



**Music listening in Hungarian education:
Possibilities in formal and non-formal
education of music listening**

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Ildiko Lehotka¹

Abstract

In Hungary, one of the part of singing lessons is music listening. It is obvious that the role of the learning songs and singing them or the expansion of musical elements (such as rhythmical patterns, harmonies, intervals, scales, solmization or absolute notes, or music history in higher levels) are more often in practice than music listening. The teacher can check this knowledge of the students easier but not the music listenings. In Hungary, there are two music lessons in the first 4 years. In the following 4 years in primary school and for 2 more years in secondary school, the students have only one lesson. Like it or not most of the children are never taken to opera performances, concerts, or folk music concerts by their parents, so the classical or folk music is absent in those students' life. Unfortunately, lots of the pupils can get or listen to artistic music only at school. But how teachers can find more chance to students to listening to music? There are several opportunities to get to know with classical music for the students. Music listening and music literacy are significant and useful phenomenon for the students – both help the children to become sensitive and creative adults.

Keywords: music listening, extracurricular opportunities, extra lessons

¹ Doctoral Program on Educational and Cultural Sciences, University of Debrecen, Debrecen, Hungary, Email address: lehotkaildiko@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0003-3115-2085

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What is Music Listening?

Music listening is a process that reflects the complexity of music (Laczo, 1987a). It is an activity when the listener follows the musical elements and its progress, and can position him or herself into the atmosphere of the piece of music. Music listening is a “*very serious activity in the mind, it needs to move the energy of our spirit*” (Laczo, 1987b).

For music listening or for reception and acceptance of music, we must devote intense attention. Therefore, the listener should approach the music in a knowledgeable and curious way. It is a principle that to get closer to the music, the listener should start listening to music from shorter pieces to huge masterpieces. Such kind of music listening can develop the musical hearing, e.g., the rhythmical elements, the realization of the harmonies and intervals, the style and form of the piece of music, and (using Gordon's, 1971 definition) the auditionation.

Why and How Do We Listen to Music?

Almost every person likes listening to music. Music listening is a very useful activity: we entertain ourselves, we can get impressions by music, and we can develop our memory as well. There are two types of music listening: the active and the passive ones. We all hear some kind of music in the shops, our telephone's signal is a kind of melody, the television signals, and the radio or television advertisements. This kind of music listening is passive.

We assume that listening music actively is a progress when we deal only with listening to music. We are not engrossed our work, we do not deal with any activities, and music listening is the only activity we do. Nobody is excluded from the effect of music, so music listening is an important and useful activity in our life. To know the role of music listening, particularly classical music listening in a young person's life, it is one of the main tasks at school.

The Part of Music Listening in the Hungarian Curricula

The first mention of music listening in the Hungarian Curriculum can be found in 1932 – in the 6 years of schools. At that time, the subject's name was merely “enek” (singing) – now called enek-zene (singing-music). The very first mention of the music listening can be this curriculum: “We can give delights for the students with radio and gramophone.” “*The gramophone discs made for cultural purpose can be used for schools*” (Hungarian Royal Minister of Religion and Public Education, 1932, p. 449). Let us examine the most important changes in the Hungarian curriculum especially the music-listening role of the music lessons. In 1941, the school system has changed and the elementary school has broadened for eight classes. The new curriculum suggested the same goal with same phrases. The following curriculum from 1946 (Minister of Religion and Public Education, 1946b) writes

about “the malapropos presentation of musical pieces [...] by the radio or other technical invention” (Minister of Religion and Public Education, 1946a, p. 44). The next considerable step toward confirming the importance of music listening was in 1962. The curriculum has mentioned the music listening as an activity form (except the first class), and for all the eight classes were released vinyl collections. In 1995, appeared the NAT (Nemzeti Alaptanterv, National Basic Curriculum), with a noteworthy element: “the role of multiform elements of music and the role of music in media and cinematic art” belong to the subject in the secondary schools. From 2012, the curriculum orders for the music-listening section are the popular music and jazz as well (Kozlony, 2012).

According to a survey, the high-school students’ (Dohany, 2014) most favorite part of the music lessons is music listening. In the classroom lessons, there is not enough time to listen to music; one piece of music can be heard once or maybe twice, so the students do not enter into the atmosphere of the masterpiece, the composer’s era, the form, the orchestration or instrumentation, and the rhythmical specialities. It is obvious that the listeners will not remember the piece of music, so the goal, effectiveness, usefulness, and outcome of music listening will be absent.

All in Hungarian curriculum, we can read some sentences about extra occasions of music listening, for example, from 1932: “We allow our pupils to listen to the former students’ choir or orchestral performance in the school festivity or ceremony.” Obviously, policy makers and educators recognized betimes the possibilities of music listening as an extra occasion. A curriculum from 1946 writes down that “Teachers should use all the tool and occasion in order the students get to know experiences or impressions about music.” Therefore, this suggestion not only encourages music teachers to help children discover the pieces of music in music lessons only, but also music educators have to look for as many occasions for music listening as they can.

The latest curriculum (2012) provides the possibilities of more music listening. The subjects are classified into fully 10 fields (muveltsegterület); these are the following: Hungarian literature and grammar, foreign languages, mathematics, mankind and history, mankind and nature, our earth and environment, arts, informatics, life style and practice, and finally physical education and sports. The description of subjects (the requirement of input and output) is meticulously detailed. The description provides several connections between music listening and the non-musical lessons.

The act of National Public Education [27. § (1)] emphasizes that the lessons can be organized not only in classroom but also could be taken in a museum or in a library. The teachers can take lessons attached to an exhibition or concert. The curriculum gives an interesting opportunity for teachers and students to teach and learn in a camp – it is called erdei iskola; the students stay 3, 4, or 5 days there (Kozlony, 2012).

In this study, we find more occasions for music listening. We sort the possibilities of music listening into two categories according to the place: inside the school and outside the school.

Possibilities of Music Listening Inside the School

In Hungarian schools, students can attend lessons in the afternoon finishing their obligatory lectures. Some schools have an own choir perhaps orchestra, but the students who cannot sing well or play an instrument can visit extra lessons. In these extra lessons (called *szakkor*), the students get to know the element of music, they get some musical experiences, play the flute or listen to music or watch concert films, or watch films on a life of outstanding musician.

The obvious chance to offer music listening is the integration of other subjects. Almost all subjects have connection to music. The National Basic Curriculum indicates the connections of music listening with other subjects. For instance to the History lessons, the teacher can attach Gregorian chants, the renaissance music (in the court of King Mathias as well), the Hungarian folk music, the sound of tarogato (a special Hungarian wind instrument used in folk music), or music from the different historical eras. The curriculum does not name the title of the music piece apart from some of the high-priority works, for example, Marseillaise, Stravinsky: *Pulcinella*, Penderecki: *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*. Teachers can expand the ways to bring music into their subjects, and the curriculum gives examples ([Kozlony, 2012](#)). Teachers may be prepared to teach or mention the musical connection with the subject(s) they teach. The simplest way to integrate music listening to other subjects is that the music teacher him/herself would talk about the chosen piece of music. To solve this idea, there is no chance to do it. Every music teacher has an own time table, so it is impossible to go to a classroom and get involved with other lesson.

We have to mention the project work. This activity gives an opportunity to examine one topic for several views. The teachers choose a theme and organize a day (or days or a week) when students show their works. The students collect the important pieces of information about the theme, take an exhibition, invite a specialist, and talk about the chosen theme. The presentation of the project work can be conducted in the classroom or a hall. The members of the groups can gather from more classes, so the community of the school can strengthen.

The third opportunity of music listening in classroom is a festivity or a ceremony. We can talk about the national day or religious day like Christmas or Easter and we sing or listen to music. We can celebrate the students who have won a competition, got a medal, or took part with success. These processes do not take over all the lessons but they will be

everlasting. Both occasions of listening to music occur during the time of class schedule and the students have to take part the lessons. However, there are remarkable chances for music listening in the afternoon.

The ceremony or festivity has mentioned connected to classroom lessons. All schools organize ceremony for the National Days, or specific time, and the event is held in the school's large hall or in the gym. Almost every ceremony, students hear some kind of music performed by the members of the school (e.g., a choir), musicians, or music teachers. Music can be the part of a drama performed by the students. If the school has not organized an own choir or orchestra, the ceremonies can be colored by music recordings.

Possibilities of Music Listening Outside the School Time – School-Wide Programs

There are several occasions that can be found for music listening, besides the classroom lessons or ceremonies. These events belong to school but not obligatory for students.

The following possibilities exist in the afternoon, in the evening, or longer period in Hungary. Connected to the curriculum, students have a special subject called drama and dance. This subject is obligatory for 5–8 classes 11–12 grades and optional for 9- and 10-grade students. There is a remarkable possibility to organize an extra program to show a drama (or puppet show) or a dance performance – or combine those elements.

Several schools organize arts competitions or gala for the school found: the students recite a poem, sing a song (folk song as well), or a choir work, perhaps a school orchestra plays a masterpiece, pupils perform a short drama, play the guitar, piano, violin, etc. The students can demonstrate their artistic talents for the others.

In recent years, some “talent” shows have appeared in Hungarian Television, for instance “Megasztar, X-factor, The Song, Virtuoso, and Felszallott a pava” (competition for folk dancers and folk musicians). The effect of the two last mentioned shows has achieved the young people's interest for artistic music and folk arts. In our town, three schools organize folk music competition. These competitions have not existed 10 years ago. These competitions, both television shows and school performances, offer discussions for students and teachers what they could see and hear; these discussions are not only interesting but also develop the aesthetical and rhetorical sense as well.

In recent years, I have learnt about rock band festival, which was organized only twice – it is hard to organize the event, look for the bands, and listen to their music in advance (because of the lyrics or the costumes). An amusing music listening and dancing possibility can be “tanchaz” either – people dance for live folk music. It has double benefits: nobody is able to stand without dancing – the rhythm and music have huge energy.

Last but not least, the main possibility for music listening is to go to a classical concert. Listening to an orchestra, soloist, chamber music concert, or opera performance can be amusing but teachers should prepare the students to be aware of these opportunities. The concert pedagogical studies help teachers to prepare students to enjoy the concert. Judit Varadi emphasizes the aim of listening to music in concert – students will be the audience of the concerts. According to Varadi (2010), teachers should talk about the masterpieces in advance and the students have to listen the piece of music before the concert, so at least we talk about two occasions.

These extracurricular music-listening occasions strengthen the school community and set an example for the students. Merriam pointed 10 facts about the music role of the society that can underline the usefulness of curricular and extracurricular events.

Conclusions

It is said that young people do not like and enjoy classical music. The audience of the concerts is getting older and the young people prefer popular music. The music lessons' main task is teaching musical elements and singing. The music-listening activity does not get enough time, so the curricula, the schools, and teachers have to involve extracurricular opportunities in teaching method. One of the roles of schools and classroom teachers is to initiate students into the world of classical music. The extra class (Cahn's, 1952 definition, p. 20) and extracurricular activities are more interesting than classroom lessons. There are several ways in which teachers can encourage the students to listen to classical music.

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About the Author

IL is a teacher of Hungarian grammar and literature, music teacher, and teacher of Kovács method. She works in a music school, teaches solfeggio and music history. She works as a music critic as well.

Ethics

The study procedures were carried out in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. The Institutional Review Board of the Institute of Educational and Cultural Sciences (University of Debrecen) approved the study.

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