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Work with a Talented Student – Professional Primary Music Education

*Praca z uczniem zdolnym – profesjonalne kształcenie
muzyczne stopnia podstawowego*

Abstract. The article deals with the problems of working with a student of a primary music school. A student subject to professional music education is the one who has special talents, which constitute the basis for supporting him in the process of music education. A special role in this regard is played by the teacher of the main subject, who, thanks to the form of individual lessons, is able to recognize the educational needs of their pupils and create conditions for their comprehensive development.

Keywords: talented student; primary music education; teacher of the main subject

Abstrakt. W artykule poruszono problematykę pracy z uczniem szkoły muzycznej stopnia podstawowego. Uczeń podlegający profesjonalnej edukacji muzycznej to uczeń posiadający szczególne uzdolnienia, które stanowią podstawę do objęcia go wsparciem w procesie kształcenia muzycznego. Szczególna rola przypada w tym zakresie nauczycielowi przedmiotu głównego, który dzięki formie lekcji indywidualnych ma możliwość rozpoznania potrzeb edukacyjnych swoich podopiecznych oraz stworzenia im warunków do całościowego rozwoju.

Słowa kluczowe: uczeń zdolny; kształcenie muzyczne stopnia podstawowego; nauczyciel przedmiotu głównego

In the mainstream of considerations regarding work with a child, it seems interesting to take up a selected thread in the organization of the education process of students entering the period of late childhood (Brzezińska, Appelt, Ziółkowska 2015, p. 164) and attending primary music schools, institutions offering both artistic and general education, as well as those that offer candidates only an artistic profile (Kędzia 2020, p. 104). In the interesting area of the gifted child, therefore, students attending schools

with a strictly defined profile of artistic education deserve attention. When looking at the organization of the process of professional music education, it is impossible not to notice the role played by the teacher in this process, which is justified by the changes in the social functioning of a child at early school age. The early and middle school age is, as Kamza (2014, p. 26) states, “the only developmental period in which the teacher plays such an important role in the child’s life”. The teacher plays one of the central roles in this period and is treated by the child as a role model (Kamza 2014, p. 26). In the light of the above considerations, in music schools, the teacher of the main subject becomes particularly important for a child, who is treated as a kind of master and authority. It is a kind of commitment and motivation for the teacher to self-development.

The contact of the child with the teacher of the subject takes place practically from the moment of recruitment to the music school. In the light of the law, musically gifted students are verified for a specific type of school on the basis of the so-called suitability test, consisting in “checking musical aptitude and predisposition to learn to play a specific instrument” (Regulation of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage of 9 April 2019 on the conditions and procedure for admitting students to public schools and public art institutions and transferring from one type of school to another, Journal of Laws 2019, item 686). Already at the recruitment stage, contact is made with other teachers of the main subject who sit on the committee. The test takes place in direct contact with the child, it is a kind of dialogue and the initial conversation is about getting to know the reasons why the child wants to learn to play on the first-choice instrument indicated in the questionnaire. Establishing a relationship with the candidate, the way of communicating during the research and formulating instructions are important factors motivating to start studying at a music school and may affect the course of the entire study.

There is no doubt that the task of primary music schools is to develop students’ specific musical abilities. But is the role of a music school teacher limited only to supervising the growth of abilities?

The perspective of the phenomena related to the subject matter taken seems to cover a multitude of issues. It becomes justified to pay attention to selected topics related to the role of the teacher of the main subject in the process of professional education of the primary level: the place of the instrument teacher in the classification of music school teachers, the role of his own artistic activity in the context of teaching the game, the teacher’s influence on the motivation of his students and his personality traits important in building a relationship with the student.

Systematizing the theoretical orientation of approaching the subject of a music school teacher, make it possible to look at the issue in a broader context and make certain locations. For this purpose, it is worth trying to classify teachers of the first-level music schools. Based on the criterion of the nature of educational activities, a general typology can be made:

1. Teachers of compulsory education activities common to all specialties (team activities, e.g. rhythmic, ear training).
2. Teachers of compulsory education for each specialty (group activities, e.g. choir, orchestra, and individual lessons, e.g. an extra piano).
3. Teachers of the main subject (individual lessons, e.g. violin, piano, drums).

As Jemielnik points out, different didactic interactions in each of the groups presented above require different characteristics. “This is due to the fact that acquainting with practical skills, e.g. playing an instrument, practice methods, requires different pedagogical knowledge and qualities than teaching theoretical knowledge, choir or chamber ensemble” (Jemielnik 2014, p. 41). The above observation leads to a reflection on the education of the teacher of the main subject and the path of his professional and artistic career. In addition to having certain qualifications contained in the Regulation of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage of 20 May 2014 on the detailed qualifications required from teachers of art schools, artistic education institutions and teacher training institutions (Journal of Laws 2014, item 784), the teacher of the main subject becomes both an instrument playing instructor for his or her student and an educator. Learning to play any instrument requires the acquisition of issues related to, among others, musical notation and the entire area of topics related to the principles of music, mastering the playing technique and methods of articulation. In the instrument lessons, attention is paid to the correct interpretation of a musical piece, the culture of the game and issues related to public performance. The teacher becomes a kind of guide for the student in the world of music and science, explaining the secrets of technique and interpretation of playing, music theory and instrument construction. It seems reasonable to conclude that the teacher himself should be a concert artist and pedagogue at the same time, hence the considerations on the role of a music school teacher are complemented by reflection on the professional practice of a pedagogue. The teacher-practitioner, teacher-artist is an authority for the musically educated student in the field of transferred knowledge and skills. The artistic activity of the teacher of the main or theoretical subject is the necessary perspective for pedagogical work. Experiencing playing on stage, experiencing your own performances broadens the educational message with the context of a conscious approach to the content taught, also in the case of a theoretical subject. In this spirit, Bogdanowicz recalls the figure of a teacher following the Jaques-Dalcroze method, a teacher who is required to “constantly create, be independent, creative, and learn and teach others through his own experience, because only then can the educator contribute to educate an independent, sensitive and creative student” (Bogdanowicz 2015, p. 15).

Early-school children, taking up new challenges, derive satisfaction from completing activities, selecting methods and means leading to the assumed goal, which gives them the basis for faith in their abilities (Kamza 2014, p. 15) and at the same time motivates them to take further actions. On the basis of the results of observation of students at the initial stage of music education, Nogaj (2013, p. 35) concludes that “the

individual contact of the student with the teacher, actively following the educational and cognitive needs of the child, allows to develop internal motivation to learn music also at higher stages of education”. The teacher, supporting the student in developing their own motivation, can stimulate it in various ways, e.g. strengthen the autonomy by leaving freedom in choosing the repertoire or redirecting attention to the learning process and not the final result (Kaleńska-Rodzaj, Pietras 2014). At this stage, the cooperation of the teacher with the student’s parents also becomes important. In the early years, it happens that a parent participates in the instrument lesson. The purpose of such a solution is to prioritize, develop a rhythm of exercises over the repertoire at home, and correctly follow the teacher’s instructions. Daily contact with the instrument and work on the repertoire help the child learn to be systematic and, consequently, require independence. Successive work brings the child satisfaction from achieving successive small stages in the form of, for example, a mastered range or one of the methods of articulation. Correct habits imply daily motivation, because the observation of children in the early years of a music school shows that they are more likely to exercise every day and less than once every few days, but longer.

Mere motivation on the part of the teacher, even based on the activities described above, is not enough to become an authority for his students. The teacher’s personality traits and attitude also determine it. A kind attitude towards a child, “a warm attitude, a willingness to discover the world of music in front of a child, skillful encouragement to learn it” (Kaleńska-Rodzaj, Pietras 2014, p. 106) encourage early school children to enter the world of music, to the first positive experiences and experiences related to music (Kaleńska-Rodzaj, Pietras 2014). “The teacher strives to arouse and maintain the student’s curiosity, using playful forms of work, creating a friendly atmosphere for getting to know the instrument and experimenting with sound” (Kaleńska-Rodzaj, Pietras 2014, p. 106), no longer conducting authoritarian control over the mistakes of his student/ward, his role is not limited to pointing to imperfections in the area of technical skills. Keeping in mind the master-student relationship in which he becomes a certain role model, the teacher should create psychological and pedagogical situations conducive to building trust. These will give the students space to look for their own solutions in the field of improving their playing or singing skills, adapted to their individual talents. In this context, Jasińska-Żaba (1997, p. 42) draws attention to the teacher’s personality traits, his attitude towards the student, which should be expressed in “readiness to discover all musical dispositions and to stimulate them, as well as finding means of a favorable way of communicating with the student. This favors co-participation in solving problems on the basis of partnership”. Szymanowski, composer, educator and reformer, has already pointed out the role of the teacher as a partner in musical education. In the literature, we can find a statement that a student for Szymanowski was to be a “younger friend” who solves creative problems on his own. Only such work, as a result of which the teacher encourages people to look for new solutions and activates, made pedagogical sense (Markiewicz 1984, p. 45). The

attitude of openness and subjectively treating the student build a strong bond between him and the teacher. It is good if its foundation is also the authority of the educator who, with his own behavior and personality, sets an example for his pupils.

Taking into account the above considerations, it is worth paying attention to the role of the teacher in relation to his influence on the overall development of the student/ward, i.e. on motivation, self-esteem, attitude towards music, preferences and self-esteem (Chmurzyńska 2014). Activities of the teacher of the main subject in the process of educating students of music schools are multidimensional, not limited only to the transfer of the necessary knowledge or shaping skills. There are also the pedagogical, psychological and emotional aspects. As Bissinger-Ćwierz (2016, p. 34) concludes, “only taking into account by teachers-instrumentalists all dimensions of artistic and psychological development guarantees a full, holistic approach to child maturation and thus increases the effectiveness of education in a music school”.

During the full cycle of music education, lasting 17 years (6 years at the first-degree school, 6 years at the second-degree school and obtaining the professional title of musician, and 5 years of studies at the music university (Regulation of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage of 6 September 2017 on the core curriculum for education in artistic education professions in public art schools, Journal of Laws 2017, item 1793), the student in this period is a teacher of the main instrument (Chmurzyńska 2014). The teacher himself, being at the same time an artist and a teacher, is a guide in the world of art, emotions and attitudes. and thus, with great responsibility for the musical preferences and further musical education of his pupils, especially since the memory of the master is vivid throughout the musician’s professional life and affects his future career.

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