



THE NEW MODEL FOR MUSIC EDUCATION – THERAPEUTIC APPROACH: WHY AND HOW?

Marit Möistlik
Tallinn University
Lai 13, 10133 Tallinn, ESTONIA
marit.moistlik@tlu.ee

Abstract

Music could be seen as a versatile instrument in people's lives - its powers and various functions (including therapeutic application) have been widely discussed. Several studies, however, present the fact that music inside of school and outside is not an organic whole for pupils, especially for adolescents (Harvgreas, 2011; Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall, & Tarrant, 2003; Liimets & Mäesalu, 2011). In a nutshell, therapeutic approach to music education acknowledges inborn (natural) musicality, which, supported by a music teacher, could help establish lifelong involvement with music and therefore gives opportunities to the individual to enhance one's well-being through music.

Key Words: Inborn musicality, music teacher, lifelong involvement with music, therapeutic approach, well-being.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to introduce a new model for therapeutic approach in music education (MTAM) and discuss its relevance and necessity (=why?) as well as feasibility (=how?). An introductory overview of the model for therapeutic approach in music education is given in the article "The model for therapeutic approach in music education" (Möistlik, 2011). Therefore, this article focuses on the further clarification of the necessity and viability of the model. It also addresses the concept of innate (natural) musicality, emphasises the role of a music teacher in the MTAM model and discusses possible obstacles to the implementation of the model.

Music is regarded as a natural part of human development, which is testified by the fact that there is no known culture without music (Walker, 2005). Music has also a unique and necessary role in education, because it allows insights into a person's inner world (Hodges, 2005). Since, for various reasons, music has been appreciated in every culture and society throughout the Western history, it has always been a necessary component in children's education (Mark, 2002, 1). Music can mean much more than just a note or a beautiful melody – music can play a symbolic role in human life in both positive and negative sense, which was expressively revealed by a study conducted in Sweden on the topic "*Strong experiences with music*" (SEM) (Gabrielsson, 2011).

Early and intensive musical activity in the classroom has a positive effect on children's personality development, allowing them to achieve skills and abilities that go far beyond the purely musical framework. According to Nöcker-Ribaupierre and Wöfl (2010), this serves the process of becoming a personality or individuation, facilitates intelligence, creativity, social skills, and supports integration, which in turn allows the development of reliable self-esteem and self-image. However, studies carried out in Estonia show that music lessons more likely than not create barriers and obstacles to endorsing pupils' innate musicality and lifelong involvement with music (Möistlik, 2009; Möistlik & Rütel, 2011; Möistlik, Liiväär & Rütel, 2012).

THE MODEL OF THERAPUETIC APPROACH IN MUSIC (MTAM)

MTAM relies on the assumption that everyone is musical, i.e. being musical is intrinsic to all people (Edwards & Hodges, 2007; Hallam, 2009; Pavlicevic, 1997; Perret, 2005). Nonetheless, we cannot overlook the fact that musicality is difficult to unambiguously define. There are narrower and wider definitions, which are not all pedagogically constructive, causing numerous problems in music education due to their ambiguity. The clear manifestation of innate musicality mentioned above is closely connected to the person's environment. All homes do not offer an environment needed for the activation of a child's musicality (see also Mõistlik, 2010), but fortunately in the majority of countries compulsory music lessons at general education schools still survive today. In Estonia music lessons are also compulsory during the entire period of study (students aged 7 to 18). MTAM is primarily intended for the context of compulsory music lessons of school environment, however, the idea of the model can be equally implemented also in preschool and higher education as well as hobby education.

In summary, the model for therapeutic approach in music education includes four components: (1) innate (natural) musicality, (2) music teacher's support, (3) lifelong involvement with music and (4) emotional wellbeing, the interrelationships of which are illustrated by Figure 1:

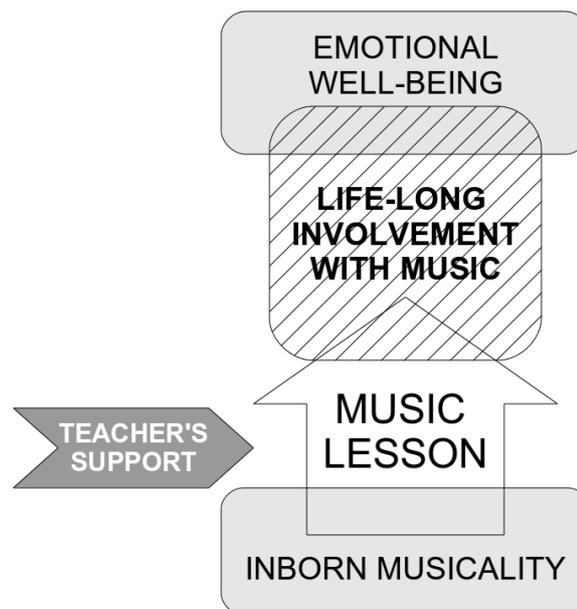


Figure 1: The model for therapeutic approach in music education.

As stated above, the innate (natural) musicality is intrinsic in all humans. Yet it is important to realise that students come to music lessons with very different experience of implementing musicality. This depends on students' home (family) background, which may be engaged with music on a daily basis or, vice versa, not engaged with music at all. The results concerning the four different profiles of musical behaviour (see Mõistlik, 2010) are illustrated by Figure 2, which schematically presents the musical atmosphere of students' family (input), school music lesson and music teacher's role as a shaper of musical behaviour (filter) and musical behaviour in adulthood (output):

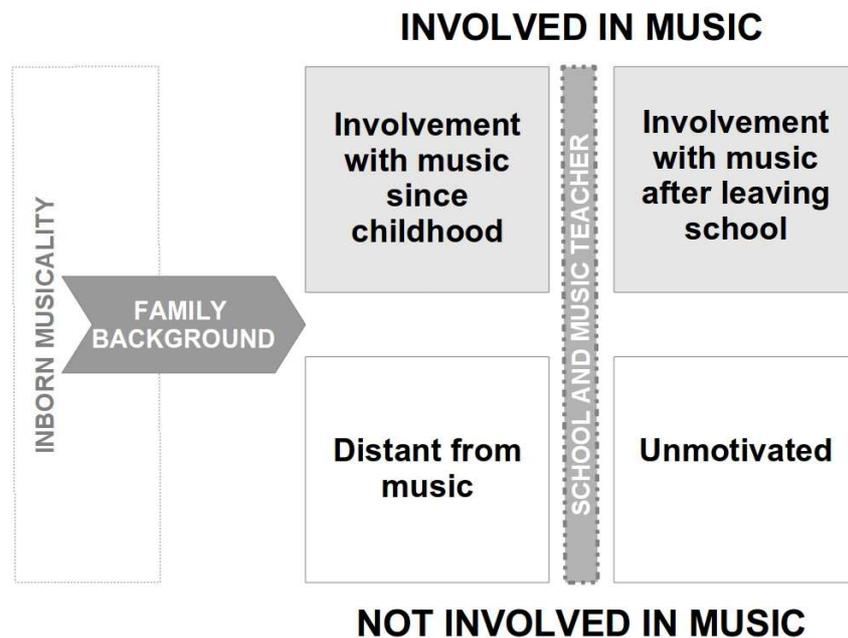


Figure 2: Four profiles of musical behaviour (Möistlik, 2010).

While standing in front of a class as a music teacher, the first impression may be that some students are “very musical” (musically “talented” or “skilful”) and others “unmusical” (or musically “non-gifted”). However, the author agrees with Mills (2005, 2) that we all have a musical potential – the rudiments that, according to Tafuri (2008, 122), are manifested in all people. All people start their life being musically talented, i.e. with a “normal” genetic musical ability. Once again, it is important to realise that only those whose development is facilitated by their environment’s very positive and stimulating interaction (at both home and school), education and many other important factors (including individual’s personal interest in engagement with music) – only those develop their full potential in music.

Therefore, music teacher’s role is extremely important in MTAM, since through the teacher’s feedback and assessments students perceive their musical development and receive reflections on their musicality during the entire period of study. This also means that a music teacher may be the key person, whose support and positive attitude “switch” students’ innate musicality from passive mode to active mode. Passive mode is regarded by the author as a person’s way of thinking where the innate musicality is negatively formulated (“I’m not musical”, “Music is not for me”, “I don’t have a musical ear”, “I don’t have a singing voice”, etc.), which essentially limits or prevents the desire to participate in various musical activities and areas related with music.

Compared to verbal relationship that takes place in the majority of other lessons, musical relationship is more primitive while being considerably more vulnerable (Priestley, 1975, 223), and thus music lessons and making music allow the development of a special teacher-student as well as student-student relationship. That the teacher-student relationship is important and should not be imposed in the process of learning is also emphasised by the authors of the book *“Therapeutic Education. Working alongside troubled and troublesome children”*, Cornwall and Walter (2006). Students perceive teaching styles primarily through teachers’ activities/teaching methods (Poom-Valickis, 2003), and when teachers’ activities or teaching methods do not support the safe development of the vulnerable musical relationship, it may result in students’ essentially unjustified exclusion from music and the development of a negative self-image (Whidden, 2008), which was discussed above.

IMPORTANCE (WHY?) AND APPLICATION (HOW?)

Next, we will look at the significance, necessity and implementation of the model, and potential obstacles. Why is the implementation of this model important? From the point of view of a music teacher, it is important to realise that many homes and families do not support children's musical development and the manifestation of their innate (natural) musicality. When children go to school, they become engaged with music in the context of compulsory music lessons independent of their prior musical background. What happens to this engagement henceforward is already the matter of an approach. The author's study on the effect of the music lessons of general education school on adults' musical behaviour (Mõistlik, 2009; 2010) clearly showed how essential music teachers' support is in the activation of students' natural musicality, especially when a student's family background lacks any engagement with music. This activation allows students to become aware of their musical potential ("*I can/ am allowed/ am able to also make music/sing!*") and apply it creatively in very different situations. The above study revealed that such process led students to music also after school leaving and the majority of the members of the university choir had relied on their positive prior experience when joining the choir. Even if after school leaving adolescents do not actively engage in music, they are open to music and have a positive musical self-image, which, among other things, may facilitate active music making in the future. In addition, one should not forget the opportunity to relieve stress with music (listening to music, music making, singing), which according to an Estonian study (Rüütel & Pill, 2008) is used usually or often by three quarters of students and two thirds of respondents who have left school.

On the other hand, those who had experienced their music teacher's negative attitude and lack of support to their innate musicality, felt uneasy and anxious before their music lessons at school and as adults did not regard themselves as people who could express themselves through music. Nevertheless, there were those who, in spite of the negative memories from their school music lessons, had independently begun to activate and explore their musicality in adulthood, but with certain reservations. For example, they had started learning on their own how to play a musical instrument, but because of the negative experience they had had, did not even dare or wish to consider singing. Whidden (2008) describes a similar situation where the comments made by the music teacher have robbed people of their "own voice" in both childhood and adulthood. However, singing can, and often does, offer positive experiences that help to develop a balanced emotional world and reduce tensions, depression, stress, fear. According to Sepp (2005), teachers' task is to create an atmosphere where a child dares to be free and experiment with his or her voice. At the same time, teachers have to consider students whose singing development is modest compared to others at a particular point in time to prevent them from feeling musically worthless and excluded.

What is innovative in MTAM? One of the novel moments is getting to know and acknowledging that the effect of a music lesson lasts considerably longer than the music lesson or the acquisition of secondary education in general. The positive or negative reinforcement of the musical "self" in music lessons has a significant impact on a person's musical behaviour in adulthood. Strong experience gained from music (including music lessons) is powerfully revealed by Gabrielsson's (2011) study, which was mentioned already in the introduction, where the music lesson and/or music teacher has an important role in generating strong experience in both positive and negative ways.

What are potential obstacles? The author considers as the first obstacle music teachers' comprehension of musicality, which, according to a study carried out in Estonia (Mõistlik & Selke, 2011), may still be too narrow and traditional to understand the concept of innate (natural) musicality. For example, in terms of the narrow concept of musicality, the inability to carry a tune (singing out of tune) is regarded as an indicator of non-musicality. Nevertheless, it is important to realise that often inability to carry a tune may be due to deep anxiety, the fear of not singing in tune, which in turn contributes to singing out of tune (Pinkerboer, 2007). However, recently a number of studies have been carried out in this area (e.g. Malloch & Trewarthen, 2009; McPherson, 2006), which confirm a significant widening of the concept of musicality, viewing musicality as an inherent human ability to communicate through and by means of music.



The second obstacle is time constraint. In Estonia a lesson lasts 45 minutes and at basic and secondary school music lessons take place once a week. In other European countries the common frequency of music lessons is also one lesson a week. Adding a large number of students in a class, it is easy to understand why in some respect it is more convenient for music teachers to use the narrower (more traditional) concept of musicality and view some students as musically incompetent, whose development does not deserve any lesson time since “they are not musical”.

How exactly can the model be implemented in a music lesson? What does it require from a teacher or teacher training to put the model for therapeutic approach in music education into effect? How to train future music teachers and offer refresher courses to the practising teachers to ensure that in their lessons students are encouraged to explore their musical “self”? These questions definitely need thorough investigation so that the model presented in this article would not remain abstract but would be carried out in practice.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, therapeutic approach to music education means that pupils can find themselves and their innate musicality, and music in the widest sense (music as any meaningful, purposeful, organized sound, noise and sound experience), with teacher’s support and encouragement. Such an approach would help to justify the mandatory nature of music as a subject in Estonian schools (and elsewhere) and on the other hand to open up its potential to lead to lifelong involvement with music.

Acknowledgments: This article was supported by the European Social Fund.

WJEIS’s Note: This article was presented at International Conference on New Trends in Education and Their Implications - ICONTE, 26-28 April, 2012, Antalya-Turkey and was selected for publication for Volume 2 Number 2 of WJEIS 2012 by WJEIS Scientific Committee.

REFERENCES

- Bunt, L. (1994). *Music Therapy – An Art Beyond Words*. London: Routledge.
- Cornwall, J., & Walter, C. (2006). *Therapeutic education: Working along troubled and troublesome children*. London: Routledge
- Edwards, R. D, & Hodges, D. A. (2007). Neuromusical Research: An Overview of the Literature. In: W. Gruhn, F. Rauscher (eds.), *Neurosciences in Music Pedagogy* (pp.1-25). New York: Nova Biomedical Books.
- Gabrielsson, A. (2011). *Strong Experiences with Music. Music is much more than just music*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Green, L. (2008). *Music, Informal Learning and the School: A New Classroom Pedagogy*. UK; Ashgate
- Hallam, S. (2009). Musicality. In: S. Malloch, C. Trevarthen (eds.), *Communicative musicality* (pp. 93-110). Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hargreaves, D. J. (2011) Intercultural perspectives on formal and informal music learning. *Dedica revista de educação e humanidades*, 1, 53-66.
- Hodges, D. A. (2005). Why Study Music? *International Journal of Music Education*, 23(2), 111-115
- Lamont, A., Hargreaves, D. J., Marshall, N. A., & Tarrant, M. (2003). Young people’s music in and out of school. *British Journal of Music Education*, 20(3), 229–241.
- Liimets, A., & Mäesalu, M. (eds.) (2011). *Music inside and outside the school*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.



Malloch, S. & Trewarthen, C. (eds.) (2009). *Communicative musicality. Exploring the Basis of Human Development*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Mark, M. L. (2002). *Music Education. Source Readings from Ancient Greece to Today*. (2nd ed). Routledge: London, New York.

Mills, J. (2005). *Music in the school*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

McFerran, K. (2010). *Adolescents, Music and Music Therapy: Methods and Techniques for Clinicians, Educators and Students*. London, Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

McPherson, G. E. (ed.) (2006). *The Child as Musician. A Handbook of Musical Development*. Oxford. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mõistlik, M. (2009). Connection between music lessons and involvement with music after leaving school. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, 18, 115-127.

Mõistlik, M. (2010). Music lessons' influence in musical behavior after leaving school: four profiles. In T. Selke, G. Lock, M. Mõistlik (Eds). *Evaluation, reflectivity and teaching methodologies in the framework of multi-cultural understanding*. Tallinn, Tallinn University, 59-65.

Mõistlik, M. (2011). The model for therapeutic approach in music education. *Problems in Music Pedagogy*, 9, 19-26.

Mõistlik, M., Liiväär, L., & Rüütel, E. (2012). School creative lessons from 13-14 year old pupils' perspective and its relevance to teachers. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, 39/40, (in press, ISSN 1822-7864).

Mõistlik, M., & Rüütel, E. (2011). 'Therapeutic' outcomes from music lessons: what supports and influences pupils? *The Changing Face of Music and Art Education*, 3, 45-58.

Mõistlik, M., & Selke, T. (2011). Assessment of participation or musicality: Pilot study among Estonian music teachers. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, 30, 61-73.

Nöcker-Ribaupierre, M., & Wöfl, A. (2010) Music to counter violence: a preventative approach for working with adolescents in schools. *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*, 19(2), 151-161.

Pavlicevic, M. (1997). *Music therapy in context: music, meaning and relationship*. London & Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Perret, D. (2005). *Roots of musicality. Music Therapy and Personal Development*. Jessica Kingsley London.

Pinksterboer, H. (2007). *Vocals. The Singing Voice*. London, New York, Paris, Sydney: Wise Publications.

Poom-Valickis, K. (2003). Õpetajate professionaalse arengu uurimine: kuidas muuta eelarvamuslikud tõekspidamised arengupotentsiaaliks. [Research about teachers' professional development: how to change the biased beliefs into developmental potential?]. In: E. Krull, K. Oras (eds.), *Õpetajakoolitus IV – Õpetajate professionaalne areng ja õppepraktika*, (pp 95-107). Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus.

Priestley, M. (1975). *Music Therapy in Action*. Constable London.

Rüütel, E. & Pill, E. (2008). *Õpilase elu-olu 1998–2007. Küsitluse KOOLITUGI kokkuvõte*. [Students' life and milieu. Summary of the survey SCHOOL'S SUPPORT] Tallinn: Tallinna Ülikool, Tallinna Haridusamet.



Selke, T. (2007). *Suundumusi eesti üldhariduskoolimuusikakasvatuses 20. sajandi II poole ja 21. sajandi alguses*. [Music Education in Estonian Comprehensive School: Trends in the 2nd Half of the 20th Century, at the Beginning of the 21st Century] (Phd Dissertation) Tallinn: Tallinna Ülikooli Kirjastus.

Sepp, A. (2005). Mõtteid muusikaõpetusest 4.-6. klassis. [Reflections on music education from 4th to 6th grade]. *Muusika ja kunsti õpetamisest. Abiks õpetajale*. Tallinn: Paar, 23-25.

Tafari, J. (2008). *Infant musicality: new research for educators and parents*. - (SEMPRE studies in the psychology of music). England, USA: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Walker, R. (2005). A worthy function for music in education. *International Journal of Music Education*, 23(2), 135-138.

Wigram, T., Nygaard Pedersen, I., & Bonde, L., O. (2002). *A Comprehensive Guide to Music Therapy*. Jessica Kingsley London.

Whidden, C. (2008). The injustice of singer/non-singer labels by music educators. *GEMS –Gender, Education, Music & Society*, 4, 1-15. Accessed online at www.queensu.ca/music/links/gems/whidden5.pdf