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Music, Rhythm and movement: A comparative study between the BAPNE and Willems Methods

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Abstract

In musical education the importance of body movement together with the use of the voice is steadily increasing. Comparing the musical learning methods may improve their effectiveness and take part in the development of the methods themselves. The objective of this comparison is to define possible integrations and lines of development. Willems and BAPNE are different: one musical and aimed at training the ear and learning reading and writing, the other aimed at cognitive stimulation through the music and body percussion. The teacher needs to be open to different methods in order to answer the various problems which can occur.

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1. Introduction

In the field of musical education, the first half of the twentieth century witnessed the birth of the principal music teaching methods (Orff, Kodaly, Dalcroze, Gordon, Willems, Martenot etc.) after the ideas arising in pedagogical and methodological sectors (Watson, Piaget, etc.). Each method is characterized by essential features and didactics

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linked to rhythmic, melodic, harmonic and body movement aspects, and organizes its activities around theoretical bases which are more or less specific and argued.

The richness represented by each methodology, especially when confirmed by practical educational experience, can be a very important heritage for the development of music learning. Yet the socio-cultural development in these last years, the birth of the Internet and the relative impact on the access to music (especially in terms of traditional musical culture), the growing need to face problems linked with learning, have not been met with a similar development and upgrade of music teaching methods. This has caused a notable gap: on one side the methods and practical application of activities and exercises, on the other the necessities of contemporary classes, part of a society which is very far from the one for which these methods were thought.

An important instrument for the development of methods can be the theoretical and practical comparison of the various constituent elements, with the objective to determine the principal points of strength of a method and supply material and ideas for development. The comparison between music education methods, however, is rarely seen in scientific literature and this represents a very interesting field of research.

From 1995 to 1997 the author has attended Willems teacher training and from 2010 to 2013 he has turned his attention to the BAPNE method. He has practised both methods in the music teaching field and is a certified trainer in both methods. In everyday work as music teacher the author has put the specific and functional characteristics of the two methods into relationship, appreciating their peculiar and complementary aspects.

In the different groups of recipients of the activity (children, adolescents and adults) and in the different workplaces (music schools, primary schools, centers for the disabled), through the use of music education, there has often been difficulty in obtaining valid results through the use of just one teaching method. The objective of this study is therefore the systematic comparison in thematic sectors of these two methodologies, with particular reference to innovative aspects or open to development.

2. Method

For comparative purposes the author has used the model presented by Ana Lucia Frega (1996). The model contemplates several parameters among which: biography, psychological basics, aesthetic position, musical material, musical language and ear training, use of musical notation, suggestions as to actual musical activities, curricular structure.

This study stems from this collation model for the comparison between the Willems and BAPNE methods. At the moment there exists no comparative study on these two methods which we believe may be complementary under some aspects. Taking into account the recent discoveries and influences of aspects linked to neuroscience and the development of knowledge linked to movement, we believe it to be necessary to implement Frega's comparative model with some comparative parameters.

The proposed model contemplates the following theoretical aspects: use of rhythm, use of melody, use of harmony, use of instruments, final objectives, evaluation criteria, types of learning, learning process connected to chronological age, flow status, sources of inspiration, body use and weight, body control, voice control, attention, concentration, memory, laterality, creativity, possible benefits through the method. In this way the intention is to extend the comparative offer to aspects which are not purely musical but of a more general scope. For reasons of space and priority only some of the comparative parameters are being discussed here.

3. Results

In Edgar Willems method there are some specifics which are not in the BAPNE method. They deal especially the approach to melody, the formation of the ear, the analytic awareness of musical elements (Willems 1940). The systematization of the educational route according to well defined structural principles such as: global learning process from global (experience) to analytical (theory), division of each lesson in four moments: listening, rhythm, songs, natural movement, assimilation of musical order (sounds, scales, names of the notes, pentagram, etc.). In BAPNE method there are some specifics which are not in the Willems method. Systematized work on the

movement of the body in space, always in connection with singing. Progression until an optimal level regarding practice of individual polymetry and polyrhythms, structured cognitive stimulation, supported by scientific study. Group work with a minimum of 12 to a maximum of 30 and more people. Development of values such as inclusiveness, respect, sense of community. The Willems method is not furnished with evaluation criteria defined by the author, in any case the following parameters are constantly evaluated: Rhythmic sense – Plasticity of the action – Intonation – Assimilation of arrangements – Creativity – Musical ear – Fluidity in reading. The BAPNE method is very systematized with respect to the evaluation criteria according to a very detailed table (Romero 2013b).

Table 1. Comparison between the two methods

Parameter	Willem	BAPNE
Psychological Basics	The psychological basics of musical education (Willems, 1956) – study on the nature of the fundamental elements of music: sound, rhythm, musical ear, melody, harmony and inspiration. Partition of man in physiological, affective and mental.	It is based on studies on the psycho-physiological perspective and psycho-biological of the body percussion, the cognitive theories and principles and techniques of reinforcement and compensation in a conductive view.
Aesthetic position	The method is open to all musical genres with particular reference to western classical music. It is particularly centered on self-expression for creativity.	The method refers to african principles and values. It uses traditional musical material and tends towards self-expression and cognitive stimulation.
Materials used	Melodic instruments (bells, instruments with effect, bird calls and other self-built instruments) rhythmic (woods, tambourines, etc.) and with peculiar characteristics (infra-tonal metallophone).	Only the use of the body for the majority of the activities.
Musical language and ear training	Study of musical language from the basics (panchromatic sound movement) to the most advanced stages (jazz harmony and clusters) through a rigorous and structured route.	The method does not contemplate the learning of musical language at a generic level, at a specific level it offers strategies for the acquisition of rhythmic values.
Use of musical notation	A route to writing starting from the neuma (panchromatic sound movement) for melody and graphics (short and long lines) for the rhythm until an elevated degree of complexity is reached, aiming at the understanding of the orchestral scores.	Musical notation (rhythmic) is used to help in the conduction of the exercises, in connection with figures of the human body which identify the movements to be carried out. Melodic notation is also present for the songs used.
Suggestions as to actual musical activities	Listening, singing and body movement are always developed with special reference to natural movement (march, run, hop). The use of the chromatic metallophone, considered pre-instrumental is contemplated.	Listening, singing and movement are always developed in connection with the suggested songs. There is no connection with the musical instrument. The body is always used in the activities, as percussive instrument and in its movement in space.
Curricular structure	The method has implications in the cognitive, affective and activity development area. Education aims at the development of the person and is spiral shaped, that is the principal themes are developed at different levels.	The method has strong implications in the cognitive, affective and ability development areas. Education aims at the stimulation of all the cerebral lobes connected with the development of different multiple intelligences postulated by Gardner (1983).
Parameter	Willem	BAPNE
Use of rhythm	Rhythm is used in all the progression of the method, initially connected to the prosodic accent with the use of wooden sticks. Later the activity gradually takes on the characteristic of abstraction and consciousness.	Rhythm is used in a practical way in connection with the movement of the body. It is also present in improvisation.
Use of melody	Melody is used in all the progression starting from the panchromatic sound movement all the way to the song	Melody is used in context with the singing of the songs, there is no specific study of melody.

(synthesis). The melody is used also with the name of the notes and with improvisation.

Use of harmony	Harmony is used in all the progression, initially with a sensory element and then with awareness of the elements.	Harmony is not used since songs are essentially in single voice and the accompaniment of musical instruments is not contemplated.
Learning methods	Imitation, invention and improvisation	Imitation, contrary and inverse reaction, signalization in real time, circular variable coordination.
Learning process linked to chronological age	Activities are structured according to 4 levels starting from the third year of age. The same topics are dealt with based on ability. There is no scientific basis to back up the educational offers, only the educational experience of the author.	Activities are presented in a very strict and structured way, starting from scientific studies which show the effective psycho-motor abilities based on chronological age.
Flow status	No reference is made to the flow status	Reference to flux status (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and work in circles and concentric circles with specific reference to the production of hormones such as oxytocin and cortisol in the opposition of different types of work.
Sources of inspiration	For the rhythm the study of greek rhythmic, for melody popular songs.	The principal reference are the hand-clapping games of children and the ethnographic study of research in the field.
Attention	No reference is made to different types of attention.	For each activity the different developed attentions are indicated, sustained alternating and selective.
Memory	A personal view from the theoretical point of view (Psychological bases p.87), is used from the initial years especially in association with rhythm and timbre. There is no difference between working, short and long term memory.	For each activity the typology of developed memory is indicated, short or long term.
Laterality	It is developed in rhythm through the use of hands, united, alternated, dissociated. There is no reference to laterality in the use of the body.	It is constantly developed with specific exercises and games particularly with reference to biomechanical planes and the parietal lobe, especially concerning somatic-sensorial laterality.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

Through the analysis of the differences and similitudes in the two methods we believe it is possible to define viable integrations useful to the development of the methodologies. We intend to present four examples of how some points in common between the two methods may integrate and complete each other.

4.1. Connection of beats/movements with the prosodic accent

In Bapne it is very important to connect the prosodic accent to the movement or the beating of hands or other part of the body. In Willems the prosodic accent is present but the form of work foresees four different elements for each song: rhythm (prosody) tempo (regular beat) measure (first beat of each bar) division (two or three for each tempo). Willems also contemplates individual polyrhythm.

4.2. Learning through imitation.

In Willems imitation is an important form of learning right from the start. In BAPNE there are four distinct forms

of learning: imitation, inverse and contrary reaction, signalization in real time and variable circular coordination.

4.3. Use of the weight of the body

In Willems the body is used in natural movement (marches, runs, hops) and for balance (sense of timing). In BAPNE the movement of the body weight in space is contemplated also with reference to polymetry, polyrhythm and rhythmic improvisation.

4.4. Use of melody.

In Willems the voice, the melody, the knowledge of intervals and of chords is developed through many ear training activities. In this method it is possible to learn to improvise with the names of notes. BAPNE does not contemplate a specific learning activity connected to melody. Singing is learned through imitation and all the melodies are sung in unison (no harmony).

Following what has been said and in the light of personal experience, the researcher, as certified teacher of both methods, can affirm that the two methods can be integrated under different aspects. The BAPNE method has the principal objective of cognitive stimulation and systematization of work according to Gardner's intelligences. In this sense it offers a more scientific view and an approach in line with the times and the more recent discoveries connected with the world of research.

The BAPNE method offers valid learning tools in the field of gross motor skills and coordination, as well as laterality and development of rhythmic sense. The Willems method has the principal objective of the development of the musical ear and offers an ample learning structure with respect to the musical elements, especially in the melodic and harmonic area.

The Willems method has a strong psycho-pedagogical basis connected to the nature of the musical elements. In conclusion, by putting Willems and BAPNE in relation we can state that the knowledge and practice of these two methods can be considered an interesting learning resource. Both methods put the human being at the center and education to values. The connection between different methods allows for learning in an open form, evidently more interesting for everybody.

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