient preschool musical development.

The main form of music education during the stage of pre-notation is the *song*, an emotional and attractive element whereby the choir member, with the help of the teacher, will sense intuitively the relationship between the elements that make up the musical language (lengths, pitches) as well as their emotional value.

The songs selected must have an aesthetic value and follow in gradual succession, from simple to complex forms,

the development of the ability to operate with musical intervals and rhythmic structures. Each performance must be followed by a concrete presentation of the significance of the language elements present in the song, as well as their expressive role. In ordinary speech, in order to communicate, children learn new words and phrases very easily – the same learning process applies to learning music. Repetition, through various attractive exercises, of rhythmic formulas taken from the song, along with the use of the names of notes, raises awareness and enables memorization of their different values.

Using pitch as an element of the musical language must be associated with the spatial image of its melodic development. The drawing of the melodic line on the blackboard leads to the understanding of the pitch of its component sounds.

The sound is, by nature, an abstract notion, and yet concrete, perceived aurally. Not only children but also experienced adults may find the notation system of the musical language imperfect and hard to understand. In terms of the notation of the length, pitch and musical expression, there is a degree of conventionalism that does not satisfy the demands of scientific rigor. Both the length (musical time) as well as the pitch are relative notions, for the understanding of which intuition is associated with logical thinking.

Given their tendency to imitate, children are capable of reproducing the sound, but they must relate its features to some concrete aspects. This is why visual and sensory perceptions play a crucial role in developing abilities to operate with the sound. Based on them, the features of the sound acquire visual (spatial) and movement (temporal) representations: hands clapping or tapping on the desk, rhythmical movements, using certain toys.

The representations, associated with sensations and emotional states, have the

role of fixing in our minds the image of the whole and the components of the musical phenomenon.

In the process of developing the capacity of operating with the elements of the musical language, memory plays a vital role. The mental mechanism functions according to the principle of association, control and feedback. In intonation or singing everything is controlled within a vision previously planned and controlled by feedback. Progress in vocal or instrumental performance as well as the reaction of the brain to external stimuli, visual or audible, is based on the statistic experience in the memory.

The development of musical memory, as a superior part of knowledge, represents the psychological ability of imprinting, stocking and reactivating the accumulated experience on the basis of some logical processes and cognitive schemes.

The comprehensiveness of expression of ideas and terms of the musical language is essential in memorizing their significance, as well as in the development of the abilities of operating with the sound, while ambiguity leads to a decrease in the capacity of memorization.

The purpose of musical education is reached when the choir members have understood that they have acquired the ability to operate with the sound, being ready to apply the theory in other situations, according to the psychological laws of transfer. The key factor in the progress of musical education is not to move on until each stage of the study has been consolidated.

Gradual assimilation of the elements of musical language broadens one's horizons and capacity of approaching the score in a rational way. By using the graphic sign, the sound acquires, in the mind of the choir singer, a temporal dimension, and by placing it on the stove, a spatial dimension.

One of the mistakes most often made in music education is the excessive theoretical approach to music serigraphy to the detriment of a practical approach. The ultimate purpose of the classes of musical education is (re)creation, whereby pleasure is born from use of the sound, and the theoretical aspect flows naturally from the musical one.

Use of the terminology that is specific to various elements of the musical language will be done only in the context of the expressive, emotional and practical side of music, not only the theoretical one because music, a non-verbal language of artistic communication, is revealed and learned only by singing. The success of overcoming these obstacles depends on the utilization of some efficient methods but, unfortunately, the preoccupation with cultural education is one of the weak links in the educational system, nationally and internationally.

3. The formative value of cultural education and its socio-community impact

The purpose of the cultural education revolves around a syncretism and the contribution of a community's traditional culture is the result of a collectivity integrated in the national and world culture. Unfortunately, for a community and for national level, the attention and support for artistic education is minimal. The lack of a long-term vision on the importance of cultural education in the life of the individual has a negative impact on the quality of socio-economic life of the community itself.

This does not refer to specialized cultural education, aimed at developing a professional career in one of the branches of culture, but has a global meaning, as an essential part of the education of the human personality.

I will support the above with arguments from personalities and specialists in the domain. President Ronald Reagan argued that civilizations remain in the collective memory for their art and thinking, and the existence of a solid musical education and the school curricula for arts are important for the development of the artistic taste and free thinking. It is well known that for the interdependence of the seven forms of human intelligence – *linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal* – neither one should have priority over the others.

The importance that musical education has in the development of human personality is also given by the fact that the musical sound is a strong vehicle of expression, creativity and human emotion.

According to Bloom's taxonomy, creativity is the highest level in the cognitive process, and the reason why artists excel here is because they create original values. At the social and community level, arts teach us that problems can have several solutions and that questions can have multiple answers – the effects are visible.

Cultural (musical) education contributes to a better quality of life in the school environment. It offers clear ways to learn by promoting a large number of thinking abilities, it contributes to the development of intelligence in other fields of study, being a predictor for success in overcoming the school-related and personal difficulties.

In this sense, arts can play a crucial role in solving the school abandonment problem and the encouragement of students to attend school until they graduate. International studies have shown the importance and success that arts programs have in preventing school abandonment; the creation of spaces for

arts exhibitions, cinema or some interconnected cultural events – choirs, drama, dancing; the involvement of the youth in projects and partnerships with cultural institutions; the creation of opportunities for going on trips, to museums or concerts, are many types of socio-cultural integration and avoidance of the personality crisis, of the feeling of frustration and futility. Music has the ability of reviving our daily mood, being therapeutic and a source of joy and consolation. It also makes life more dynamic and contributes to stimulating learning and implicitly to preparing one for a professional career. Music education encourages discipline and commitment, stimulates team work and group cohesion, enhancing the self-esteem and sensibility of the participants. In their role as educators, music teachers have the mission to form productive, creative and responsible citizens, with a distinct personality and a positive power of communication. It is vital that every student and pupil have access to high-quality musical education, because every individual must have the opportunity to develop their own creativity.

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