

Incorporating Experience-based Concerts into Public Education

Váradi Judit¹

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Summary

All over the world, the past decades have seen a continuous decrease in the number of the audiences at classical music concerts. It is not only me who has long been occupied with the question of how to make classical music popular with the young generation. The education of the audience has been gaining ground recently in the policies of concert organisers and professional performing ensembles. The aim of innovative experience-based concerts is to complement the musical education of school-age children by familiarising them with the art of listening to music. Presenting the values of classical music, which is the main task of this mission, is in the interest of performers and audiences alike as they are in an interdependent relationship. Examining the habits of listening to music not only as cultural consumption but also as an educational issue, we lay emphasis on the methods of musical education and educating lovers of music. For this purpose, we focus on the development of an adequate receptive attitude and the improvement of receptive competencies. We have studied how the effective presentation of music and educational concerts can complement school-age children's musical education in an experience-based way and familiarise them with the art of listening to music.

music education, music pedagogy, concert pedagogy, listening to music

Absztrakt

Évek, évtizedek óta tapasztaljuk szerte a világon, hogy a klasszikus zenei koncertek közönsége egyre csökkenő tendenciát mutat. Nemcsak engem foglalkoztat régóta az a gondolat, hogyan lehet a klasszikus zenét megszerettetni a fiatal generációval. A közönségnevelés egyre inkább központi helyet foglal el a koncertszervezők és a professzionális előadói együttesek műsorpolitikájában. Az innovatív szemléletű élménykoncertek célja kiegészíteni a köznevelést az iskoláskorú gyermekek zenei nevelésében, megismertetve őket a zenehallgatás művészetével. A zeneközvetítés feladata a komolyzene értékeinek megmutatása, az előadó és befogadó közös érdeke, mivel a kapcsolati viszony egymásra épül. A zenehallgatási szokások vizsgálatát nemcsak kultúrafogyasztásként, hanem neveléstudományi problémaként

¹ University of Debrecen Faculty of Music, 4032 Debrecen, Nagyterdei krt. 82.
associate professor PhD, judit.varadi.06@gmail.com

meghatározva hangsúlyos szerepet kap a zenei nevelés és a zenehallgatóvá nevelés kérdése és módszere is, amelynek érdekében célunk az adekvát befogadói attitűd kialakítása, a befogadói kompetenciák fejlesztése.

Megvizsgáltuk, hogyan lehet az eredményes zeneközvetítéssel a koncertpedagógia segítségével élményszerűen kiegészíteni a közoktatást az iskoláskorú gyermekek zenei nevelésében, megismertetve őket a zenehallgatás művészetével.

zenei nevelés, zenepedagógia, koncertpedagógia, zenehallgatás

Musical Activity

Understanding music used to belong to general erudition, but the concept has changed a lot during the past two centuries. Music used to be part of celebrations or church services. Composers had to be very prolific as the same piece was not supposed to be performed twice; a new one had to be composed for each occasion. This natural symbiosis between life and music existed for a thousand years in

history of western music: the contemporary music of the given era – that is what was meant by the word music – was an essential component of life (Harnoncourt 1988). Entertainment, dance music and festive music formed an organic whole without being separated into classical and popular music.

Our cultural environment has been affected considerably by mass culture, which seems to overwhelm us without any limitations. Of all forms of art, it is music that has become part of our everyday lives; therefore, the message it conveys is crucial (Hausmann 2011). It is paradoxical that today, when we are literally surrounded by music, for instance in shopping centres or places of entertainment, it is no more than decoration. Our modern lifestyle and mass culture have turned music into a consumer good, so listeners are no longer recipients but consumers (Stachó 2008). If one does not listen to music for its own sake, the most important requirement of aesthetic reception is missing. *“As soon as one uses music as a prop or decoration to evoke certain moods in oneself, it will no longer exert its influence as pure art”* (Hanslick 2007: 109). Musical activity takes three different forms: creation, reproduction and reception. Péter (2013) has given

one more activity as a part of the competences, musical analysis. Creation manifests itself in improvisation or, on a higher level, the composition of pieces of

music. Reproduction presupposes active playing – the instrumental or vocal performance of music or noting down sounding music. However, when one recreates musical meaning while performing, it also involves definitely productive elements. Reception is the active or passive process of listening to music. Losonczy (1969) distinguishes between the active listener with real perception and understanding, whose *“focused efforts and intellectual achievement produce a result”* and the passive one, *“who has not made and does not make any effort”* (Losonczy 1969: 195). When looking at people’s choices of music, one should be aware that everyone chooses what they understand, and they can only understand what they are familiar with and accustomed to, but they can only get accustomed to what they are able to understand within certain limits.

Concert Pedagogy

The progressive educational activity beginning to be known as concert pedagogy in Hungary has become, by today, an independent branch of education in the western countries. Its appearance in Europe is rooted in the realisation that professional groups and orchestras could take part in music-related educational activities such as the education of the audience. This new area of non-formal education, following the example of museum, drama and theatre pedagogy, takes place in an extracurricular environment. The primary objective of the new educational practice, called art pedagogy, is that children should meet artistic activity in an enjoyable way at its original location. Thus concert halls become scenes of education to complement public education. The short-term goals of concert pedagogy are spreading musical knowledge and presenting the values of music in an enjoyable way; its long-term goal is the systematic education of the audience.

Concert pedagogy is an educational activity which complements musical education in the family and at school innovatively with a special focus on enjoyability, using the methodology of experience-based education. Its primary objective, namely that young people should gain musical experiences through live performances, can be labelled as an educational activity developing adequate receptive competencies (Körmendy 2014).

The European Association for Music in Schools is an international organisation of music educators, artists and scientists who are committed to the development of music education throughout Europe. In order to create a global musical horizon and promote lifelong learning, the objective they set as a guideline for music education is an attitude that is open to novel auditory impressions and musical

experiences. Owing to the limited scope of formal education, they recommend finding extracurricular opportunities for taking part in live performances.

Orchestras in Great Britain, the USA, Australia and New Zealand have their own Education Departments (Váradi 2010). They were founded to meet the social and musical demand for awakening children's interest in art and music as early as possible. Rather than "tomorrow's audience", young people ought to be looked upon as "today's audience". With a view to raising the next generation of musical people in Britain, concert programmes are compiled in cooperation with preschool and school teachers. Performances are preceded by educational sessions for teachers with the participation of the performing musicians, the conductors and the presenter. That is when the preliminary outline of the concert is drawn up and the musical motifs to be highlighted and explained in advance by the teachers, if necessary, are decided on. Afterwards, teachers have two months to prepare their students for the concert in depth. The orchestras' musicians keep in touch with the teachers and might even visit the schools. It has happened that some classes have accompanied the music with dance or pantomime, or the children have taken along their own instruments and played along with the orchestra. The London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) employs a head of education who has been in charge of their educational programme *LSO Discovery* for over 10 years. The head of education's task is to host youth programmes, lead workshops and prepare the musicians for visits. The programme mainly targets the 5-11 age group, who are still very open and not prejudiced against any kind of music. The educational programme of the Association of British Orchestras (ABO) is a nationwide network. Their work is supported by the fact that according to the National Curriculum every child aged 5-14 has to learn to compose and perform music and understand musical processes. However, the initiative faces considerable difficulties as there is a lack of well-trained teachers in these fields. The LSO's educational activities take place in a state-of-the-art renovated building. With the help of the Internet, the Music Education Centre can involve children from other regions or countries in their events. Practice has proved that these methods are also adaptable to other locations as it is professional educational work that counts.

The British model is followed – adjusted to local conditions – by several orchestras in Austria and Germany. In accordance with the slogan "*Orchestras to schools – schools to orchestras*", several German ensembles form smaller or larger chamber groups to visit schools, where they prepare students for the orchestras' concerts. Next, students take part in the orchestras' rehearsals, and it is only afterwards that they can attend the concerts (Mertens 2005). The Munich Philharmonic Orchestra organises youth events for every age group, who can attend them either with their schools or their parents. The number of the audience is rather low because of the intense interaction between the parties. The events are

centred around symphonic works and instruments, which children can try themselves. In Chemnitz, the orchestra's members volunteer as godparents to classes and introduce them to concert life through the personal relationships they build up. The long-standing three-phase model is used at many places: after the preparation session held by the musicians during their visit at the school, children attend first a rehearsal and then the concert.

Experience and Concerts

During the past years there have been some exemplary initiatives in our country to elaborate the programme of presenting music in an enjoyable way. The prevailing law on performing arts (2008/XCIX) treats the art education of school-age children as a priority in the General Provisions of Chapter I stipulating that professional ensembles facilitate children's and young people's access to works of art and contribute to the fulfilment of the state's and local governments' educational tasks. That is to say, the task is given, but the methods and methodology are still to be worked out. The guidelines for curricular education are to be found in the National Curriculum, but extracurricular musical education has plenty of untapped potential.

In Hungary there are a lot of professional orchestras and concert organisers committed to young people's musical education. When planning a so-called experience concert, one must keep several factors in mind. The best choice is, of course, to compile a concert programme that is adjusted to what students have learnt in music classes. Based on that, the concert helps conscious reception through the magic of live music. Besides, concerts should be colourful and interesting enough to capture the young audience's attention. Because of their young age and openness, young people are able to show enthusiasm for unusual sounding and contemporary music.

There are three factors meeting in an educational concert: demand, content and the framework. The demand usually comes from teachers, who wish to complement musical education under non-formal circumstances. Performers play a crucial role: the success of the event depends on their artistic preparedness and performance. The three factors exist in interaction, shaping one another all the time (Váradí, 2010).

The informative part of the concert highlights various facts, concepts and phenomena, which are then illustrated by the music. By widening the audience's general knowledge, the aim is to give thorough information on historical (of music and of the genre) and biographical data, the circumstances of the composition of the work and the influences of the age. In contrast, concert pedagogy takes another approach. It is the presenter's task to call the audience's attention to the characteristics of the performed music, familiarise them with its content and

guide them towards going through an emotional musical experience. “... we attempt the miracle of forwarding music from one person to another, and our attempts will never come to an end...” (Perelman, 1983:104). That is to say, the important thing is not verbal information but taking delight in musical processes. Music is intercultural and not limited by linguistic obstacles. However, presenters can only fulfil their missions if they have firm pedagogical and rhetorical knowledge and they are able to put musical processes into words vividly and expressively. Creative and inspiring ideas alone do not guarantee successful realisation. Children are a very critical audience and can only be touched by a professionally prepared performance. The target audience’s age must be taken into consideration during the compilation of the concert programme, and the presenter must be fully aware of the aim of the event and choose a method accordingly. The primary aim that determines the method is to hold the audience’s attention, and, if necessary, the method can be changed during the course of the performance. Obviously, the main priorities are to awaken interest and provide an enjoyable experience. The concert will fulfil its mission only if the chosen pieces of music are high quality and valuable. The presenter and the artists who perform short pieces and excerpts during the concert are also to be selected with care. There are still some further factors crucial to the success of the concert, for example involving the audience in the event. There are an infinite number of ways to do so, and it only depends on presenters’ creativity how they convince the audience that they are also part of the performance. The concert may include a song sung together, improvising a polyphonic piece using body sounds, perhaps improvising a free audio collage by sounding the objects in one’s pockets or, allowing for the conditions in the concert hall, dancing or making movements at one’s place. László Sály’s creative musical exercises (1999) may serve as a perfect resource of ideas. The audience applauding loudly to the rhythm of a popular piece of music is not part of the performance yet. Successful cooperation comes about only if children are involved in the elementary musical process and feel they are active participants of the concert.

One possible way to prepare the audience for attending a musical performance is to show and teach them the excerpt, tune or rhythm in question and have them sing it. Teachers may as well write words for the music and have the audience sing it in one voice or polyphonically, or use its motifs to improvise (Szabó 1977). If the tool of guided attention is used, the audience feels at home when listening to the complete work for the first time as they have already been familiarised – actively – with some of its parts.

It is a memorable experience for the young audience if they can try the instruments themselves. If there are wind instruments, it is worth preparing mouthpieces out of use for that purpose. It might be useful in advance to make a list of the children who learn to play a particular instrument so that they can be

given the chance to play, if not an entire piece, at least some of its motifs. Seeing their peers play an instrument may motivate children for taking up one themselves.

In England and Germany it has already happened a number of times that children have been present at the birth of the piece of music or the composer has even let them experiment during the process of the composition. Playing that piece will be a lifelong experience for them indeed.

If organisers want to keep their audience, they have to come up with new ideas and a new theme from year to year. It is impossible and also inadvisable to present the full array of instruments to the audience at a time. With a wise choice and rotation of musical materials and apparatus children go through new experiences every year, and they can be shown the full range of instruments. The instrument within the human body, i.e. the human voice must also have its share in the concert programmes. The human voice represents naturalness, and it is the most direct expression of man's inner world. The way it sounds and it is sounded has virtually been unchanged throughout thousands of years, and it is accessible to every child. Singing is an instinctive way of self-expression for almost every person in closer or broader circles, depending on their voice, self-knowledge and inhibitions.

Western European practice has proved that it is possible to stage an experience-based concert without any speech or explanation. The reception and understanding of music is helped by impulses coming from other, non-musical branches of art. During the performance music is linked to some visual media or scenic performances. There are experimental concerts in Hungary as well with mimes and sand pictures illustrating the music. However, it is important to find the balance so that the visual part should not divert the audience's attention and take priority over the music (Mertens, Farish, Stiller, Leslie 2005).

When planning a concert, organisers are advised to make use of other branches of art for the sake of better understanding. As far as the connection between music and fine art is concerned, musicians may think of old paintings which depict the musical instruments and performing traditions of the painter's age. Such pictures, owing to the lack of written records and historical objects, are important sources for the history of music. The deep-rooted relationship between the two branches of art is finely illustrated by Mussorgsky's famous work with a telling title: *Pictures at an Exhibition*. The concert may be accompanied by a related art exhibition creating the atmosphere. Organisers can take advantage of the fact that music itself can inspire fine art, so it is worth having the audience draw during or after the concert. A drawing competition is an excellent opportunity for the audience to visualise their thoughts and emotions evoked by the music.

A wide range of literary works have inspired composers, and music has inspired an almost infinite number of literary works. The combination of the two has resulted in new genres, the most illustrative example of which is the opera. The intellectual content of music manifests itself best in music with lyrics. The setting is to deepen and depict the meaning of the words, highlighting their essence. Our thoughts are directed by the verbal message. Thus, verbal expression enriches the content of the performance significantly.

There exists a peripheral region of music, which has been used for depicting things outside the realm of music since ancient times. Programme music is surprisingly broad and interesting, and provides an easy and enjoyable listening experience for children. It evokes the universal (Gesamtkunst) nature of music, but the dramatic plot and visual effects are rendered through music, which makes it possible for people all around the world to understand, overcoming linguistic barriers (Pécsi 1991).

From a historical perspective, organisers can take a variety of approaches when it comes to the compilation of the concert programme. One option is to select excerpts from the music of a particular period; another one is prepare a comprehensive programme spanning a number of periods from Renaissance or Baroque to contemporary music. It is not usually sounds, rhythm or harmonies that the audience encounters but the overall experience a piece of music provides. That is to say, as a result of the composer's work, the individual musical elements are united to form a planned and structured work.

Classical concerts display a wide range of genres, which can be classified logically by their common features. One possible classification is based on the performing apparatus and differentiates between instrumental and vocal music. Instrumental music can be divided into pieces for solo instruments with accompaniment, chamber music and orchestral music. Vocal music can be divided into "a cappella" compositions with no accompaniment such as madrigals and motets, and compositions which are accompanied by instruments or an orchestra such as songs, requiems or operas. Compositions can also be classified on the basis of the inner structure and form of their genres. Accordingly, concert programmes can feature motets, madrigals or airs alone; they can be made up of instrumental suites or the fantasy world of fugues as well as concertos, sonatas, symphonies, operas, just to mention a few examples. No matter which performance pattern is chosen, it is important to present a balanced programme.

Regarding the relationship between music and related arts, dance music and various dance forms deserve special attention (Körber 1995). Music and dance are closely interrelated. Both are based on rhythm, the alternation of stressed and unstressed units, the relationship between the temporal values of musical sounds and pauses, and the pace of the beat. For primitive people, dance is a cultic

activity, an instinctive expression of their emotions and passions. The distinctive instrumental music of the Middle Ages was dominantly dance music. Its musical character – rhythm and melody – was rooted in folk music. Educational concerts provide an opportunity for looking at music from the perspective of the art of dancing. Even steps suitable to the character of the given dance movement can be shown and taught to the audience.

Concert pedagogy is a very important activity but can not use instead of curriculum of experienced base music lessons. Several transfer studies have shown the beneficial effects of specialised musical education on personality development and its positive impact on skills and abilities required for other disciplines (Kokas 1972, Bácskai, Manchin, Sági, Vitányi 1972, Barkóczy, Pléh 1978, Laczó 1979, Dombiné 1992, Coca 2014). There is an endless variety of programmes to be compiled for experience-based concerts, and an inexhaustible stock of ideas to guarantee their curiosity. The primary aim of the concerts is to help the development of an adequate receptive attitude through music played on a high artistic level. Youth concerts are connected to the material covered at school, allowing for the characteristics of the age group. In this way, public education is complemented by artistic performances in a concert setting. It goes without saying that young people cannot be told what kind of music to listen to, but they can be given guidance to find their way in the maze of musical diversity. Children must realise that past generations created magnificent works in music as well as in other forms of art. These works are worth knowing, preserving and passing on one day. Besides education, the way to musical discovery also depends on the individual's intellectual disposition towards musical quality (Del Grosso Destreri 1982). Our task is to lead children into the entrance hall of the art of music, from which they are able to move further inside themselves (Kodály 1975).

Summary

Concert pedagogy is not widely discussed in the literature yet; however, it has already appeared as a subject supplementing musical education at the art universities of Western Europe. In Detmold, Germany, for example, there has been a four-semester training course since 1998. In Great Britain, the London Symphony Orchestra offers non-formal educational training to those who feel committed to putting the method into practice in their own environment. In Hungary, the subject “presenting music – concert pedagogy” has been part of the curriculum of musical higher education since 2013. It is time to introduce innovative thinking that adapts to the challenges of our age in all areas of music teacher education. It is vital to convince future music teachers of the importance of experience-based education and the efficiency of activity-based music

education with a creative methodology. These trends are the leading educational methods both in formal and non-formal art education.

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AUTOBIOGRAPH

Váradí Judit, PhD, Associate Professor, Vice Dean

Education and scientific qualifications:

1988 – University of Debrecen Faculty of Music – piano teacher

1989 – University of Debrecen Faculty of Music – solfeggio teacher and choir conductor

1996 – Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music Budapest – piano accompanist

2002 – Eötvös Loránd University Budapest – cultural manager

2010 – University of Jyväskylä, Finland – PhD degree

Title is of the dissertation: How to educate an audience to acquire a taste for classical music?

Professional experience:

1988 – University of Debrecen Faculty of Music, she works as a piano accompanist, artistic manager, teacher of compulsory piano, marketing, music pedagogy, concert pedagogy

2015 - she teaches at the Doctoral Program on Educational Sciences

2015 – leader of international research

2013 – vicedean of the University of Debrecen Faculty of Music

2013 – artistic director of the Young Musicians' Summer Academy

2001-2009 – founder and artistic manager of the Artistic Days in the Grand Forest

2001 – founder and artistic manager of the Evenings at the Conservatory concert series

2001 – founder and artistic manager of the Sound – Play – Music Youth concerts

2010 – Artisjus Awards