



LEARNING CREATIVE INTERPRETATION IN THE MUSIC CLASSROOM: THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION METHOD

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Abstract. The article discusses the problems of interpretation of a piece of music and presents a part of an extensive research on 26 filmed lessons, where the emotional expression method is used to reveal innovative possibilities for encouraging creative interpretation. The emotional expression method is used here as a way of stimulating musicality and musical, including interpretative, skills, and self-expression, by expressing the content of a work's emotional intonations, or the experiences of a "fictional hero", evoked by the integration with non-musical art forms. In this one alternative empirical experiment we used Emery Schubert and Dorottya Fabian's taxonomy of expressive features in music performance, which was developed in 2014 and focuses on expressivity in music performance, defines the specificity of interpretations, determines the differences between performances, and allows to identify the style of the various different interpretations. The participants (19 female and 7 male students) were selected for the experiment by means of representative case sampling. The main aims of the 26 experimental lessons were to stimulate the pupil to develop a personal relationship with the piece being performed, its "fictional hero", to improve the pupil's interpretation of the piece, and to stimulate the discussion of moral values by asking specific questions focused on the fulfilment of the goals of emotional and ethical education. The results of the study were evaluated by four experts – teachers of different specialisations in the subject of the instrument. The evaluation procedure was based on the review of the experimental filmed lessons and the filling in of templates of evaluation protocols (104 in total) prepared in advance by the researchers. The study revealed the positive impact of emotional expression method on harmonising the music-making process, where traditional teaching makes it challenging to quickly achieve changes in sound quality, dynamics, phrasing, expressiveness, or stylistics; it helped to develop the student's emotional competence and reduce stage anxiety. However, there were also necessary conditions for the application of emotional expression method: the pupil must have a good knowledge of the text of the piece of music, so that the "technical" difficulties do not interfere with the expression of the experiences of the "fictional hero" used in the method.

Keywords: creativity, emotional expression method, expressiveness, problems of music interpretation, stage anxiety.

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1. Introduction

One of the main activities in learning to play a musical instrument at music school is the student's music-making, which includes several processes: the development of performance skills and the interpretation of musical repertoire. We understand performer's activity as an active, specifically organised form of artistic expression, the content of which combines both performance and interpretation. However, music performance can be considered as any musical text that is read and performed live, while interpretation is the myriad ways in which a piece of music can be read and communicated to the listener.

In his analysis of the relationship between music performance and interpretation, de Assis (2018) points out that it is generally accepted to associate music performance with the rendering, reproduction or interpretation of a specifically written musical text. The scope of the activity of interpreting musical works is based on the notion of understanding and expressively performing a more complex musical text, and the essential skill sought is to apply the means of expressing the music in the performance of the musical work.

According to Hermerén (1995), one of the essential tasks of interpretation is to reveal the composer's intentions, to express feelings, to recreate the historical, social and psychological conditions, and circumstances of the work being performed. It is therefore clear that the music performer must become a mediator between the work, its author, and the listener, and engage in a distinctive chain of intercommunication (Cook, 2013).

The interpretation of academic music repertoire is relevant for the student and the teacher in many aspects: the interpretation of repertoire develops the student's individual personal abilities, broadens the cultural horizon, deepens the knowledge of music history and theory, enriches the artistic imagination, associative thinking, emotionality, encourages self-expression, *etc.* (Brenner & Strand, 2013; Machfauzia et al., 2018; Meissner & Timmers, 2019).

Malinauskaitė (2011) also stresses the importance of emotional competence, as it can provide the basis for social behaviour and its development, which is why it is important to start developing skills from childhood.

However, although the didactic aspect of music interpretation is seen as very important and necessary by instrumental educators, the process of interpretation itself, during which the student's music performance skills are improved, cultural horizons are broadened, and knowledge of music history and theory is deepened, is in their opinion lacking in definition, is complex and abstract.

It challenging to interest a today's student in the repertoire of academic music and in learning how to interpret it, because of the competition with popular music, the high demand for information technology, virtual media and the typical attitude of pupils: "I want to learn quickly and easily".

In the teaching process, teachers sometimes do not pay attention to the student's interpretative abilities at all (Héroux, 2018), preferring to focus solely on the improvement of the performance technique. Possibly, teachers lack knowledge about the dimensions of (teaching) interpretation, are short on relevant pedagogical and professional competences, or lack knowledge of how to teach it creatively (Machfauzia et al., 2018). Holmgren (2020, 2022) also criticises teaching of interpretation on the basis of educators' limited view of possible interpretative strategies, with only one of them being used most of the time, focusing on the teacher's experience and personal understanding, which in practice manifests itself in the form of mimicking or imitation. Fujimoto and Uesaka (2024) also see the development of the musician's ability to make independent decisions regarding the interpretation of music as crucial in educational practice, as this ability is linked to the learner's self-assessment, the modelling of personal goals, and the reflection of achievements.

The above-mentioned views are complemented by Silverman (2008), who refers to teaching/learning to interpret as a pathway to the highest level of musicianship. It becomes obvious that it is essential to make sense of the activity of interpretation, to bring relevance

to it: seeking to develop the interpreter's experience of musical education, the need for musical culture and values, and the creative conception of the author of the performed music, aiming to discover what is significant to the interpreter's world, creative approach and experienced feelings. Consequently, in educational practice, it is necessary to make the interpretation of a piece of music a unique space of self-expression for the pupil. It is therefore important to create favourable emotional conditions for this and to encourage this creative process.

Taking into account the above mentioned ideas, we suggest¹ that the above-mentioned goals could be achieved by integrating the emotional expression method (EEM)² (Navickienė, 2000) into the practice of the young musician's education, which is a method of promoting musicality and musical, including interpretative, abilities, and self-expression, by means of expressing the content of the emotional intonations of a piece of music or of the "fictional hero's" experiences, which are evoked by integration with non-musical art forms.

It is appropriate to briefly introduce the method itself, which resembles a four-part game, encompassing the entire process of a student's relationship with a piece of music – from the information on the composer, the work itself or the epoch of its creation, to the reflection after listening to or performing the work:

- 1) Providing introductory information. This may include the theoretical background of the lesson's topic, the personality of the composer, their country, the artistic epoch, the most famous artistic values of the time, as well as calendar, social or class issues, folk traditions, festivals, an interesting incident, *etc.* These are cognitive educational objectives answering the questions *who?*, *where?*, *when?*;
- 2) The presentation of an educational activity attitude (EAA) or a set of questions that cannot be answered without a piece of art in focus. This is a kind of intrigue for the perception of art (cognitive and psychomotor educational objectives are realised here, answering the question *how to do it?*). Thanks to EAA, the appreciation of music and other means of artistic expression does not become a final goal, but only an intermediate one, leading to the elaboration of the pupil's personal experiences and to the study of common human values. Importantly, this part always involves a fictional character, *e.g.*, an artist who lived in a particular period of time, a stranger, a fairy tale character, *etc.*, because it is easier for students to talk about another person's experiences and emotions rather than their own;
- 3) The perception and expression of a piece of music or art, in which the pupil has to find the answer to the questions asked (cognitive, psychomotor, and emotional educational objectives, answering the question *what feelings did this piece of art evoke in me?*) and to express the emotions experienced by the "fictional hero". Thanks to the EAA

¹ The authors of the article are long-term practitioners of music education, who have accumulated experience in both formal and informal music education contexts: Lolita Jolanta Piličiauskaitė is expert music teacher, author of the emotional expression method (EEM), interested in early music education; Giedrė Gabnytė Bizevičienė is pianist, piano teacher, researching the peculiarities of piano education.

² The EEM was called the emotional imitation method until 2022, but extensive research (Piličiauskaitė, 2021) has shown that it has a significant impact on students' expression of emotions, so the author of the method Piličiauskaitė has decided to change the name.

questions³, every sound, phrase, and other means of artistic expression are actualized, become relevant and at the same time stimulate the attention of the pupils. Here, art becomes not just a process of perceiving sounds, colours, metaphors, or shapes, but a type of "language" encoded by means of artistic expression, in which every melodic inflection, dynamic turn, pause, colour, tint, shadow, shape, composition, *etc.* are important;

- 4) Moral discussion is a part of non-judgemental, covert education, realising emotional and moral educational goals, answering the question *what is the significance of this for my life?*. Here, the pupils discuss and express their opinions on issues relevant to their age group and discuss⁴ the process of interpreting the musical work itself: how the performance has changed in terms of its punctuation, dynamics, tempo; how it was possible to express the desired emotions, *etc.* Thus, during the moral discussion, the teacher can address the general moral values, talk about issues relevant to the pupil, and educate the pupil in a non-judgmental way, while discussing the themes of expressiveness, creativity, and artistry.

2. Materials and methods

In order to theoretically and empirically validate the EEM as an original practical pedagogical alternative for teaching interpretation in instrument lessons, we designed an empirical study⁵ in which a one alternative experiment⁶ was carried out: 26 experimental contact lessons were filmed in different music schools in Lithuania, where the EEM was practically applied. One experimental lesson⁷ was given to each of the individual instrument-playing students who took part in the research after giving their informed consent. The aim was to determine, in a short space of time, whether specific tasks can influence the interpretation of a work. At the beginning of the lesson, each participant had to play the pre-prepared piece of music in its entirety, which allowed the researchers to objectively evaluate the initial version of the interpretation according to the established criteria, and then to compare it with the performance of the same piece at the end of the lesson.

³ "Let's say, the piece of music you are performing is a reflection of the inner world of a Baroque girl (*e.g.*, Johannes Vermeer's painting *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (dated 1665) is shown). What feelings is she experiencing? How could you convey it in your interpretation of the work you are performing? How would this be reflected in your face? In your body language?", *etc.*

⁴ For example, "What kind of person is nice?", "What kind of person does everyone want to be friends with? Why?", "Is it important for a friend to be attractive?", "Is external beauty everything?", "What should a real friend be like?", "What kind of personality traits does he/she have?", "Do you know how to communicate in a respectful way?", *etc.*

⁵ This paper presents only one (final) part of the empirical study.

⁶ One alternative experiment, "<...> examines only the educational activities organised by the experimenter, and their structure or performance is not compared with the analogous activities of other groups" (Bitinas, 1998, p. 89), and thus no control group was used in the experiment.

⁷ All the tasks given to the students were similar: "<...> let's say that this non-programmatic work is a reflection of the inner world of a boy/girl you don't know. What does this child feel? Would you like to be friend him/her? Why?". If the piece was a minor key piece, the pupil was encouraged to comfort, support and sympathise with the fictional character by playing, and if it was a major key piece, to enjoy being together, and to express a supportive stance by playing and using the body language (fulfilment of the emotional educational goals). Later on, discussions were held on various moral themes relevant for school age groups: "What is a true friend, friendship?", "Why is it important to know how to comfort and support a friend?", "Do we know how to be a support for others? Why?" (moral educational goals), *etc.*

The experiment involved pupils (19 female and 7 male, aged 11–13) from different Lithuanian music schools in grades 5–7 of various instrumental subjects, selected for the study by means of a representative case study. The experiment was carried out under real educational conditions, the educational process was organised in a small group, with the participation of the pupil, their teacher and the researcher, who also played the role of the educator during the experiment. The main aim of the experimental lesson was to encourage the pupil to develop a personal relationship with the work being performed, its “fictional hero”, to improve the pupil’s interpretation, and to stimulate the discussion of moral values by asking specific questions aimed at the realisation of the emotional and moral educational goals. In order to achieve the educational goals of the experimental lesson, a type of lesson–exercise⁸ was chosen, which allowed the pupil to achieve an observable change in the performance of the music, and to get involved creatively, uniquely, and enthusiastically in the interpretation of the work – as in a creative lesson.⁹ The experimental lesson combines the direct interpretation and discussion lesson models. The teacher “assigned” a moral theme, which was conveyed through oral narration, demonstration of materials illustrating the theme (photos, artworks, acting elements), and the pupil “translated” all this into exercises related to music interpretation. The lesson was highlighted by a moral discussion – a conversation between the teacher and the pupil, which allowed not only to reflect on the result achieved in the lesson, but also on moral values – *e.g.*, compassion, goodness, love, citizenship, friendship, and thus to develop the pupil’s skills of forming an opinion, evaluation, communication, ability to summarise and critical thinking. All 26 instrumental lessons (including piano, violin, cello, hornpipe (in Lithuanian: *birbynė*), stringed instrument (in Lithuanian: *kanklės*), accordion, flute, fife (in Lithuanian: *lamzdelis*, saxophone, alto horn) were filmed. In order to assess and interpret the data in an unbiased way, we used an additional method of expert evaluation. The expert evaluation aimed to investigate the relevance of EEM in inspiring the creativity and engagement of the pupil, the impact of the method on the interpretation of the work and on the development of interpretative skills. The study involved four expert teachers from different specialisations of the instrument. The evaluation procedure was based on the review of footage (26 fragments of the experimental lessons) and the completion of templates for evaluation protocols (104 in total) prepared by the researchers in advance.

In developing the template for the evaluation protocols, the researchers were guided by the attitude of music performance scholars to relate interpretation to its fundamental category – expressiveness of performance. Obviously, it is expressivity in music performance that allows listeners to get to know the uniqueness of each interpretation, to hear the peculiarities of different performances, to identify the style, to perceive and evaluate the quality of interpretations (de Poli, 2004; Cook, 2007; Hellaby, 2009; Heaton, 2012; Navickaitė-Martinelli, 2014).

In the scientific literature, musical expressivity is explained as a multifaceted concept:

- Expressive emotions, feelings, affects, features and characteristics of the sound conveyed (DeBellis, 2005; Juslin & Persson, 2002; Bonastre et al., 2017);
- Presentation of the structure of the work as an aspect of expression (Palmer, 1997; Friberg & Battel, 2002; Juslin, 2003);

⁸ The typology according to the method used in the lesson.

⁹ The typology according to the level of autonomy and creativity of the student.

- Levels of intensity of musical expression in performance (Nusseck & Wanderley, 2009; Fabian et al., 2014).

In the first part of the evaluation, the experts were asked to rate the student's interpretation at the beginning of the lesson and at the end of the lesson in each evaluation protocol, assigning one level out of the three (high, medium, low). In order to ensure the definition and clarity of the assessment, an assessment model based on Schubert and Fabian's (2014) taxonomy of expressive features of music performance was developed.

Table 1. A model of music interpretation assessment based on Emery Schubert and Dorottya Fabian's (2014) taxonomy of expression in music (source: created by authors, based on Schubert & Fabian, 2014)

FEATURES OF PERFORMANCE			QUALITATIVE FEATURES			AESTHETIC FEATURES			EMOTIONAL FEATURES		
Criteria	Start of lesson	End of lesson	Criteria	Start of lesson	End of lesson	Criteria	Start of lesson	End of lesson	Criteria	Start of lesson	End of lesson
Frazing	High Middle Low	High Middle Low	Technical Imple- menta- tion	High Middle Low	High Middle Low	Expres- sivity	High Middle Low	High Middle Low	Personal mean- ings in the piece sense	High Middle Low	High Middle Low
Articulation	High Middle Low	High Middle Low	Sound quality	High Middle Low	High Middle Low	Style	High Middle Low	High Middle Low	Emotional inten- sity	High Middle Low	High Middle Low
Metrics	High Middle Low	High Middle Low	Quality of orna- menta- tion	High Middle Low	High Middle Low	His- torical aware- ness	High Middle Low	High Middle Low	Scenic expres- sion of anxiety	High Middle Low	High Middle Low
Dynamics	High Middle Low	High Middle Low				Au- thentic- ity	High Middle Low	High Middle Low			
Tempo	High Middle Low	High Middle Low									
Clarity of text	High Middle Low	High Middle Low									

The object of the taxonomy drawn up by these authors is expressivity in music performance, which determines the uniqueness of interpretations, the differences between performances, and the different styles of interpretation. According to the authors of this taxonomy, expressivity in music performance is two-layered, as it is clearly intertwined with both compositional (structural) and performer expressivity, which is linked to the musical and emotional context. According to Schubert and Fabian (2014), the assessment of the intensity of expressive features in performance involves a holistic and retrospective approach, from the performer's interpretation to the listener's perception and subjective evaluation. Hence, by applying the principles of this taxonomy to the evaluation of interpretation, we can obtain information related to both the

performance of the music and the listener's perception of the performance. In the taxonomy, the authors present three basic categories of music performance, which they break down into their summarising aspects – the defined evaluation criteria:

- Performance features (phrasing, articulation, accents, metric, tempo, loudness, clarity of text, *vibrato*, *portamento*, ornamentation, instrument used);
- Qualitative features (technical execution, sound quality, quality of ornamentation, quality of recording, clarity of recording);
- Aesthetic features (expressiveness, romantic expression, Baroque expression, historical awareness, prevailing style trend, authenticity, emotion).

In order to reflect as objectively as possible, the impact of EEM on the interpretation of the work, the researchers paid additional attention to the emotional aspect when developing the performance evaluation model. They assumed that music interpreters often identify expressive music performance with the expression of emotion, and that the primary starting point for their interpretation is personal emotional experience and the desire to convey it (Sloboda, 2005, pp. 224–240; Persson, 2001; Lindström et al., 2003; van Zijl & Sloboda, 2010).

Thus, in addition to the performance traits identified in the taxonomy (where the assessment of dynamics was added, and the assessment of loudness, *vibrato*, *portamento*, ornamentation, and the instrument used were dropped), qualitative traits (the assessment of the quality of the performance, the quality of the recording and the clarity of the performance were dropped) and aesthetic traits (the assessment of Baroque and romantic expression and the predominant tendency of the style was dropped), the model included the aspect of emotional traits. It is broken down into the following evaluation criteria:

- A sense of personal meaning in the work;
- Emotional intensity;
- The observation of stage anxiety.

It should be added that in constructing the interpretation assessment model, the researchers were guided by the notion of assessing the “live” performance of students in grades 5–7, which was not intended to convey the result of a complete, perfected interpretation (the EEM itself primarily focuses on the process of the student's performance, although it has been shown to have an impact on the outcome of performance). Therefore, the aim was to develop an evaluation tool that would be simple and allow to record changes in the performance according to elementary qualitative attributes (see Table 1). It was also taken into account that the evaluation will not be based on the performance of concert repertoire, but on the performance of pedagogical (school) repertoire of a compact size. For these reasons, the taxonomy of the above-mentioned authors has been partially simplified (by dropping or adding some aspects) and, taking into account the relevant educational aspects and the existing conditions, adapted to the research presented in the paper.

3. Results

The analysis of the section “Features of performance” (see Table 2) was based on a simple approach of equating one level indication (high, middle, or low) with one point. The dynamics were clear: the most pronounced change was in the assessment of the clarity of the text, which went from medium to high, with a score of 60 expert scores. This can be explained by

the student's reduced stage anxiety – they were clearly shy the first time to play to strangers, to people filming the lesson, with several school teachers and students sitting next to them, but during the second and third playing, reflecting on the “fictional hero's” experiences, and the feelings and emotions they evoke, and shifting the focus from the text to the plot and experiences, made the playing easier and the text clearer. A similar situation applies to metrics (52 points). The phrasing, which was ranked third (43 points), was presumably related to the experience of the situation created by the educational activity and its conveyance through the interpretation of the work. The pupil's concentration on conveying the emotions dictated by the imaginary situation had an impact on the phrasing of the work, making it more expressive, coherent and suggestive.

Table 2. The one-alternative experiment: the dynamics of assessing the performance features of a work (source: created by authors)

FEATURES OF PERFORMANCE			
Criteria	Start of lesson	End of lesson	Dynamics of change
Frazing	High (H): 55 Middle (M): 45 Low (L): 6	H: 88 M: 18 L	$M < H = 43$ $L < M = 12$
Articulation	H: 48 M: 54 L: 4	H: 83 M: 20 L	$M < H = 29$ $L < M = 16$
Metrics	H: 67 M: 28 L: 10	H: 80 M: 25 L: 1	$M < H = 52$ $L < M = 15$
Dynamics	H: 30 M: 63 L: 13	H: 79 M: 19 L: 2	$M < H = 16$ $L < M = 6$
Tempo	H: 56 M: 47 L: 4	H: 82 M: 23 L: 1	$M < H = 35$ $L < M = 19$
Clarity of text	H: 69 M: 29 L: 8	H: 89 M: 17 L	$M < H = 60$ $L < M = 9$

When analysing the second segment of qualitative traits (see Table 3), the most pronounced dynamics were observed in the area of sound quality, with a score of 24 for changes from low to medium and 11 for changes from medium to high. This can be explained by the pupil's focus on the expression of relevant emotions and experiences, where the depth, expressiveness and quality of the sound are influenced by the rendering of the mental image through the playing. The evaluation of the technical performance criterion relates to the criterion of clarity of the text: when playing the piece for the second or third time and asking the pupil to focus on the emotional and moral educational goals, the excitement of not emphasising the psychomotor educational goals is likely to have contributed to a more fluent performance of the work. When commenting on the changes in the ornamentation quality criterion of the work, the incomplete dynamics of the ornamentation quality is due to the fact that not all the works had this criterion, but the most pronounced dynamics of this criterion (38 points from low to medium) also reflects the impact of EEM.

Table 3. The one-alternative experiment: the dynamics of assessing the qualitative features of a work (source: created by authors)

QUALITATIVE FEATURES			
Criteria	Start of lesson	End of lesson	Dynamics of change
Technical implementation	High (H): 43 Middle (M): 65 Low (L): 6	H: 68 M: 39 L	$M < H = 3$ $L < M = 33$
Sound quality	H: 35 M: 65 L: 6	H: 76 M: 30 L	$M < H = 11$ $L < M = 24$
Quality of ornamentation	H: 29 M: 49 L: 2	H: 39 M: 40 L: 1	$L < M = 38$

Looking at the dynamics of the evaluation of the aesthetic features of a piece of music (see Table 4), it is the criterion of expressiveness that catches the eye: the changes from low to medium (6 points) and from medium to high (14 points) are relatively small, but as many as 66 points were awarded for the highest rating. This can be explained by the fact that the students who took part in the experiment performed the piece quite expressively the first time, but still the vast majority of them were able to perform even more expressively the second or third time. The most striking change is observed in the criterion of the style of the piece. It should be noted that the EEM tasks were designed knowing the pieces that the students would perform in the experimental lesson. The tasks were designed to help highlight the stylistic peculiarities of the works to be performed (pieces, sonatinas, etc.) and to strengthen the sense of style.

However, historical awareness was low – students knew little about the composer of the piece they were performing or the era in which it was set. This also affected the authenticity of the performance of the work, with only 19 points for the change from low to medium.

Table 4. The one-alternative experiment: the dynamics of assessing the aesthetic features of a work (source: created by authors)

AESTHETIC FEATURES			
Criteria	Start of lesson	End of lesson	Dynamics of change
Expressiveness	High (H): 17 Middle (M): 69 Low (L): 20	H: 83 M: 26 L: 2	$M < H = 14$ $L < M = 6$
Style	H: 50 M: 42 L: 15	H: 75 M: 26 L: 5	$M < H = 33$ $L < M = 11$
Historical awareness	H: 22 M: 57 L: 27	H: 47 M: 39 L: 29	$L < M = 12$
Authenticity	H: 14 M: 70 L: 21	H: 61 M: 40 L: 4	$L < M = 19$

When analysing the dynamics of the assessment of emotional features (see Table 5), there was a questionable assessment of stage fright, with one expert overlooking the students' stage fright, rating it low at the beginning and at the end of the lesson.

Table 5. The one-alternative experiment: the dynamics of evaluating the emotional features of a work (source: created by authors)

EMOTIONAL FEATURES			
Criteria	Start of lesson	End of lesson	Dynamics of change
Personal meanings in the piece sense	High (H): 7 Middle (M): 78 Low (L): 21	H: 88 M: 22 L: 2	$M < H = 10$ $L < M = 1$
Emotional intensity	H: 11 M: 78 L: 17	H: 89 M: 12 L: 5	$M < H = 11$ $L < M = 5$
Scenic expression of anxiety	H: 8 M: 67 L: 21	H: 5 M: 38 L: 63	$H < M = 30$ $M < L = 4$

It is now widely documented that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly worsened the emotional health of the public, increasing anxiety levels and depressive disorders (Turna et al., 2021). Meanwhile, it has long been known that the topic of music performance anxiety is gaining momentum worldwide (Paliaukienė & Kairys, 2012), so a lot of research has been carried out in recent decades.¹⁰ Papageorgi et al. (2007) cite two reasons for the importance and intensification of research on performance anxiety. This is the apparent prevalence of non-adaptive pre-performance behaviours caused by performance anxiety. There is also the negative impact of anxiety on the performance of music and on the well-being of the performer. Lehmann et al. (2007) argues that performance anxiety is a serious and debilitating problem for many musicians. Interestingly (Desberg, 1997), performance anxiety starts as soon as the piece is chosen and the date of the concert is set. Thus, it is likely that students started to worry earlier when they learned about a public performance. The level of anxiety that is triggered or diminished varies from person to person, but usually the audience's fear is at its highest at the beginning of the performance (McCarthy, 2000). Thus, unsurprisingly, all the students in the study could not be completely calm and free of stage fright.

The high emotional intensity observed by the experts may be due to the stage fright. It is likely that if the EEM EAA was presented in a conventional setting and the student's music-making was not filmed, the emotional intensity would be higher on the second or third play.

¹⁰ Research has examined the reciprocal relationship between music performance anxiety and motivation (Elliot & McGregor, 1999), self-efficacy (McCormick & McPherson, 2003; McPherson & McCormick, 2006; Craske & Craig, 1984), the effects of perfectionism (Mor et al., 1995; Kenny et al., 2004; Stoeber & Eismann, 2007), and the association of anxiety with gender (Kenny & Osborne, 2006; Rae & McCambridge, 2004; Kokotsaki & Davidson, 2003; Abel & Larkin, 1990), performance environment (Parasuraman & Purohit, 2000), audience (LeBlanc et al., 1997), and measures of physiological indicators of performance anxiety (Abel & Larkin, 1990; Craske & Craig, 1984).

Summarising the qualitative, aesthetic and emotional features of the work, it can be stated that the emotional and moral goals emphasised in the tasks of the EAA had an impact on the performance of the work and its quality, *i.e.* it intensified the realisation of the cognitive and psychomotor educational goals, without directly emphasising them. This was an effective way of harmonising the whole process of music-making in a short time. Thus, the connection of the “fictional hero’s” experiences with personal themes encouraged the student to take their mind off their anxiety and fear, focusing on expressing their emotions in a musical way, and reduced the stress of playing in public. This helped the pupil to learn about their emotions and the ways in which they are expressed, and to learn how to control their emotions. All this is a condition for the development of the pupil’s emotional competence, which, according to Goleman (2001), becomes the individual’s potential for learning practical emotional skills such as self-awareness, self-consciousness and social relationships. Moreover, according to this author, emotional competence reveals the dynamics of the extent to which a person realises that potential by adopting and integrating emotional intelligence into their activities.

Suslavičius’ (2006) point is important in terms of the performance of the work, using the “fictional hero” and its experiences. In the three phases of empathy, the pupil recognises the emotional state of the fictional “partner” (an accurately identified emotion), experiences the “partner’s” feeling himself, transmits and reflects it, and expresses it in a supportive way in facial expressions, body postures, and sound expressions. Such an EEM-induced emotional cognition fosters sensitivity to other people’s emotional expressions (Ciarrochi & Scott 2006), and children with good emotional skills are able to better adapt at school, perform better in school, and are more popular with their classmates (Braza et al., 2007; Izard, 1971).

4. Conclusions

The analysis of the evaluation protocols of the 26 filmed lessons, prepared by the four experts of the study, showed that the experience of the situation created in the EEM EAA and the way in which it is conveyed in the interpretation of a piece of music had a noticeable effect on the performance: the clarity and the metrics of the text, while reflecting on the experiences of the “fictional hero” and the emotions and feelings that they generate, and shifting the focus from the text of the piece of music to the relevant plot, improved substantially. The student’s focus on conveying the emotions dictated by the imaginary situation had an impact on the phrasing of the work, making it more expressive, coherent and suggestive.

The results suggest that EEM is a creative, attractive teaching and learning strategy that allows for the reinforcement and deepening of phrasing and dynamic expression skills in a relatively short time.

In the qualitative traits segment, the most pronounced shifts due to EEM were observed in the area of sound quality, as the student’s focus on the expression of relevant emotions and experiences affected the depth, expressiveness and quality of the sound.

In the aesthetic features segment, changes in interpretation are not very obvious. The most pronounced change while using the EEM was observed in the style criterion, which demonstrates the effect of the method on the perception and conveyance of the style of the musical work being performed.

As expected, the dynamics of the emotional trait ratings were influenced by stage fright – the emotional intensity readings were higher, but the second or third performance of the piece were perceived as more relaxed and calmer. The connection of the “fictional hero’s” experiences to personal themes encouraged the student to turn their mind away from anxiety and fear to perform the piece, focusing on the expression of thoughts and emotions through music.

To sum up, it can be stated that the use of EEM not only promotes the student’s self-expression, develops their interpretative skills, but also helps to actualise and make sense of the lesson. We found that EEM can be valuable for harmonising the whole process of music making and for achieving changes in sound quality, dynamics, phrasing, expressiveness or sense of style in a relatively short time, through an attractive and engaging form of play-based learning. In the experimental lesson, it was observed that the presentation of specific questions focused on emotional and moral educational objectives encourages the pupil to develop a personal relationship with the piece.

Note

Only the responses of 11- to 13-year-olds whose music school directors and teachers gave their consent to participate in the study are analyzed in detail. This practice is based on a bilateral agreement between parents and the school, whereby parents give their consent for their children to be filmed and photographed during the educational process.

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