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BENEFITS OF CLASSICAL CONCERTS ON STUDENTS' WELLBEING – RESULTS FROM THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH PROJECT

Summary

The aim of the European research project *Schools@Concerts: Tuning up for the music experience* was to introduce students to live classical concert in order to increase and enrich their musical experience, as well as to show whether classical concerts improve wellbeing in children in compulsory schools in Serbia, Croatia, and Poland. During 2018, students (64 in total) have visited three classical concerts organized in Belgrade (Serbia), Zagreb (Croatia) and Gdansk (Poland). Sample: 20 students aged 11 to 13 (Serbia), 36 students aged 12 to 15 (Croatia) and 8 students aged 10 to 11 (Poland). Pre-event and Post-event questionnaires and interviews for students, teachers and concert organizers were designed to gather information about participants' music experiences, including preparatory and follow up activities. Serbian and Croatian students' questionnaire and interviews generally show that music frees students from daily routines, helps them overcome sorrow, anger and to cope with stress. Still, while Serbian results show that most students think music helps them socially, Croatian results show that only half of the students think the same. Also, while Polish results show that only one student thinks music can relax him, the majority of Serbian and Croatian students think so. Students experienced classical concerts as: pleasant and enjoyable (Serbia), interesting and unforgettable (Croatia), exciting and relaxing (Poland). In interviews teachers underlined that classical concert enlarges students' preferences for classical music (Serbia), particularly live performance (Croatia and Poland). Concert organizers highlighted that students heard some unusual ensemble (Serbia), as well as dancing and multimedia concert (Croatia). We assume that classical concerts can enrich students' life and affect the psychological and social wellbeing, only if attending classical concerts is regular and frequent.

Key words: classical concert, benefits, students, wellbeing

Introduction

There is a wide range of literature on attending classical concerts which proves a significant psychobiological effects, such as reductions in stress hormone activity with increases in immune function (Fancourt et al., 2014). Attending classical concerts physically reduces stress by reducing levels of progesterone and

stress hormones cortisol, cortisone and cortisol-DHEA ratio (Fancourt and Williamon, 2016). Classical concert audience experienced stress reduction especially during live performances (Shoda, Adachi, and Umeda, 2016). Attending a classical concert decreases negative mood states such as fear, tension, confusion, sadness, anxiety and stress. Neuroscientists explored the connection between music and the pleasure it elicits (Croom, 2011), because of a strong positive correlation between pleasure and emotional arousal (Salimpoor et al., 2009). Attending classical concerts has benefits on social wellbeing (Packer and Ballantyne, 2011). This unique bonding experience forms a relationship with others while the live music performance connects audience directly to the musicians. Regular music lessons in school with the out-of-school experience can enriched the students' musical competences and affect their cultural and artistic development (Vidulin-Orbanić, 2013; Vidulin, 2017; Vidulin, Plavšić and Žauhar, 2020).

These wide variety of benefits from a live classical concert prompted us to start the international *Schools@Concerts* project with the idea of studying single cases from different European countries. The aim was to introduce students to live classical music in order to increase and enrich their musical experience, to explore how the experiences of attending classical concerts in authentic environment impact on students, teachers and concert organizers, and to show whether classical concerts improve wellbeing in children in compulsory school in Serbia, Croatia and Poland. In this article we shall explain the methodology and give the main results concerning the benefits of attending a classical concert to students wellbeing.

Methodology

The multiple case study approach was used (Stake, 1988; Yin, 2003; Ilari & Young, 2016), as well as the previous researches on concert visits (Bernhofer 2016, Mall 2016a, 2016b). The common criteria for all the countries involved in the research were as follows: the collaboration between a single school and a concert host; a concert host tradition of a minimum of 5 years; a concert which gave children aged 10 to 15 the opportunity to attend a classical concert; an instrumental art work performed in a regular concert venue.

The research process encompassed: detecting the goals, expectations and roles of students, music teachers, concert hosts; identifying which kind of preparation processes and follow up activities were carried in schools prior to the concert and after the concert; and categorizing data related to the students', music teachers' and concert hosts' experiences in connection to the concert attendance¹.

¹ For more information on the project see: Bernhofer, Vidulin, Beqiri-Vula (2020). European comparative research project *Schools@Concerts: Experience from Croatia and North Macedonia*; Bernhofer, Mall, Vidulin, Nenadic, Konkol, Beqiri-Vula (2020). Young

The data were collected through interviews and questionnaires, using a pre-post setup with validated constructs (musical self-concept, STOMP), as well as open questions before and after a concert. There were two levels: data collection before and after the concert. Before the concert all of the three parts of the research participants were included. It comprised: a questionnaire for students and interviews with music teachers and concert host staff. After the concert, students and teachers were included only. Students filled out the questionnaire regarding their concert memories and a group interview describing their overall concert experience. Teachers interview referred to their expectations, follow-up activities, challenges/difficulties and surprising or unexpected outcomes deriving from the concert.

Students questionnaire had four parts: 1) general questions; 2) musical preferences (using the STOMP repertoire for musical preferences) and musical predisposition (seven questions), 3) musical self-concept using the MUSCI-youth repertoire (Fiedler & Spychiger, 2017), and 4) two open questions asking for students' expectations and pre-knowledge about the concert program they were going to attend.

Teachers and hosts interviews before the concert encompassed questions about their personal reasons and expected goal, aims and effects they wished to achieve and what they expected from this experience. Music teachers were interviewed again after the concert. The teachers described how they set and led the preparatory activities, explained how the project fitted into the curriculum, answered about the possible benefits of attending concert and how the logistics around the concert attendance was organized.

Before the concert, the preparatory activities were held in each country participating in the research. School lesson prior the concert was realized in five countries (Croatia, Serbia, Poland, Germany, England), the combination of school lesson, workshops and visits by musicians took place in Hungary (Budapest), workshops given by music education students were organized in Austria, while the non-formal conversation was directed in North Macedonia and Hungary (Szedged).

After the concert, school lessons were dedicated to reflection, capturing students' feelings and thoughts regarding the concert attendance as well as to see whether it deepened their knowledge regarding music elements and classical music. This kind of activity took place in Serbia, Germany, England and Austria, while school lesson in combination with workshops and visit of musicians were realized in Hungary (Budapest). A school lesson and non-formal conversation

audiences attending concerts – Result from the European research project Schools@Concerts. The whole project with all the results as well as the single cases will be published in 2021 in the book titled *Schools@Concerts: Tuning up for the music experience*. It will be a part of the collection *European Perspectives on Music Education*, edited by Bernhofer, Mall and Vidulin.

after the concerts took place in Croatia and Poland, while only a non-formal conversation about the concert visit was made in North Macedonia and Hungary (Szeged). Non-formal conversations were conducted e.g. in the bus while returning home after the concert (Croatia) or during the concert break (Poland).

The preparatory and follow-up activities were an integral part of the preparation for the concert. Almost all teachers who participated in the research prepared one lesson or workshop where they introduced the students to the music they would hear in the concert, the composers, orchestra instruments and other classical music specifics. The students were also provided with more general information about the orchestra itself, soloists and the concert venue. The teachers gave some guidance and directions how to listen to music and what should they pay special attention to. The aim was to enable students to actively participate in this experience and to listen more carefully to the music at the concert.

Since the statistic elaboration of the all round research results has not been yet, we will present some information which can be seen in their entirety in the papers mentioned in the footnote 1.

This article will present the results from three countries: Serbia, Croatia and Poland focused more on the potential benefits of this project. There were three participating groups: students, teachers and the host institutions (concert organizers) from Serbia, Croatia and Poland. The Serbian students were from a Belgrade suburb area compulsory school, Croatian students from a Slavonski Brod compulsory school, and the Polish students from a Gdansk compulsory schools. The host in Serbia was the Music Center Kragujevac, the concert was organized in the Belgrade concert hall Kolarac. Musorgski, Piazzolla, Grieg, Angelis, Budashkin, Dugić, Zolotaryov works were played by the Kragujevac Academic accordions orchestra. The specifics of the project was available in the accordion orchestra, pipe and dorma, as well as the preparatory and follow-up activities. The host in Croatia was Hrvatska glazbena mladež (Croatian Youth Music), the concert was organized in the Vatroslav Lisinski concert hall in Zagreb. The concert entitled *Impressionism in Music* and the art-works from Debussy and Kunc performed by the Zagreb Philharmonics. The specifics of the project can be seen through the preparatory and follow-up activities were dancing parts and arts elements during the concert. In Poland the host was The Polish Baltic Frédéric Chopin Philharmonic in Gdansk seated in Gdansk Music & Congress Centre. The concert was organized in this institution concert hall. The title of the concert was *Enigmatic Kingdom*. Mozart, Bruch, Elgar works were played by the Symphony Orchestra of the Philharmonic. The specifics of the project can be seen through the preparatory and follow-up activities then the repertoire. The pieces of music presented during the concert are seldom performed at concerts in Gdansk. It was a unique opportunity to listen to them at live performance.

Results

Students

At this point (June 2020), in eight countries N=147 students participated in this study: 56 boys, 83 girls and 8 not specifying gender. The average age was 12 years, from 10 to 15 years. The following table shows the distribution of pupils across different projects. Also, 8 teachers and 8 concert organizers (hosts) were engaged in this research. A number of students in Croatia, Serbia and Poland can also be found in table 1.

Table 1 Participating pupils and gender

	RS	HR	PL
Boys	3	13	1
Girls	14	21	7
NS	0	2	0
Total	17	36	8

In general, about half of the students attended classical concerts before being at the concerts within this project. The Croatian students had less experience than those in this research coming from Hungary and Serbia who had previous concert experiences. Here are the data from Serbia, Croatia and Poland regarding the number of classical concert attendances per country (table 2).

Table 2. Classical concert visits

	RS	HR	PL
No	0	31	3
Once	6	1	2
Twice	0	1	2
3 or more	2	2	1

In general, almost all students from this research enjoyed going to concerts (N=114, 95%). They appreciated live music experiences as maybe part of their social life (e.g. meeting peers, enjoying music together). Here are the data from Serbia, Croatia and Poland regarding the number of other concert visits per country (table 3).

The students' musical preferences were measured using the STOMP-R scale. The results show that students prefer pop, rap/hip-hop and classical music. They coincide with the research results made by Vidulin-Orbanić (2013) with compulsory school students, where pop was the first choice of students' musical preferences, although classical music was highly valued after rock and dance/electronic music.

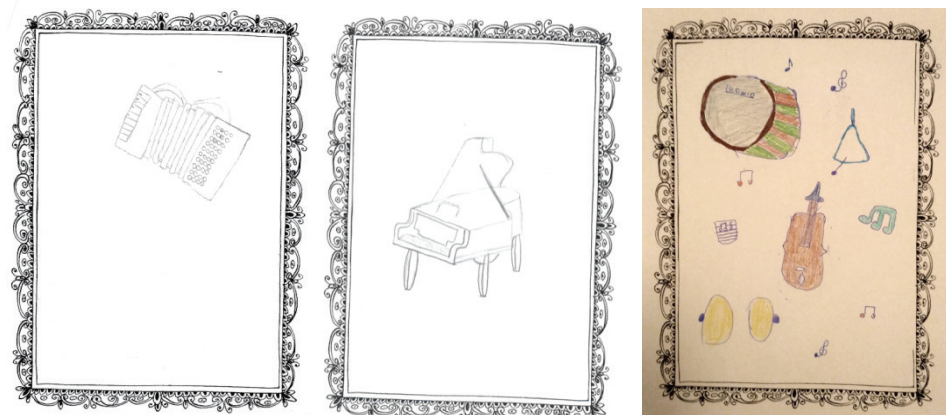
Table 3. Other concert experiences

	RS	HR	PL
No	2	16	1
One	4	14	4
Two	1	1	2
3 or more	0	1	1

The questionnaire and interview results show that Serbian, Croatian and Polish students underlined many benefits from attending concerts. During the research before attending the concert, the Serbian and Croatian students stated that music makes them free of daily routines; helps them forget sorrow; overcome anger and cope with stress. Serbian results showed that most students think music helps them to socialize while only half of the Croatian students think the same. Polish results showed only one student think that music can relax him, while Serbian and Croatian results showed the majority of students consider this role of music.

After the classical concert experience, the students reported that the concert was pleasant and enjoyable (Serbia), interesting and unforgettable (Croatia), exciting and relaxing (Poland). They underlined that they learned something new, heard live musical instruments, watched the way the conductor lead the orchestra, but also observed the concert hall, the audience, etc.

Analyzing the students' drawings produced after the concert, we detected seven categories (Bernhofer, Mall, Vidulin, Nenadic, Konkol, Beqiri-Vula, 2020): 1) instruments (representing one instrument or more instruments that played at the concert); 2) audience (watching the concert, audience members, atmosphere, concert hall); 3) conductor leading musicians; 4) only conductor; 5) soloists or musicians performing; 6) drawings explaining the concert program; 7) drawings presenting extra-musical imagery. The drawing categories showed that students drew one instrument in particular, or a mixture of instruments which can be familiar or unfamiliar to them (picture 1), then captured the audiences (picture 2) and broader atmosphere of the event, the important role of the conductor alone in the stage or leading the musicians (picture 3), as well as soloists or selected musicians during the concert (picture 4). Some children chose to represent their memories through extra-musical imagery related or not with the concert repertoire.



Picture 1. Music instruments drawn by the Serbian, Croatian and Polish students



Picture 2. Audiences watching musicians drawn by the Serbian and Croatian students



Picture 3. Conductor leading musicians drawn by the Serbian and Croatian students



Picture 4. The students drawings represent soloists performing

Teachers

The results show that one lesson (in Serbia and Croatia) and two lessons (in Poland) prior to the concert teachers dedicated to concerts preparatory activities. In Croatia and Poland teachers added another activity, and that was a very precise focused, yet non-formal conversation after the concert. The preparatory school lessons encouraged students to find out more information about the music on their own to make them feel well-prepared for the concert. These activities helped them to appreciate and understand music better.

Serbian teacher's pre-concert aims were to: increase students' preferences for classical music and classical concert; encourage their feelings for good quality music; influence them to be active listeners, able to express their critical attitude; teach the students concert etiquette. The music teacher named the post-concert benefits of the classical concert for students: the students visited the Kolarac concert hall, one of the oldest and the most representative concert hall in Belgrade; they perceived visually and audibly live sound of an accordion, pipe and domra; they discovered classical music pleasant and enjoyable; they felt satisfied with the concert experiences.

The Croatian teacher's aims were focused on students to develop a habit of attending classical concerts and getting better understanding and appreciate the art works. The teacher highlighted opportunity for the students to experience and listen to classical music performed by a live orchestra. In the post-concert interview, the teacher referred to the fine performances given by the orchestra and soloists and felt that this had been an invaluable learning experience for the students.

The Polish teacher's aim was to show that attending a live music concert is a different and specific experience. Visual stimuli and better sound quality could give the children deeper impressions and modify their attitude toward classical music concerts. The teacher wanted to show the students that pre-concert preparatory activities that include explanation about composers, instruments, ensem-

bles and musical styles would help better understand of the musical pieces, enabling the recognition of musical forms such as variations and contredanse.

The teachers' interviews results show that classical concerts enlarged students' preferences for classical music (Serbia), particularly when performed live (Croatia and Poland). Students felt well prepared for concerts and found that the preparatory activities helped better understanding. The Serbian teacher believed that the best way to motivate those disinterested students to attend a classical music concert is by encouraging a discussion about the concert with the students who were at the concert.

Organizers

The concert organizer in Serbia explained that students had the opportunity of hearing and seeing an unusual ensemble, while the host in Croatia proposed dancing and a multimedia concert which would be more familiar for particular age group. In Poland the repertoire itself was very interesting.

In Serbia, the concert organizer was Muzički centar Kragujevac (the Music Center Kragujevac). Its aim is to organize musical life, to achieve higher artistic merit and meet the cultural music needs of the citizens. This Center cooperates with schools in terms of organizing and attending classical concerts, because the organizer's primary aim is educational. The Center's participated in the research project in Serbia by filling the post-concert questionnaire. The Music Center Kragujevac organized the concert with the aim of giving students the opportunity to hear a number of classical compositions performed by unusual ensembles of accordions and solo instruments such as the pipe and domra. The organizer believed that the role of preparatory activities before attending the concert was significant for understanding the content and concept of the performance.

The concert organizer in Croatia was not ready to participate in the data collection, therefore the host's background informations were sourced from the webpage. Hrvatska glazbena mladež (Croatian Youth Music) supports culture and art and runs interesting music programs. It encourages cooperation between schools and music pedagogues with cultural institutions and orchestras and has a great impact on young people's cultural and artistic development.

The concert organizer in Poland was the Polish Baltic Frédéric Chopin Philharmonic in Gdansk seated in Gdansk Music & Congress Centre. The Centre is the largest music institution in the northern Poland. It organizes symphonic concerts, recitals and chamber music events. The symphonic concerts are mostly once a week in the evenings. These concerts are very popular among the adult audience, but are rarely attended by children. Therefore it was exciting to take students who participated in the Schools@Concerts project to one of these concerts. Unfortunately it was not possible to involve the concert host more into the research due to the organizational difficulties.

Conclusion

It can be deduced from the students' questionnaire and interviews that music, being a part of their lives, affects them in different ways. The results showed that music makes them free of daily routine, helps them forget sorrow, overcome anger and cope with stress. Some students thought that music helps them socialize and relax them. Attending classical concert was a pleasant and enjoyable, interesting, unforgettable, exciting and relaxing experience to students.

Regarding teachers' points of view, we can conclude that students' attitude toward classical music can be improved by attending a concert. But, both school and parents should recognize the importance, need and effects of classical music on students. The teachers and organizers stressed crucial importance of preparatory activities before the concerts, because they improve the listening experience. In the future, teachers should organize the preparatory activities whenever they decide to take children to a concert.

We can conclude that classical concerts can enrich students' life and affect their psychological and social wellbeing, under condition that attending classical concerts is regular and frequent. The classical music should have an important place in education and in students' lives. Experiencing classical music in live performance can help young students to develop their social and psychological personality. The value of learning to listen the artistic achievements is indispensable to the health of future generations.

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ДОБРОБИТ КЛАСИЧНОГ КОНЦЕРТА НА БЛАГОСТАЊЕ УЧЕНИКА – РЕЗУЛТАТИ ЕВРОПСКОГ ИСТРАЖИВАЧКОГ ПРОЈЕКТА

Циљ европског истраживачког пројекта *Schools@Concerts: Tuning up for the music experience* јесте упознати студенте са класичном музиком извођеном уживо, ради богаћења њиховог музичког искуства, као и показати да ли концерти класичне музике утичу на побољшање добробити деце у основној школи у Србији, Хрватској и Пољској. Ученици (укупно 64) су у току 2018. године посетили три концерта класичне музике која су одржана у Београду (Србија), Загребу (Хрватска) и Гдањску (Пољска). Узорак су сачињавали: 20 ученика од 11 до 13 година (Србија), 36 ученика од 12 до 15 година (Хрватска) и 8 ученика од 10 до 11 година (Пољска). Упитници и

интервјуи за ученике, наставнике и организаторе концерата дати испитаницима пре и после концерта, дизајнирани су тако да прикупе информације о њиховом музичком искуству. Припремне активности, као и оне које су уследиле после концерта, такође су биле део метода истраживања. Резултати показују добробити класичног концерта на благостање ученика. Сматрамо да концерт класичне музике може да обогати живот ученика и да утиче на његову психолошку и друштвену добробит само уколико је посећивање концерата класичне музике редовно и често.

Кључне речи: Концерт класичне музике, добробит, благостање