Discovering Music in School

Giácomo de Carli da Silva

Cinco de Maio Municipal Elementary School, Montenegro, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

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ABSTRACT

This research chose aslocus a public Elementary School and aimed to develop methodological proposals for the teaching of the keyboard in the classroom and extra class activities. Readings and research were made in the field of Education and Music Education. The interlocution among different areas of human knowledge made the learning of the studentseasier on a path where they themselves showed an interest in learning music. The subject of the activities was the story of the german composer Ludwig van Beethoven and the possible sonorities of the grand and luxurious ship of the early twentieth century, RMS Titanic. Thus, music had a special meaning in the lives of students who learned in this alternative way.

Keywords: Musical education; Methodologies in Music Education; Music at School

INTRODUCTION

This article presents the work of an undergraduate student in his early teaching experiences in a school, which was conducted between 2015 and 2016. The work was conducted with pre-school and 3rd-grade classes, as well as with some students from 4th to 6th grade and 9th grade, which occurred individually. The venue for the activities was a public school located in the city of Montenegro / RS.

Readings in Education and Music Education were taken, as well as research on some historical facts that could be related to the study. Likewise, themes such as family history were included to support and build an affectional connection with the work developed with the students. Thus, the research focused on developing an interest in learning music in a fun, different, and playful way in the students who participated in the program.

Ludwig van Beethoven's life, aspects of folklore, and the history of the early twentieth-century European luxurious transatlantic called Titanic were studied across the history of music, encompassing the lives of composers and musical works with facts related to the time. For example, in the year in which Beethoven's last symphony was composed and the beginning of the arrival of German immigrants to Brazil and Rio Grande do Sul, a state of Brazil.

Action Research Theoretical-Methodological References

The work developed belongs to the field of Music Education transversal to Education. It is based on theories belonging to the first and second generations of the active methods in Music Education. Regarding the open practice to all people, the work focused on the development of music at various levels of learning disabilities with elementary school students from a municipal public school in Rio Grande do Sul.

In the field of Music Education, the work had the contributions of the first and second generation of the active methods, including the proposals of Self (Fonterrada, 2008), Schafer (2011) e Carl Orff (Fonterrada, 2008). When it comes to education, the work developed had concepts from Vygotsky (1998) and Dubet (1996).

The work was marked by the search for a method that could unite practical and visual activities with a view tolearning music. As several observations were conducted before the beginning of the work that as orientation had the method established in the action research, described by David Tripp (2005), it was possible to plan its beginning in a more adequate way. It is understood that in order to conduct research, it is necessary to identify the problem in order to solve it. Thus, according to Tripp (2005):

Educational action research is primarily a strategy for the development of teachers and researchers so that they can use their research to improve their teaching and, as a result, their students' learning, but even within educational action research, varieties have emerged. (Tripp, 2005, p. 3).

Regarding the action research method, described by Tripp (2005), it is divided into four steps, namely, planning improvement of the practice, acting to implement the improvement of the practice, monitoring and describing the effects of the action and evaluate the results of the action.

The first step, planning, is the moment when the organization is elaborated, which will be implemented later (Tripp, 2005). Therefore, in this research, we thought of a practice that would be more likely to be successful. After identifying the problem, in this case, what would be studied with the students when it comes to teaching music. So all the work was planned.

During action, the second stage of this action research, the planning was put into practice in order to achieve the objectives. In the third stage, the description stage, everything that happened was reported in writing or with other elements such as audiovisual and voice recording in order to document how the process of application of the planning made occurred in practice. In the fourth and final stage, the evaluation, the smallest details were evaluated in order to ponder what would need to be improved, what happened properly, finally, evaluating everything that would contribute to the success of the action research. (Tripp, 2005). Regarding the theoretical-methodological references that underlie action research, Vygotsky and Dubet contributed to educational issues.

According to the German psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1998), in his approach to socio-interactionist theory, the interaction between student and teacher is considered vital for both teacher and student development. This tells us that not only does the teacher transmit knowledge to the student but the student also transmits knowledge to the teacher. Moreover, in his theory, the researcher understands human development from a sociocultural perspective, that is, constituting him or herself in the interaction with the environment in which he or she is inserted (Vygotsky, 1998). In this sense, according to Vygotsky (1998),

The child's conquest of language is through a constant interplay of internal dispositions that prepare the child for language and external conditions — that is, the language of those around — that provide both the stimulus and the raw material for the accomplishment of these provisions (Vygotsky, 1998, p.36).

Vygotsky (1998) argued, therefore, that “the development of the psychological foundations necessary for the teaching of basic subjects does not precede this teaching, but flourishes in continuous interaction with the contributions of teaching” (p. 101).

Dubet's theory (1996) also served as a theoretical basis for this action research. The definition of society from sociologically divergent perspectives without essentializing it enabled Dubet to construct the notion of social experience. According to Dubet, just as society is made by different and incongruent understandings, social experience is based on heterogeneous logics of action. Social action is thus interpreted in the absence of a unitary sense, under multiple meanings and registers.

In his reflections, when he had the opportunity to know what it is to be a teacher in a one-year experience as a teacher of history and geography in a college on the outskirts of Bordeaux, France, Dubet (1997) proposed that teachers should provide activities to students so that they do not enjoy any free time during class as they may lose focus. For the sociologist, students are not "naturally" willing to play the role of students, and teachers need to learn to teach those who do not know how to be students.

The contributions of Vygotsky and Dubet, in the perspectives presented above, constituted the socio-educational contributions of this action research. The pedagogical-musical references, which were of great importance for the foundation of this action research, included the presumption of Self, Schafer, and Orff.

The active methods in music education make us reflect on how important it is to learn music, not restrictedly to the traditional way. Most active music educators explain that everyone regardless of education, age, economic background, can learn music. Also, they express that it is very important to know the students in order to learn how to teach them. In this sense, the pedagogical-musical proposals of George Self (Fonterrada, 2008), Raymond

Murray Schafer (2011) and Carl Orff (Fonterrada, 2008) were chosen to guide the work developed.

George Self was a musician committed to avant-garde music and music education. For him, music-based education of the past limited the students' creativity, leaving them in a mere process of training, which would lead the student to the mastery of sheet music reading and technical skills in order to reproduce patterns before established by the composer.

Self (Fonterrada, 2008) proposed that traditional music notation be replaced by signs so that students could understand the dynamics, rhythms, and melodies of a musical piece. Self's model of music education aimed at preparing the student to listen to new music, new sounds, stimulating creativity, and invention. Self did not disregard the value of teaching traditional music. What he proposed was an expansion of the students' sound and musical experiences. His method had the general principles of using irregular rhythmic organizations; the basis of the chromatic scale and undefined sounds; stimulating sound production, spontaneous creation and improvisation; and the use of unconventional musical notation, better suited to the new sound model (Fonterrada, 2005).

Raymond Murray Schafer, a Canadian composer like Self, emphasizes sound listening and stimulating creative ability. Schafer (2011) deals with the importance of the Soundscape, in which everyday sounds and simple objects are used to tell a story through sounds. His proposal, more appropriately called sound education, stresses the importance of a balanced relationship between man and the environment.

According to Fonterrada (2005), what Schafer proposes "should precede and permeate the teaching of music" (p. 196). Schafer is not concerned with creating theories about musical learning, nor does he intend on developing pedagogical methods. His perspective is that of the search for understanding the world through sound criteria, becoming aware of the sound environment around us and thus awakening a new way of being in the world, establishing a balanced relationship between human beings and sound environment. (Schafer, 2011).

Schafer proposes a return to the performance of simple and basic exercises involving hearing in order to recover the ability to listen attentively, considering the indiscriminate increase of noise and the conditions of modern life (Fonterrada, 2005).

The German Carl Orff was also an important and recognized composer. He developed his pedagogical proposal with the teaching of music through practice, the-making-of music in mind, from observations he made while teaching music and dance classes, an integrative proposal of music and movement for Physical Education teachers.

Orff worked with Dorothea Gunter and together, in 1924, they founded Gunterschule, where they taught music and dance. Gunild Keetman, who worked in the field of music and movement, and Maja Lex, dancer and disciple of Rudolf von Laban, were also part of the school. In this environment, Orff began to develop a creative proposal in which he integrated music and movement (Fonterrada, 2005).

In the process, in order to build a series of percussion instruments, which became known as "Orff instruments" and which still serve as the basis for his proposal, Orff had the help of Karl Maendler. Orff, besides starting from how children learn, proposes a group music teaching, improvising with musical instruments.

According to Fonterrada (2005 : p. 145), the basis of Orff's proposal is "the integration of artistic languages, the teaching based on rhythm, movement, and improvisation". Putting together speaking, dance, and movement, Orff constituted the concept of elementary music, the basis of early childhood music education. Rhythm is the basis for melody according to Orff and both relate to the body: rhythm to movement, and melody to speaking.

For Orff, improvisation was vital, with activities that include repetition exercises, ostinato - a musical phrase or persistently repeated motif - pentatonic scales, and question and answer, among other activities, being extremely productive.

The Orff method, in German Orff-Schulwerk, was a pedagogical concept for teaching music to children derived from the work Musik für Kinder (Music for children), Orff and Keetmann. Schulwerk means school assignment

or task.

Based on the theoretical-methodological references presented previously, the results of the action research were analyzed.

RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

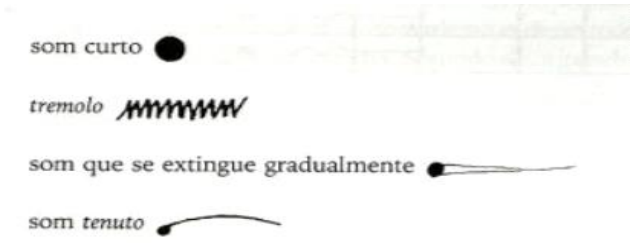
a) Keyboard Workshop with Students from 8 to 14 years old

For the action research, it was used the syllable language of the musical notes "do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-si". Instead of starting with the traditional music language, we opted for an alternative form. Only the letters representing the musical chords "A - la, B - si, C - do, D - re, E - mi, F - fa, G - sol" were used according to the traditional musical language. These letters, which represent the chords (three or more notes played simultaneously), are only meant to indicate which note is expressed according to the chord it represents. For example, the letter “c” represents the “C major” chord, but students should only play the tonic of the chord (the lowest note) with their left hand, not having to play the three notes of the “C” chord. This makes early music learning easier.

Before teaching the chord letters, body care was taken care of through body stretching and posture when sitting at the keyboard. Following this, the musical notes and their locations were introduced on the keyboard. Since it was started by teaching that the C-note is the first of the seven musical notes, the orientation given to the students was that the C-note is the first white key on the left side of the black key pair. Thus, students identified more than one “C” note across the keyboard span, as the sequence of seven musical notes repeats and there are more than two black keys together across the keyboard span. Subsequent to the note “C” (do), there are the other notes “re-mi-do-sol-la-si”, in this order, and after the note B, the note C is repeated and thus sequentially until the end of the keyboard key extension. When it came to learning of a "C" note or any other note, even with the same name, it was explained that this is called the eighth. An octave is made of eight sounds. When the next note is reached, with the same name, up or down, it's called the octave range. Example: re-mi-fa-sol-la-si-do-re (D-E-F-G-A-B-C-D) (from D to D). The written notes represent those that should be played by the right hand, just as the chord letters are played by the left hand.

According to Fonterrada (2008), Self uses the alternative musical language in his studies with his students. Self-used an informal language in music, where a simple “.” (dot) represents a short sound. Below, Self's proposal is exemplified:

Figure 1: Self’s explanation



Source: Fonterrada, 2008 : p.183.

Throughout the action research and elaboration of this methodology, signs such as “------” have served to indicate that the sound of the left-hand notes that play the chord letters are long notes. The sign “____” indicates that the right-hand notes with this sign are longer. As Self used in his study, this research was based on the principle of creating something innovative for students interested in studying music.

Continuing the explanation of the method, the numbers on the notes indicate the fingers that should be used at the time of the performance for both the right and left hand. The boxes serve to give students more visibility and understanding at times when both hands articulate at the same time.

Often, during the course of classes, there were students who could not read. Thus, the full reading of the notes became impracticable, that way the numbers above the notes, representing the fingers that should be used, made

the understanding possible. The numbers range from 1 to 5 (5 fingers of the right hand), one number for each finger, distributed as follows: 1 (thumb), 2 (index finger), 3 (middle finger), 4 (ring finger), 5 (little finger). This analogy was valid for both hands. The fingering, before being shown in a simplified language, was expressed in a drawing made from the students' own hands. In this drawing, the right hand and the left hand were drawn along with the note that each finger of each hand should play on the keyboard. Initially, the first piece of music chosen by the teacher to study, the theme of Ludwig van Beethoven's "Symphony No. 9, Opus 125" (1770 / Germany-1827 / Austria), first performed in Vienna, Austria, in the year 1824.

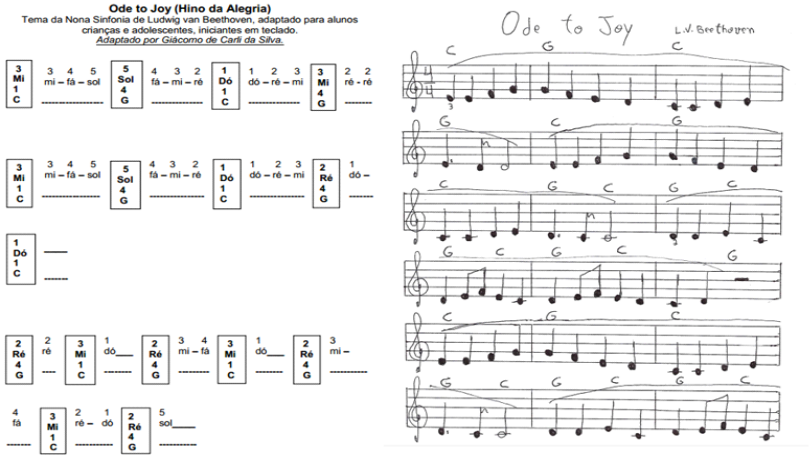
At the same time, a historical, global, and local perspective was part of the learning. What happened during Beethoven's life, in Germany and Austria, here in Brazil? This was the question asked for the elaboration of a supporting material that served at the same time to stimulate literary reading through general history and music in particular.

Because students were studying the main theme of Ludwig van Beethoven's "Symphony No. 9, Opus 125," facts of his life and work, along with historical events in Brazil and the city where the students lived, were presented and discussed. All this work was developed in order to relate the life and work of the composer with the lives of the students, emphasizing aspects of the Brazilian historicity and the students' city. Similarly, the local, national and world cultures, notably German, were transversal to the study, contributing to everyone's learning.

This same methodology considered working with other musical pieces, including folklore, in which the city's urban legends were read with the students. Musical folklore was worked on and discussed with the students, including the songs "Pastorzinho" and "Frére-Jacques".

In the year following the start of the keyboard workshop, the transition from alternative and simplified learning of music began to be transposed to traditional musical notation (Figure 2) through the first musical piece studied, "Symphony No. 9, Opus 125" By Beethoven. The ways of prolonging the sound of "------" and "_____" notes have now been conventionally expressed by the very value of the note figures "sixteenth note = ½, quarter note = 1, half note= 2, whole = 4". Dotted notes started to be part of students' learning, along with ties.

Figure 2: Alternative and Traditional Methods, respectively.



Source: Author

It is understood that it was a way of arousing the student's interest in music. At times there were dropouts from classes. On one occasion, it occurred that a student said he no longer wanted to continue with classes if they were not taught through the alternative mode we were working with. But he was convinced of the importance of also learning the language of traditional music notation, so he continued to attend classes, learning well.

b) Musicalization Workshop

With the same locus as the research described earlier, the Musicalization Workshop had students from preschool and 3rd grade. Sound appreciation activities were developed based on the sound history of the luxurious

transatlantic ship of the early 20th century, the Titanic. In total, in both classes, there were ten sessions. The main goal was to bring the piano to the classroom through the two electronic keyboards in the school.

In order to introduce the history of the RMS Titanic ship and its relationship with music, students were presented with images of old and current vessels so that they would know the difference between a boat and a ship. In addition, an older sailing vessel, as well as newer ones were introduced, starting with the steamboat.

As we approached the historic era of the Titanic, images of it were presented to the students to show what it looked like. Similarly, images of the interior of the Olympic twinship that had six pianos onboard were shown.

In the first two sessions with each class, musical auditions were held with the song “My heart will go on” from the movie Titanic. These listening moments were based on Schafer's (2011) proposal, which emphasizes the importance of listening to music through the soundscape of different environments, both in the natural environment (nature) and in the urban environment (city). According to the author:

The soundscape is any field of acoustic study. We can refer to a musical composition, a radio program or even an acoustic environment such as soundscapes. We can isolate an acoustic environment as a field of study, just as we can study the characteristics of a particular landscape (Schafer, 2011, p. 23).

For this activity a multimedia recording was used, aiming to expose the students' interpretation, in drawings made by themselves, after listening to the music. It was also a way of recording what students felt and thought as they enjoyed the piece of music, as, in addition to preschool students, many third graders still had difficulties writing.

Similar to what was developed with the Keyboard Workshop, this musical instrument was gradually introduced in the work with the classes. In order to teach notes and how to locate them on the keyboard, the same process was developed except for student hand drawing, which was set aside due to time optimization and the number of students, 24 preschool students and 24 in the 3rd year.

At preschool, the children showed more interest in knowing and exploring the instrument compared to listening to the teacher's explanations. An attitude, by the way, normal for those who are discovering the world. 3rd-grade students, however, demonstrated more commitment to learning to identify notes on the keyboard as well as learning conventional music theory through two songs, "My Heart Will Go On" and "Closer to You Lord (Mais Perto De Ti, Senhor).

Throughout the sessions, the work with the sound recreation through everyday objects was introduced in both classes. Objects (Figure 3) such as sand-filled glass pots, X-ray films, metal pots, toy assemblies, ceramic plates, plastic pots, stones (carefully selected), mini piano, plaster sculptures, and plastic bottles. All this so that it was possible to practice sound creation based on programmatic music, which aims to tell a story. At the time, the sound story of the Titanic ship was being reconstructed through simple objects that we can easily find in our day-to-day. This activity can be observed in the following image.

Figure 3: Students experimenting with the materials and their sounds (The photograph was taken with prior permission from the school and students’ parents).

Source: author

The objects shown in the previous image helped a third-year student with neurological, motor, and vision impairments understand the shape of the piano, the shape of a ship, and the shape of a heart (song "My Heart Will Go On").

Before starting the work on programmatic music, students watched videos that told the story of the Titanic. It was proposed that they paid attention to the sounds that the ship's structure made. For example, sailing, the bell, the steam coming out of the chimneys, the creaking of the structure during the wreck, among others sounds.

When starting the activity in the preschool class and the third grade class, the students soon assimilated the sound of the two ceramic plates tapping against each other to the sound of the ship's bell. The students, dragging their chairs on the floor, assimilated it to the sound of the ship crashing against the huge iceberg. When scraping a small stone against the plastic toothpick holder, they related it to the sound of smoke coming out of the ship's chimneys.

The same proposal to relate the facts that occurred at the time of Beethoven was carried out with the Titanic, in which the facts that occurred at the time of construction and sinking of the ship (1909-1912) were presented to the students. This was very important because it made the distance between the times and the places where the facts occurred become closer to the students.

In the last activity related to musealization through the sound history of the Titanic, the students were asked to bring home an object of their day-to-day lives that resembled some sound made by the Titanic.

A relationship between historical facts was also made with the 3r d graders. Considering that musician Luiz Gonzaga was born in the year the Titanic sank, the song Asa Branca (1947) was studied. So, the work with ostinato and improvisation, presented by Carl Orff, were used to accompany the melody played on the keyboard by the teacher. Agogô and triangle were used as percussion instruments. At this time, it was instinctive. The students began to drum with their hands in their classes the rhythm that was being performed. As far as Titanic-related activity is concerned, this was the perspective.

In the third grade, the second and last class on that year, the Christmas theme was studied alongside with the keyboard workshop students. The song “Stille Nacht” (1818), with lyrics by Franz Joseph Mohr (1792-1848) and melody by Franz Xaver Gruber (1787-1863), was studied along with percussion instruments and a recording of the song. Small group rehearsals were created because there were many students in the large group.

As Carl Orff (Fonterrada, 2008) explains, ostinato and improvisation were best employed at this time to compose an accompanying rhythm for the performance of Mohr and Gruber's music; percussion musical instruments such as rattle, caxixi jingle, agogo, and triangles were used.

In all, besides these musical instruments, the electronic keyboard, and the voice were used. This demonstrates that musical instruments from around the world can be used on various musical pieces, alternating as a European song, being studied with instruments from Africa, and a Brazilian song with African rhythmic roots being performed on a European instrument.

Morin (2000), in his book entitled “Seven complex lessons in education for the future”, explains a lot about miscegenation, which we often do not realize.

Unity, miscegenation, and diversity must develop against homogenization and closure. Miscegenation is not just the creation of new diversity from an encounter; it becomes, in the planetary process, a product and producer of reconnection and unity. It introduces complexity at the core of mestizo identity (cultural or racial). Certainly, each one can and should, in the planetary age, cultivate poly identity, which allows the integration of family identity, regional identity, ethnic identity, national identity, religious or philosophical identity, continental identity, and earthly identity. But the mestizo, in fact, can find in the roots of its poly identity the familiar, ethnic, national, even continental bipolarity, allowing him or her to constitute in it the fully human complex identity (Morin, 2000, p. 78).

As expressed at the end of the methodological part of this text, Morin (2000) presents this relationship. It can be

understood that the fact of inserting African musical instruments (rattle, caxixi), which originated some Brazilian musical instruments (triangle), as accompaniment in European historical melodies and European musical instruments (keyboard/ piano, and rattle) in a Brazilian musical rhythm with African characteristics, we are promoting something that we can call "musical miscegenation". It is a "marriage" between musical characteristics of two continents, which influenced the creation of music produced in Brazil.

Final considerations

This program developed shows how important is the implementation of music in schools through varied methodologies, often not focused on the traditional musical notation. For that, it is important to consider how each student learns, which is pivotal for effective, efficient and healthy music learning, with a view to developing a taste for musical knowledge.

Reflecting upon the work carried out, the importance of sharing information between students and teachers is clearly understood. Everyone has a wide range of knowledge, which can and should be shared.

In addition, working with different sounds and varied soundscapes, using the body in a creative and productive manner may translate into effective ways of teaching and learning in music.

Finally, the relevance of the increasing and effective insertion of music teaching in Basic Education schools is emphasized because music an important knowledge for the development of a person, therefore, it is a right of all students to have access to music, whether they are children, teenagers or adults.

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