

## The Musical Ear: A Starting Point for the Advancement of Children with Autism



Nuša Piber, Ptuj 2022

## Music and autism

- ▶ Bridge
- ▶ Diversity
- ▶ Choice of procedures
- ▶ Willems music education

## Principles of Willems approach:



- ▶ Willems' concept of music education is founded on the psychological connections existing among music, human beings and the natural world.

## Individual music lessons:

- Auditory perception training
- Rhythmic activities
- Singing songs
- Moving to the music
  
- Playing piano

## The primary goals at the beginning of musical education are as follows:

- ▶ Extend concentration length
- ▶ Make eye contact
- ▶ Decrease inappropriate behaviour
- ▶ Improve comprehension
- ▶ Improve communication
- ▶ Build performance skills
- ▶ Promote integration
- ▶ Adapt to different situations

## How?

- ▶ Musical activities
- ▶ Safe environment
- ▶ Rewards (anchoring)
- ▶ Recreation of events
- ▶ Group inclusion
- ▶ Group performances
- ▶ Diverse musical material
- ▶ Adjusting the language and vocabulary

## Group inclusion:



## Auditory equipment to train the ear and voice:

- panchromatic flute



- bells



- Infratonal metallophone

- musical hammer



## PIANO

Galper, 6 years old



- ▶ I like ordered world. Piano mens that to me. White keys are always in place, as well as the black ones. Eventhough the world around me is often a mess. I calm myself with the piano. It always respond as I expect.

I believe my students feel that.

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## Progression through musical activities:

- ▶ Hypersensitivity to certain sounds
- ▶ Concentration
- ▶ Extend of activity
- ▶ How the child responds to instructions
- ▶ Consolidating
- ▶ Safety and trust

## Members of the group Beautiful mind:



- ▶ Matic, Bor ,Nat in Jernej always come prepared on their piano lessons - practice is a part of their everyday.
- ▶ Visiting piano lessons fulfil their afternoons and offer them an additional way of collaboration in the society.

## Case study:

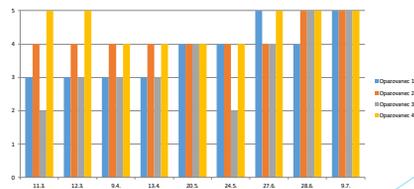
How musical engagement affected other fields :

- communication
- behaviour
- Orientation in space
- motivation for home practice
- other areas of learning

## Research questions:

- ▶ RQ1: Does the performance of *The Phantom* allow the boys to be included in the society?
- ▶ RQ2: How do the boys manage to adjust to the new environment, new stage, setting, light and the audience?
- ▶ RQ3: Do the boys communicate among with each other before and after the performance?
- ▶ RQ4: Do they communicate with the other people involved in the show (actor, mentors, parents, technical staff)?
- ▶ RQ5: How did the performance of *The Phantom* affect their wellbeing?
- ▶ RQ6: Are the boys more motivated for music involvement because of the play?
- ▶ RQ7: Did their memorx serve them well at the show?
- ▶ RQ8: Does the performance have a positive effect on the ability to learn?
- ▶ RQ9: How much free time per day do the boys spend playing the piano?

## Reply to RQ 4:

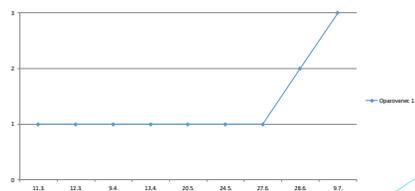


## Research results:

- ▶ RQ1: Performance of the show enables the boys to be included in the society.
- ▶ RQ2: The boys have no trouble adjusting to the new environment, stage, setting, light and the audience
- ▶ RQ3: The boys have made tremendous progress in communication with each other and with people in the treatre group, ie. that is the people with whom they are often in contact).
- ▶ RQ4: Memebers of the group communicate with other members of the group.
- ▶ RQ5: The show has a positibe effect on their wellbeing. One of the members sleeps through the night after the performance, which is very rare otherwise.

- ▶ RQ6: The members of the group Wonderful Mind look forward to their performances and wish to perform music in front of the audience.
- ▶ RQ7: The members of the group Wonderful Mind perform their music from memory very persuasively.
- ▶ RQ8: The research illustrates that the cognitive qualities of the group members, as well as for other fields of learning.
- ▶ RQ9: The boys spend 60 to 150 minutes playing the piano at home.

## Progress in independent task:



### Thoughts:

- By working with Matic and other boys I learned giving clear instructions. I found out that giving clear instructions also suits for other children.
- I believe experience acquired by working with children with special needs are invaluable for each and every teacher.
- In his progress, a child with autistic spectrum disorder, is dependent on his teacher.

### Matic, 26 years old



- After two years of playing the piano Matic learned how to swim.
- After three years of playing piano was the first time he committed the laces on the shoes.
- After three years of playing the piano Matic learned how to ride a bike.
- (He was thirteen when he started to play the piano.)

### Nal Frankovič (20 years old):



### Fascinating:

- Nal has a different personality now! He is much more joyful.

And so it is worth the effort for each child!

THROUGH OUR EFFORT children can become happier, more satisfied, accepted and healthier!

**Ob delu s svojimi učenci z avtizmom se vedno sprašujem, kje je njihova meja. Mogoče je tam, kjer je naša.**

*By working with children with autism, I often ask myself where is their boundary. Maybe there, where ours.*



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Fotografije: Andreja Zavrlinik