MUSIC HISTORY – MORE THAN AN EDUCATIONAL FIELD, A WAY OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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"Music is a moral law. It gives a soul to the universe, wings to thinking, boldness to imagination, charm to youth, life and joy to all things. It is the essence of order, uplifting the soul towards all that is good, just and beautiful."

Plato

SUMMARY. Guiding ourselves by the contemporary issues of adjacent domains, we have acknowledged the existence of some interesting points of view and an orientation towards a new educational paradigm of experiential type. Education, which is the foundation for human development, for the determination of the personalities and the evolution of the society in which we live, was in the middle of the scientists' attention of all times, from antiquity to present day. Starting from modern research we focus our attention on the music's potency and influence. But appealing to the wide potential of music history, we are bringing forward in this current study a proposal that places at its central point the resources that this field includes and the way that these can be exploited inside a personal development strategy. This strategy is concerned with accomplishing personal and professional achievements, with quality of life enhancement and the development of a better, more evolved society.

Keywords: self-knowledge, conscience, personal development, education, music history, music, achievement, change.

Starting from Plato's quote, we'll first define the segment or the action plan of this research, followed by a further analysis of the motivations behind the choice of topic, a proposal of a work template through which all

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willing can reach a superior level of experience through self-knowledge and emotional self-analysis. In the end we're going to offer a presentation of the potential result, of the utilities and benefits gained through this process.

Numerous studies have been made and countless articles, books and dissertations have been written on music therapy or the hidden features of music, on its beneficial or less so, effects. The main objective of all these studies was the exploration of the positive or negative effects that music has on the human body or on the human psychological state, music's active of passive influence on the improvement of body, emotional or mental health, on human's social, psychological or spiritual behaviour. Music is used in the treatment of several diseases, especially by way of listening sessions of classical music, or instrumental or vocal music, when the targeted issues deals with the expression, communication or relationship improvement, through the development of creativity. Both cases deal with music's components: rhythmic, melodic or even rhythmic-melodic. Less information is found, close to none, when it comes to the harmonic component, mentioned by Plato in his *Republic* as part of the chants.[2] The same famous antiquity philosopher knew even from back then that education can harmonize the parts of the soul between them, while describing the portrait of the "righteous man", by which he meant the typology of the human being in harmony with life and its emotions, a harmony created and displayed from personal to societal level. We'll begin from the same idea, formulated by Carl Gustav Jung, that "the development of personality through education has nowadays become a pedagogical ideal…"[3] to arrive at imagining a new possibility of development for our own personalities, one that includes the musical experiment, in the form of musical information and audition.

We have commenced our research from the yet unexplored potential of music and the features that music history promises in the personal development of the contemporary human being, by way of crossing from the its informative character to the formative one, as a consequence and general tendency of emphasis and exploitation of the latter, especially in the institutionalized medium, where education's objectives are represented by aptitude and skill growth in a certain domain or in a certain area of activity. Following this train of thought, we are joining the specialists in sociology, psychology, philosophy, medicine and economy, by wanting to create an

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[2] Platon, *Republica (The Republic).* cărţile I-IV, ediţie bilingvă, vol. I, Editura Teora, Bucureşti, copyright, 1998, p. 301.

[3] Jung, Carl, Gustav, *Puterea sufletului – Antologie, A treia parte, Psihologie individuală şi socială analitică. Temeiuri (Power of the Soul – Anthology, The Third Part, Individual and Social Analitical Psychology. Arguments),* Editura Anima, Bucureşti, 1994, p. 11.

arc from the study of human dysfunctions to the study of human abilities, but especially towards the process of learning, through conscious decision, of skills like empathy, compassion, happiness, that aren't necessarily taught in school. We consider that this process would represent a real help for educational systems both in the development of abilities that lead to personal or professional achievements, but also in the training of individuals able to adapt and orient to the present time's multiple and unpredictable changes, achievements that would represent an upgrade to the society as a whole. The satisfaction of a fulfilled life rests inside personal accomplishments and according to different authors that consider personal development to be a new educational paradigm, "success implies: social skills, emotional and cultural intelligence, psychological equilibrium and maturity, creativity, flexibility and adaptability."[4]

It is to these "attributes" that we were referring earlier when we came with the proposal of an incursion into this wonderful domain of music, and discover the encrypted information of the immense history of universal music, convert it into the unconventional and continuous form of education, highly regarded nowadays, that of personal development, through a new way: music history. As a didactic field, music history is a complex discipline, which offers both a large source of information from the musical domain, but at the same time, through the knowledge it contains, music history offers information from other interconnected domains like architecture, mathematics, geography, religion, politics, sociology, psychology, medicine and so on. On the other hand, as a work method, it implies a harmonious meeting between its theoretical side and its practical one that can be applied, which is the audition. Auditions are used both in the educational process as well as in passive music therapy. In order to achieve optimal results, a conscious audition is required; it is the process of raising awareness that stands at the foundation of this activity's success.

Starting from the idea that music represents a discernible universal language, and because of the emotional side that it brings, we propose a new vision of its meaning and potency, of it's unravelling from a different musicological and psychological point of view. We propose a new possible perspective of adding value to it, owed to the multitude of information that the theoretical side of music history includes (basically, all the information related to music), on the information that it can reveal about ourselves, by acquiring it and thus associating it to certain contexts.

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[4] Badea, Mariana - Cosmovici, Ion - Mecu, Carmen-Maria - Mitrofan, Laurenţiu, *Dezvoltarea personală - competenţă universitară transversală (Personal Development – Cross Academic Competence),* Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 2007, p. 15.

The rich and varied content found in the history of music can be transformed into an extremely useful tool in the personal development of certain different groups of individuals, no matter the age or occupation, from pupils, students to adults of different professions, keen on living a fulfilling life, and eager to know more about music, and through this knowledge, eager to explore the hidden parts of their own inner universe. It is at this point that the practical, experimental side of music history – the conscious musical audition –holds the main role in the deciphering of the inner emotional universe of those striving for self-knowledge and self-development, where a great importance is held, just like in the case of music history classes, by the conscious audition of the selected musical fragments. Everybody can say that they listen to music daily, but this is not done in a deliberate way. In this case, most of the time we're talking about listening to music at home or inside commercial spaces, at radio or while at work, and it is being reduced to the perception of a melo-rhythmic background, whose rhythmic component has a role in stimulating the body's physical functions, and most of the times it boosts the activities of the person listening as it is being experienced as an invigorating sensation, rising the levels of inner dynamics and supporting the everyday activities. If it isn't the case of its rhythmic component, then it surely is related to the message; musical text being the one that transmits the ideas to which the listener relates to.

In contrast to the musical sounds, whose practical application and exploitation started a long time ago, during the ancient period whose precise date is lost in the mists of time, music history includes in its theoretical side information regarding the musical styles of different eras, their social characteristic or biographical data on musicians and composers. Following carefully crafted comparative analysis it can easily be determined that, not for a few times, the character particularities of great musicians are reflected in their composition. A good example of this is the comparative examination of Verdi's and Wagner's work.[5] It is common that specific musical forms and genres, particular to different periods in history, or important events in the life of creators, have had an effect on their artistic work, as well as in establishing certain preferences for specific expressions inside different temporal and social contexts. Every work of art, of greater or smaller scale, carries a certain coding, a personal and temporal mark. We could associate the temporal mark to the stylistic terminology, by referring to the most well known eras in music history and their distinct stylistic features, by quoting Vasile Iliuţ, who says that "…humanity came to know many styles,

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[5] Ştefănescu, Ioana, *O istorie a muzicii universale, vol. IV (A History of Universal Music, vol. IV).* Editura Fundaţiei Culturale Române, Bucureşti, 2002, pp. 103-196, 293-398.

reflecting and representing as many stages and moments in the culturally-artistic development of the human species"[6] and that "style makes a mark on the product, on the artworks categorized by profile, era and allegiance."[7] The style of an era includes the social ambiance of those times, determined by the living conditions, the socio-political troubles, that later transposed into emotions and feelings.

The personal mark demands a more profound examination of the composers' biographies and work catalogue, where an important part is held by the connections made according to this information. The next step is to observe their utility in the process of personal development as well as their applicability to different circumstances. Even if the creators of these works of art were contemporary to each other, their own experiences and their distinct personalities bore a distinctive, original and unmistakable mark on their creations.

Therefore, by further analyzing and trying to better understand ourselves, we arrive at the conclusion that each personality is unique, affirming itself through behaviours like a unique style, like a definitive blueprint, that includes abilities and disadvantages, strengths and weaknesses, of which, if we become aware of, we can decide how to further act upon so we can achieve the desired results, that will bring fulfilment to our lives, that would inspire and push us towards accomplishments, bringing satisfaction, well being, health and a content life in an evolved society.

Unlike the other diverse therapies based on music, on melotherapy, or other forms of art-therapy that include music or its components which appeared in the last decades and address troubled or disabled persons, **personal development** shows an important distinction. It addresses psychologically healthy individuals, having an efficient and productive work capacity, living in harmonious relation to the environment, in good physical, spiritual and social shape, showing good adaptation skills to societal change, open to knowledge and self-improvement, found in a state of dynamic equilibrium and capable of spontaneous activity.

To define personal development as clearly as possible and outline its advantages, both for the individual and for society, and to further understand the importance of the individual and its way of thinking and living inside the society, we're going to make a parallel to nature, the life sustaining environment, where the tendency towards integrity and unity is ever present. Thus, personal development assumes a new orientation, towards progress, "a field of knowledge and managerial and psychological intervention that has

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[6] Iliuţ, Vasile, *O carte a stilurilor muzicale (A Book on Musical Styles),* vol. I, Editura Academiei, Bucureşti, 1996, p. 12.
[7] Idem.

been internationally present during the last thirty years, especially in the USA, as a true social and educational policy towards the advancement of professional and social success and psychological well-being."[8]

In order to examine the activity of personal development and to follow, along the pages of this study, the way its objectives can be reached through the use of music history, we further list some of them:

- self-improvement and individualization, by which we understand the development and fulfilling of inner potential, and the integration and understanding of personal problems;
- awareness in observing, determining and gaining rational control over emotions and actions;
- self-tolerance as a positive attitude towards oneself, especially the tolerance of critique and rejection;
- problem solving through acquiring understanding of how to look for solutions and finding the best ones;
- psychological education through acquiring techniques of behavior understanding and control;
- acquiring of social abilities having an important role in creating relationships, as: maintaining eye contact, conversation technique or anger management;
- cognitive change through the modification or the complete removal of irrational beliefs;
- behavioral modification through the change or the replacement of non-adapted or destructive behavioral models;
- development: meaning working with skills, abilities, conscience or knowledge that will help the person confront social inequalities;
- attaining an enduring personality, with a high level of activity engagement, with a good internal control on its activities, with a perspective on the world that makes it intelligible, predictable and coherent, which regards itself as having means to actively influence its own life situations, to which stress is a challenge, and which actually perceives less stress, having a sense of purpose in this world.

All these objectives have as a main and final purpose the triumph in all aspects of individual and social life.

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[8] Badea, Mariana - Cosmovici, Ion – Mecu, Carmen-Maria - Mitrofan, Laurenţiu, *Dezvoltarea personală - competenţă universitară transversală (Personal Development – Cross Academic Competence),* Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 2007, p. 9.

Starting from the idea that "the process of personal development is the key to an efficient and dynamic open society (…)"[9], we suggest using music history as a possible tool in this process. The argument sustaining this is the following: this tool represents the ideal help in attaining the personal development objectives, through the conjunction of its two components, the theoretical one with the practical one. An extremely important role is held here by the associations and connections that the client can make with his or her musical memory. In this regard, it can come in handy a questionnaire on the person's musical knowledge, memories of pleasant or less pleasant moment associated to musical moments or music audition; favourite music genres listened to in certain environments or situations, at certain events, favourite melodies, taking part in musical events or meeting different persons or musicians at these events.

Due to the fact that the people targeted by personal development are healthy individuals, who wish to gain some results or performances in a certain domain, in the beginning group meetings or workshops can be organized, because the group work methods are different than individual counselling.

To enable the participants' access to the information stored in their memory or subconscious, we suggest as a work method the following of two important stages. The first stage deals with making them familiar to elementary notions and concepts of personal development, while the second one points to theoretical notions of music history, as: the main stylistic eras, the stylistic characteristics of music history eras, musical genres, representative figures, musicians, composers belonging to different stylistic eras, specific tones and musical instruments, aspects of the theoretical side.

The brainstorming sessions will be used to direct the reproductive-type memory and the mechanical thinking to a more flexible and adaptable thought process, by encouraging the participants to make associations, discoveries and to create connections. Teamwork brings great satisfactions because of each individual contribution defines the image of the whole. The group members' degree of involvement and the dynamic of their participation is directly proportional to their enthusiasm and satisfaction.

It is also at this stage that the musical auditions take place, from previously selected tracks, in order to follow the participant's level and their essential problems and discover the best way to meet them. This means an analysis of the perceived fragments, with the help of the theoretical information that have been underlined through the brainstorming activity, to which will be added new information acquired this time from each of the group's members,

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[9] Badea, Mariana - Cosmovici, Ion - Mecu, Carmen-Maria - Mitrofan, Laurenţiu, *Op. cit.,* p. 9.

understanding again that distinctive judgment constitutes the most important component of our identity, being determined by lasting components, and not by the changing ones.

In order to obtain a feeling of identity it is mandatory that we focus on our own person, discovering our own emotions and the ones of the people around us by emotional validation, and so receiving a helping hand in the clarification of feelings, emotions or confused emotional states. The consequence is the possibility to better understand our life experiences and to adequately adapt to them.

The dialogue of assessment of the musical fragments represents the most important moment in personal expression, as it's influenced by the subjective perception degree or the musical receptiveness capacity which differ from one person to another, based on a series of factors which are related to personal experiences and personalities. Appreciating the audience is conditioned by the capacity of tolerating different opinions. A very important factor in personal development is teaching tolerance for different views, which helps to maintain the personal identity and learn the empathic communication. This stage of the audition, the acknowledgement, represents the most important phase.

By becoming aware of our attitude and our perspective we can make the best life choices, by knowing what works for us and what doesn't. Empathic communication is a way of creating efficient relationships to the ones around us, by respecting the right of the other person to have different convictions, feelings or actions, while at the same time assuming the right to freely express ourselves, to speak out what we think and feel, as well as to accept the different opinions.

Trying in a first stage to define the identity of each participant, we'll then further try to outline the group's identity, and along with that to outline what problems the group might have, and further work on that. It is at this stage as well, that the associations and connections made by the participants will uncover precious information on the individuality of the persons in the group and the group's personality. The theoretical information and the musical auditions will also have a role in blending together the group. Once aware of the situation, we'll define the goals and the action plan to address the problem.

Starting from Jung's outlook on the human vision of the surrounding world and the evolution of human's conscious according to the changes in this vision[10] – done only through having a different attitude, or by bringing up the topic of the cave myth, we'll do an outline and a reconstruction of the

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[10] Jung, Carl, Gustav, *Op. Cit.*, p. 11.

expectations, taking a look on features like: denial or self-acceptance, the sense of self-worth, relationship co-dependence, emotional intelligence, where music has again an important role, which is to open the heart. One more time, musical audition represent the ideal way to becoming aware of one's own emotions. In the process of personal development, it is very important to make a distinction between academic intelligence (IQ) – an ability that refers to logical thinking and is being acquired in school, and emotional intelligence, whose level of structure is being defined by the emotional content (EQ)[11], basically two forms of knowledge, one relying on rationality, and the other on affectivity. A great share and value in the creation of a personal development plan is held by emotional intelligence which infers the fulfilment of three conditions: awareness of own emotions, awareness of own modalities of personal emotion management and the understanding of the emotions of other people or empathy, that can be learned and developed permanently during a lifetime. If acquired, EQ includes the ability to monitor both personal and the others' emotions, to make a difference between them and to use the information to guide the thought and action pattern of other people (Mayer & Salovey, 1993)[12]. Help to those wanting it can be offered by working on a scale of emotions, that covers both the negative and the positive emotions, from low-frequency ones like fear, sadness and depression to higher frequency ones like joy, freedom, love and peace[13].

Music represents one of the most well known methods of being aware of personal feelings, and that's being done, as I've mentioned earlier, through conscious musical audition. Emotional control is the ability to use emotional self-awareness in order to become flexible and to positively direct our behaviour in difficult situations. Contrary to some statements, all felt emotions can be considered to be good for our development and our spiritual ascension, even if they're positive or negative, because they're all transmitting something about what's important to us, about our values and our needs, about what's good or what's bad in our lives. The most important thing in the monitoring of our daily emotions

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[11] Goleman, Daniel, *Inteligenţa emoţională, ediţia a III-a (Emotional intelligence, 3rd edition),* traducere din limba engleză de Irina-Margareta Nistor, Editura Curtea Veche, Bucureşti, 2008, pp. 351-362.

[12] http://www.unh.edu/emotional_intelligence/EI%20Assets/Reprints...EI%20Proper/EI1993%20 Editorial%20on%20EI%20in%20Intelligence.pdf

[13] Cosnier, Jacques, *Introducere în psihologia emoţiilor şi a sentimentelor (Introduction to the psychology of emotions and feelings),* traducere de Eliza Galan, Editura Polirom, Iaşi, 2002, pp. 48-49.

is being aware of them, and then using this information to treat them seriously and to decipher the message that they convey. This can begin with the conscious audition of different musical fragments, generating positive and negative emotions, followed by the overlooking of day-to-day emotions. Once they appear we can continue the observation process, by associating them if necessary to things or events.

Further on, we can pass to a different level, to the discovery of our own convictions. Discovering personal limitative convictions can easily and efficiently be done with the help of music, by evoking our own personal music preferences. Because of the multitude of music genres, we can rapidly and practically make a change of paradigm, by starting to allow our conversation partner to present his or her point of view, by further asking for clear statements and further intervening by presenting a context or an attractive characteristic of an unattractive genre. We'll change a restrictive paradigm to an inspirational one, thus opening new opportunities from a direction where previously was a roadblock. Likewise, if someone finds itself in a dead-end situation, it's useless to look for a solution that has been proven to be worthless; therefore we'll begin a reconfiguration of the way we begin to solve the problem, to rethink the framework, actions that usually lead to a fresh insight of things. We commonly have a tendency to categorize things according to the way we have perceived them in the past. Often times, by changing the everyday standards of perception, we create more options for our lives, because by looking at that situation from a different point of view, we also change the way we react in life. We can change the mental representation and perceptions of something and in an instant, if we succeed, change our state of mind, our behaviour and our actions. When a person has a bad experience, the repugnant thing is actually his or her response to that experience. Our way of changing the answer is by understanding that the answer in itself isn't grounded on the sensory experience, but on the interpretation we give it. And if we don't have the power to change the events in our lives, we have the power to attribute them a frame which is convenient to ourselves, by changing its meaning, because thought belong only to us, and we can anytime change a thought that is provoking discomfort, to a more positive one. Modifying the perception will determine different reactions and behaviours. Music history allows us in this case a display of the context of origin of some different musical genres, as well as their rendering framework; religious in the case of a mass, or aristocratic in the case of a minuet. We can ask the participants to imagine the execution of the two musical genres inside their

rendering spaces, and then to switch only the spaces and imagine a mass sang at a birthday party and a minuet danced inside a church, and then describe what they think about each case. If for the usual frame of render they shall describe a pious or a cheerful attitude, when the frames interchange their reaction will be hilarious.

Anchoring is a technique used in clinical psychology consisting in associating a state of mind to an object, a person or a place. This could be easily and efficiently used in the process of personal development through music, taking into account that a melody can be tied to a pleasant memory, that generates a certain good feeling, and will bring the same state every time the tune is being listened to, being thus transformed into a sound anchor. Listening to this melody can be associated to the moments where the person wants to relive the good feeling associated to the melody, as for example the moment of meeting or building a relationship with another person. It is important that these moments are associated to a positive energy anchor, in order for the ensuing relationship to be tied to that state of mind generated by the anchor.

We further present a short list of the results that can be gained by using music theory for personal development:

- the acquiring of knowledge and diverse information about music, of the ability to value them in personal interest to attain certain goals and professional or relational objectives;
- self-knowledge and deeper knowledge of the others, awareness of personal emotions, knowledge of strengths and weaknesses and the ability to use them accordingly;
- change of the limiting convictions, extension of the area of musical knowledge and preferences;
- ease of problem solving, and solution-orientation in situations that otherwise would have been considered to be impossible;
- change of the restrictive paradigm with the stimulating paradigm, in order to modify the state of inconvenient things;
- working with emotions, changing a state of mind with the help of musical audition.

All these results have as their main objective the creation of a new, different and better future, filled with positive experiences.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to help the youth, but not only them, to learn using a wider range of methods and contexts then those being imposed until now, to become more efficient, independent and motivated in the process of self-education, to understand the process of learning as a process of self-knowledge necessary for personal and social evolution, to make connections between information and to relate them to a larger context, to define immediate and long term objectives according to their personal abilities, to take decisions according to their strengths and weaknesses, to make use of knowledge when reaching for self imposed goals, to plan and assume responsibility their personal learning process and to take active measures in order to make it more efficient.

Now, being aware of the influence that music can have on our choices and our feelings, personal development through music comes to meet the persons willing to live a beautiful and fulfilled life, in a pleasant environment, where positive energies are generated, determining successful events and bringing satisfaction and joy to life.

Translated by Cornelia Stamatin

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