

## Play elements in approaching music education

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**Abstract:** Play, through all its forms and manifestations, triggers and stimulates a series of determining factors for the mental and spiritual health of a human being. Through the complexity and diversity of its actions, the game stimulates creativity, spontaneity, originality, freedom of expression. Through play, man, from the earliest age, develops attention, will and determination. Without any exaggeration, we can say that playing is the most effective way through which the human being enters a relationship with the surrounding world and explores the physical and emotional environment.

The choice of methods of play as a support in the teaching-learning-evaluation activity in music education classes favors communication between teacher and student, at the same time becoming a bridge to the perception of indirect beneficiaries: family and society.

Music is one of the most abstract fields of knowledge. It can either irresistibly attract or, on the contrary, alienate the listener. The music teacher will guide the student by challenging them to think, feel, filter the information, combine it with his own vision and transform it - all in a pleasant, approachable and age- and understanding-appropriate setting. All it takes is a little imagination and lots and lots of patience.

**Keywords:** game, education, music, good practice

### 1. Introduction

Contemporary society is currently facing problems related to a lack of cultural openness, on all levels, to the aesthetic and formative values of art. The newer generations no longer have the patience and interest to gain valuable knowledge and experiences, they no longer have a horizon towards which they aim, but want to obtain everything instantly, even if satisfactions are short-lived. This phenomenon is increasingly stimulated by the digital society we live in. Therefore, let's use the positive elements of this

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transformation of mentality and approach the students with another type of learning, an alternative method to the classic, rigid type of education.

Childhood is a stage of life that we remember with great fondness and nostalgia. Most of the time memories are incomplete, unclear, but what remains is a state of well-being which later accompanies us throughout life. We long for it, and maybe that's why we're happy when we can relive it, even if just through the eyes of our children and grandchildren. We can explain this attraction starting from the physical and material elements, to the state of mental comfort, a consequence of the naivety and joy specific to children, the lack of worries and responsibilities. Even if not all children have a happy childhood, due to various problems, they all have something in common: they PLAY. From the earliest stages of life, with the help of play, children will accumulate information, knowledge, skills – so they will evolve – without being constrained by any educational system.

## **2. But what is PLAY? We are dealing here with three dimensions:**

➤ PLAY is an activity specific to children, without a defined educational goal, and it is spontaneous, without constraints. Being present at most times in early childhood, it provides the young child with the means to discover the surrounding world and is extremely valuable for the child's development.

➤ The GAME is an organized activity, with rules. Unlike play, the game is specific to all ages, from preschool to old age. Games develop the spirit of competition and fair play, precisely because many times they can also fulfill an educational role, having a well-defined purpose and objectives.

➤ ROLE PLAYING offers participants the opportunity to get into the skin of a character, whether real or imaginary, allows analyzing a situation from different perspectives and blurs the boundaries between possible and impossible, due to the fact that we can recreate almost any space, situation or emotion.

Any of the three types above creates a state of well-being and promotes interaction, having a meaningful social role. Both play and games, through all their forms and manifestations, trigger and stimulate a series of determining factors for the mental and spiritual health of the human being. Through the complexity and diversity of its actions, playing stimulates creativity, spontaneity, originality, freedom of expression, attention, willpower and determination. Without any exaggeration, we can say that play is the most effective way through which the human being enters into a relationship with the surrounding world, exploring the physical and emotional environment.

The choice of play methods, as a support in the teaching-learning-evaluation activity within music education classes, favors communication between teacher and student, becoming at the same time a bridge to the perception of indirect beneficiaries: family and society.

In mainstream education, music education is one of the “page two of the catalogue” type subjects. Maybe that's why it is regarded as a class of “relaxation”, it is “unessential”. If this irritates us, it is sometimes understandable. But it also gives us the reason to look for methods and means to offer children as much as possible in a pleasant way, so that learning takes place with minimum effort, but at the same time it is thorough. By resorting to play methods in traditional education, we will certainly attract children to the side of music, and the knowledge and skills acquired will be much more valuable in the long run.

In the following pages, I will present a few proposals for playful activities that I have experienced in various learning situations.

### **3. I would like to be...**

The students sit in a circle. They will assign themselves a character by saying its name accompanied by an adjective and a suggestive movement: “I would like to be... because I am...”. The student on the right will repeat the name, adjective and movement of the one before him, adding their own character, accompanied by the adjective and movement: “You are ... because you are ..., and I would like to be ... because I am...”.

The game continues clockwise, with students repeating everything they have heard so far. The game ends with the first student, who will have to repeat all the statements.

If we are working with few elements (such as the 7 musical notes, for example), they can be repeated but the adjectives and movements that accompany them must differ. It is preferable that the motivation “because” is intrinsically linked to the musical notion in question.

#### **Examples:**

First student: “I'd like to be note mi grade because I'm small (squats)”

The second student: “You're note mi because you're small, (squats down) and I'm note ti because I'm self-confident (beats their fists against their chest)” etc.

or:

“I'd like to be the note mi because I'm on the first line of the staff”/“because I'm the third step in the C major scale”/“because I'm part of the C-E-G arpeggio” (in this case the movement can be replaced by exemplification – intonation of the note/ scale/ arpeggio)

It is an excellent attention and memory game involving both the auditory and visual memory. Even though the students will be scared at first thinking they will not be able to remember so many names, adjectives and movements, they will be surprised to see how well they will do by watching the game unfold. They will notice that, by associating the statements with the movements and expression of the one who appropriated the character/item, they will be able to reproduce them all fairly easily. It can be very helpful if the adjective used starts with the same letter or syllable as the chosen term (as in the example above).

We can use this game both in moments of knowledge fixation, as well as in evaluation. Children will be careful to accurately reproduce the statements and gestures of their colleagues, thus avoiding the nervousness of being evaluated and graded, and repetition and associations support the memory exercise. At the same time, they have to be creative, so that their performance is unique.

#### **4. Symphony of emotion**

Originally, this game encourages the externalization of a state or an emotion: fatigue, joy, fear, etc. A group of 5 students line up in front of the others and mimic that state/emotion according to the teacher's instructions: minimum, moderate, maximum. Another option is for the participants to express this emotion gradually, from minimum to maximum, each of them miming a little extra, so that we get the whole palette of intensities. We can increase the number of participants up to 10, thereby forcing participants to achieve finer “tuning” in the dosage of expressing emotion.

Both as protagonists and as audience, students will apply what they have learned “on paper”, visualize and interpret the concepts taught.

It is an excellent game to teach specific elements of music education:

- the height of the sounds;
- durations or breaks;
- musical nuances;
- tempo;
- periods of music history, etc.

Both as performers or part of the audience, students will apply what they have learned

“pen on paper”, they will visualize and interpret the concepts taught.

#### **5. Are you an artist?**

This is a board game, which I created together with a class of 6th graders. The game board has boxes where you have to move forward until you reach the finish line. In class, students will be divided into 3 or 4 teams, each with a leader - the conductor. In addition to the game board, we will

use flashcards on which various musical tasks are described. In turn, each conductor rolls the dice, draws a card, and in order to advance as many squares on the game board as the dice show, the team will have to solve the task on the card.

### Examples of tasks:

- musical notes on the staff: the team must recognize and interpret that sound;
- names of musical notes: one or more team members must position themselves correctly on a staff drawn with chalk on the floor;
- musical durations or breaks: at the conductor's instructions, the team will position themselves in such a way as to achieve the respective form;
- nuances or tempo elements: the team will perform a simple song, according to indications.

We can form the flashcard deck however we want, with elements from just one learning unit or as a general review. However, the route is sprinkled with a few bonuses or traps:

- the major scale helps you climb the board faster;
- the flat takes you down... one space;
- if you get to the Philharmonic, you will attend a concert – sit for two turns;
- you get lost in the Forest of Dissonances – go back 3 spaces etc.





The teacher can use one game board for all classes, but different flashcards for each level, or challenge the students to make several flashcards (each class can have its own game), with new designs and challenges, thus stimulating the spirit of competition between classes.

## 6. Wanna play against the girls?

The teacher prepares a PowerPoint material on a certain topic, which will include questions structured into four categories plus a “surprise” category. Each question will be hidden behind a score, from 100 to 500 points depending on the difficulty. The participants will answer alternately, one girl and one boy, only once for each student, until the questions are exhausted. If there are more questions than participants, those from the beginning will be able to answer once more. Participants can choose the category of the question, but in the order of their scores. Those who gain most points win. We can give teams the opportunity to choose any question, regardless of score.

This game involves teamwork, choosing a strategy, using knowledge - for the teacher it is an excellent way to check to what extent the class has assimilated what was he/she has taught. Students will be encouraged to cooperate to achieve the best result. Even the less prepared, rather shy students will be driven to participate to help their team win.

Muzica religioasă	Muzica laică (I)	Muzica laică (II)	Renașterea	?
<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
<u>200</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>200</u>
<u>300</u>	<u>300</u>	<u>300</u>	<u>300</u>	<u>300</u>
<u>400</u>	<u>400</u>	<u>400</u>	<u>400</u>	<u>400</u>
<u>500</u>	<u>500</u>	<u>500</u>	<u>500</u>	<u>500</u>

These are just a few examples of fun activities that we can use in class work. The advantages are numerous, because students will be eager to play instead of learning (because that's how they will perceive them), and we will be able to pursue our goal: to teach, consolidate or evaluate.

Of course, there are also drawbacks to this type of approach. Activities based on playful methods are chronophagous, often consuming more time than anticipated. At the same time, the evaluation based on this type of activities, even if it is very attractive for students, is not objective, and the results are difficult to quantify by assigning marks or qualifications.

## 7. Conclusions

Music is one of the most abstract fields of knowledge. It can irresistibly attract or, on the contrary, alienate the listener. With the help of play elements, the music teacher will guide the students, challenging them to think, feel, filter the information, combine it with their own vision and transform it - all in a pleasant setting, close and appropriate to the age and understanding level. All it takes is a little imagination and lots and lots of patience.

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