

Characteristics of the Hungarian Music
Education in the Mirror of Ilona Andor
Specialized Elementary Music School's
Talent Development Programme

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to introduce the system of music education in Hungary through the best practice of an elementary school specialized in music. Ilona Andor School is a complex education institution where elementary school education and elementary art education operates within one institution. The author aims to sum up the key factors that lead to success including inter-institutional collaborations and cooperation with parents. The study stresses the importance of enrichment programmes, performances, competitions and differentiated music education for those who are preparing for a professional career in music.

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I. System of music education in Hungary and its legal background

I.1. Music education in elementary level

1.1.1. Singing and music lessons in elementary schools

In Hungary there is a highly appreciated system of musical education based on Zoltán Kodály's concept. According to his principles kindergartens and elementary schools play a fundamental role in the system of musical education.

In the eight form elementary school (attended by 6-14 year olds) singing is taught weekly and can be complemented by optional choral singing. In the primary schools all children have music lessons. According to the prescriptions of the new general curriculum (2013), in the lower forms (ISCED 1) there are two music lessons per week instead of the former rate of one lesson per week. In the upper forms (ISCED 2) students have music and singing lesson once a week.¹

Kodály's conception is apparent in its purest form in the specialized elementary schools for singing and music. In such schools the efficiency of musical education is incomparably higher than in other schools. The law prescribes three or four music lessons and two lessons of choir practice per week in the curricula².

1.1.2. Extracurricular music studies in primary art schools

Instrumental education on primary level occurs in state-owned primary art schools (music schools).

Maintenance of music schools by the state was governed by the 15th Law of 1951 on compulsory schooling and primary schools. 68/1952. (VIII.17.) M.T. § 2 on the reform of music education states that "music education at elementary level operates in the music schools. In addition to providing elementary level of education, the music schools are also responsible

¹ Szucs, Timea & Hejja Emerencia Bella (2017): The Institutional Network and State of Music Education in Hungary In: Hungarian Educational Research Journal 2017, Vol7 (3) p.39-54.

² Decree of the Minister of Human Resources No. 51/2012. (XII. 21.) on the order of the issue and legal status of general curricula

for non-vocational music education. " In the history of primary art education institutions, the Act I of 1985 on education was a great progress. Section 13 of the second chapter of the Act stipulates that primary art education institutions are institutions of school education which can be set up and maintained by the city councils.

According to data of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, in the academic year 2017/18, 114,492 students attended musical training in primary art education³, 102635 of them studied classical music. In Hungary, 10495 educators worked in primary art education in 2018 at 2944 task locations.⁴

Courses can be started simultaneously with the second grade of elementary school studies in primary art schools operating in the afternoons. There is a preparatory course (one or two years) which lays the foundation for musical sight reading and scoring. In these specialized music schools children are provided not only individual instrumental lessons (two times per week) but also solfeggio classes and music literature. Usually there are several ensembles operating in the school such as brass bands, choirs, string orchestras. These classes are optional for the lower class students but the rest of the students choose to participate in these classes regularly from as early as it is possible.

I.2. Intermediate and university level of music education

In Hungarian secondary education (ISCED 3) we differentiate between grammar schools, specialized grammar schools and vocational secondary schools. There is one music lesson weekly in grammar schools according to the general curriculum amended in 2016. In the following two years students can choose from either art, visual culture, music or art history. In specialized grammar schools – with the exception of music grammar schools – students can take one lesson per week of music, visual culture, drama and dance, or history of the moving picture and media studies under the title arts, depending on the decision of the school principal.

³ In primary art schools the age limits are 6-22. There are independent primary art schools and some that operate coexisting with other institutions of public education. There are different types of primary art education institutions, some of them (music schools) exclusively have musical profiles. In the art schools, after two years of preparatory course, 6 classes have to be completed in order to take basic art end of school examination. Thereafter, three further training courses can be taken by the student up to the age of 22. At the end of the studies, final art examination can be taken, which does not mean a vocational qualification.

⁴ Hungarian Central Statistical Office (2018): Statistical Reflections , Data of Education 2017/18. KSH, 2018.

No such lesson exists in the vocational secondary school⁵ where intermediate level of education for prospective artists, instrumental teachers and orchestra musicians is provided. Besides Budapest, there are ten other similar educational institutions in the country.⁶

Talented students who intend to continue their musical studies attend the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest or choose one of the prestigious universities of Pécs, Debrecen, Szeged, Győr or Miskolc. These universities' music faculties provide similar education with qualified professors.

II. The conditions of successful work in Ilona Andor Specialized Music School

Ilona Andor Specialized Music Primary School and School of Arts has more than 100 years of history. It is named after Ilona Andor⁷, Liszt Prize winner, coach, and music educator. The fact that elementary school education and basic art education can be found within one institution shows the complexity of the school. The school is maintained by the Baptist Church. Apart from the study hours in the morning, students have the opportunity to have instrumental lessons under the guidance of professional musicians in the afternoon. The primary purpose of art education is to develop skills through the fulfilment of specified requirements, which is achieved through the foundation, deepening and constant development of art literacy. In addition to this, talent development and assisting those preparing for a career in music are of special importance. The most important condition of all concerning talent development is to have right human resources in education and to develop practical professional collaborations to help gifted children.⁸

⁵ Decree of the Minister of Human Resources No. 22/2016. (VIII. 25.) amending Decree of the Minister of Human Resources No. 51/2012. (XII. 21.) on the order of the issue and legal status of general curricula).

⁶ Szucs, Tímea & Hejja Emerencia Bella (2017): The Institutional Network and State of Music Education in Hungary In: Hungarian Educational Research Journal 2017, Vol7 (3) p.39-54.

⁷ She was born on April 9, 1904 in Pécsvárad. During four decades of her pedagogical and artistic work, she dedicated all her time and power to the service of music and community. With his guidance, Kodály Zoltán Female Choir performed choral works of great 20th century composers such as Lajos Bárdos, Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály. The choir of Ilona Andor was the first to be named after Zoltán Kodály. She was the first to introduce Zoltán Kodály's several masterpieces, most of were dedicated to her by the Master personally.

⁸ www.andor-ilona.baptistaoktatas.hu

2.1. Specializations and human resources in arts education

Students can choose from 13 different specializations in the Art School Department of Ilona Andor School. They can either choose piano, flute, cello, violin, harp, flute, clarinet saxophone, percussion, brass instruments, guitar, fine arts lessons or folk dance. There are 205 music students, 25 in the fine arts department and 31 students study at the folk dance faculty. 18 students are involved in the work of two departments in parallel training.

Musical talent is one of the earliest identifiable talent areas therefore primary education institutions put emphasis on identifying musical talents and designing programs for the gifted. In such institutions complex professional and collaborative work is essential. The responsibility of elementary teachers is crucial in the preparation of students for a professional career in music. Only up-to-date, innovating professionals can meet the expectations of the 21st century. These teachers participate in training programmes, develop collaborations with their colleagues in their own field and organize enriching programs to maintain the children's motivation. 18 specialized teachers help the students in Ilona Andor School's music faculty. Most of the teachers have the highest level of specialization (MA in music performance) and either work for leading orchestras as guest artists or play in various chamber music ensembles.

2.2. Collaboration between different departments

One of the pillars of successful talent-development is the collaborative work environment. In practice, teachers of the keyboard, string, woodwind, chord, and music theory departments hold community-based meetings on a regular basis, whereby they plan to prepare gifted students for performances, integrate them into different musical ensembles of the school, and create chamber music projects for them.

2.3. Inter-institutional cooperation

Inter-institutional cooperation between Ilona Andor School and other educational institutions are wide-ranging. The school is involved in professional cooperating work with other Baptist institutions operating in different parts of the country. Students and teachers regularly visit sister institutions, organize joint professional programs and gatherings. These occasions (e.g.

concerts) give both parties the opportunity to showcase their talented students, discuss their development, and build relationships or friendships. Networking is also very important for primary school students, as peer groups are key environmental catalysts in the process of developing musical talents.⁹ The fact that Ilona Andor School became a Talent Point was significant in its life. As a talent point, the School has become part of an institutional network that has opened up additional opportunities for the school such as organizing joint programs, professional consultations with colleagues of partner institutions.

III. From Talent Identification to Career Choice (Good Practice Presentation)

3.1. Talent Identification , early music education

The basic tasks of art schools include finding, identifying and developing talents. Ilona Andor School has been focusing on music education, recognition of musical talents and the popularization of vocal music from a very early age. Following Zoltán Kodály's approach, school teachers begin to teach music even before the age of 6. Thanks to in-and out of school cooperation, teachers organize music-lessons for nursery school children as well. These are great opportunities to start music education and to make them love music.

Nursery School Music Class is a complex development program aimed at kindergarten children which, beyond the development of musical abilities, has an impact on both their motion coordination and the development of emotional and intellectual skills. During these classes percussion instruments and guitar are used which are part of the school's property. Folk songs and games are taught by teachers to children. Games, music making and motions are a priority in line with the characteristics of kindergarten age.

Students acquire knowledge, develop their steady walking, measuring, rhythm-taps, pace movement, melody echo, sound tracking skills with movements. The development of children's musical memory is achieved by listening to music and singing rhymes.

The program called 'Squirrel Luring' targets nursery school children (aged 4-6). The purpose of the series of programs is to help kindergarten children learn the basics of art education through games and joyful activities. During the four occasions, children can participate in crafts, music, folk dance and drama classes. These programs are led by professional pedagogues of

⁹ Gagne F.(1991)Toward a Differentiated model of Giftedness and Talent.

the school so that prospective students can get to know their future teachers before they start school.

Every year the institution announces an instrumental entrance examination for school-age children. After the so called „Musical Instrument Showcase” in spring, the schoolchildren participate in the entrance examination where teachers test their general musical abilities and examine their musical instrument specific physical abilities. Students have the opportunity to name at least 3 musical instruments they would like to study.

The results of the entrance exam are discussed by the Music Working Group during a meeting where teachers create a list of students who are accepted to the art department and can start their afternoon classes in various specializations from the following year.

3.2. Specialized programs for the gifted, differentiated music education

Those who are preparing for a musical career are involved in complex practical and theoretical training in the art school. These students have two 45 minutes long individual instrumental lessons where their teachers develop student’s musical skills through practicing studies, exercises and different pieces of music. Sometimes the teachers deal with orchestral excerpts during the instrumental lesson in order to help the work of the school’s ensembles.

An important tool for talent development is "acceleration". The teacher provides the opportunity to progress faster for highly talented students who meet the curriculum requirements at a fast pace.¹⁰ Differentiated musical education is not only about acceleration. The institution also put great emphasis on the development of performance skills of the students and their mental and physical health.

In order to give adequate help, teachers take part in specialized courses to familiarize themselves with the Feldenkrais method¹¹, Alexander Technique¹² or the Kovács method which

¹⁰ In Hungarian art schools, faster progress is possible for students in the „B” class. This class provides more instrumental lessons and piano accompaniment lessons. In this context, examination requirements are also different from the regular „A” class, and concert opportunities for the students are multiplied.

¹¹ The Feldenkrais Method of somatic education uses gentle movement and directed attention to help people learn new and more effective ways of living the life they want. You can increase your ease and range of motion, improve your flexibility and coordination, and rediscover your innate capacity for graceful, efficient movement.

¹² **F.M. Alexander** was an Australian actor who began to experience chronic laryngitis whenever he performed. When his doctors could not help him, Alexander discovered a solution on his own. He had not been aware that excess tension in his neck and body were causing his problems, and began to find new ways to speak and move with greater ease.

His health improved to such an extent that his friends and several of the doctors he had consulted earlier persuaded him to teach others what he had learned. Over a career span of more than fifty years, he refined his

is well-known in Hungary. The application of these methods in the preparation of students for a career in music is of fundamental importance. One of the keys to success is the ability to maintain physical and mental health for a musician in a long run.

3.3. Enrichment programmes

The school also takes care of other cultural needs of students. The management of the institution and teachers organize joint trips for students to show the cultural traditions and values of their mother country. Museum visits, exhibitions, concerts, theatre, dance shows, dance competitions are among the above mentioned enrichment programs.

Thanks to institutional cooperation, students can visit rehearsals of leading Hungarian orchestras, gain an insight into professional work, and can enjoy unique concert performances.¹³

3.4. Operation of music ensembles in the school

There are several chamber music ensembles coordinated and led by music professionals from the arts department. For these bands and ensembles the school offers regular activities and organize out of school performances. Community based musical experience is indispensable for those preparing for a career in music.

One of the most popular ensembles is the string band, the guitar band, the flute ensemble and the percussion chamber music groups.¹⁴ During school concerts, students from different classes play in different chamber music groups together. There are musical compositions of different genres, with different apparatus being played on the same concert. Musical ensembles of Ilona

method of instruction. After teaching for over 35 years, he began to train teachers of what has now become known as the Alexander Technique. www.alexandertechniques.com

¹³ Ilona Andor School maintains an excellent relationship with 'Óbudai Társaskör' (local venue for music) and the Budapest Festival Orchestra. The cooperating institutions continuously inform the management of the institution about their programmes and activities.

¹⁴ During the performances, teachers and parents also play with children in the ensembles. This community experience has a positive impact on students, promotes the development of parent-teacher, teacher-student relationships.

Andor School, including choirs¹⁵ perform several times during the school year such as festive concerts and joint concerts with sister institutions. Outside the school, there are countless opportunities for the bands and ensembles of Ilona Andor School to perform throughout year. These events are excellent community building opportunities and are very popular among students and their families.

3.5. Concerts, exams, performances

Everyone who is preparing for a professional career has the opportunity for systematic preparations for performances taking place in or outside the school with professional guidance. Thanks to the cooperative work between institutions, students of Ilona Andor School attend numerous concerts in the capital and in the countryside yearly. Concerts, which have become a tradition, are very popular among parents who often accompany their children to these occasions.

These opportunities are particularly important if the students prepare for music competitions or exams. In addition to concert opportunities defined in the school's schedule, teachers organize extra concerts for those preparing for music competitions. After these so called 'practice concerts', members of the staff can discuss developmental problems, evaluate the progress of the students and set long and short-term goals.

3.6. Auditions, master classes, summer programmes

In order to give adequate assistance to students, teachers need to be constantly informed about high school subject requirements and the recruitment process of the target schools. To this end, instrumental teachers arrange consultations for the students who prepare for further education and their parents on a regular basis from the year prior to further education. Music education is an individual education, where the instrumental teacher not only provides professional help

¹⁵ Each student in the school participates in a choral session on a weekly basis, within a classroom. There are three choral choirs in the institution: Small Ones' Choir, Beginner's Choir and Ilona Andor Mixed Choir

to the students, but also develops a decisive human relationship with the student while becoming a mentor of his/her students over the years. That is why the choice of secondary school teacher is also of particular importance. Because of the above-mentioned facts, not only professional but also personal impressions are important in the school choice. The role of the elementary teacher is crucial in the choice of the most appropriate secondary school.

During the second semester of the academic year, teachers of the music working group set up a list of courses and summer camps that can provide the most appropriate professional support and assistance to students. During parental meetings, they inform the parents of talented students about the opportunities and suggest them music camps during the summer. In the last summer before the end of the primary school, the role of the aforementioned camps is extremely important. Students have the chance to get acquainted with their future high school teachers at a music course and this experience may facilitate school choice afterwards.

3.7. Role of music competitions in talent development

There are a number of showcasing opportunities on local, regional and national levels for the gifted students. These occasions such as competitions are preceded by months of preparation. Research on the historical background of the pieces of music students perform is part of the whole preparation. After a complex preparation process mentioned above, students take a huge step forward in their instrumental studies. They are not only engaged in instrumental specific music skills development tasks, but also improve their performance skills as well as acquire essential theoretical and music backgrounds.

3.8. Cooperation with parents

Students' successful preparation for their musical career is unimaginable without the help, support, or involvement of parents. Numerous researches prove that the impact of parents in the lives and career of professional musicians is of great significance.¹⁶

¹⁶ According to Sergeant and Thatcher (1974), Shuter-Dyson, 1982) there is a direct relationship between music performance, family relationship to music, socioeconomic status of the family, and the child's intelligence quotient.

Zoltán Kodály recommends the beginning of music education for the ninth month before the birth of the child (Kodály, 1964). It means that the role of the family plays a key role in the child's musical education.

Ilona Andor School gives an important role to parents, so it intends to provide up-to-date information on the student's development. Teachers of the school use an electronic diary from 2016 to provide parents adequate pieces of information about their child's school results, daily problems, and give regular feedback on their child's progress.

In addition to using the electronic diary, parental meetings are organized in the school, which allows the teacher to highlight techniques that can make home work more effective. In this way, students from non-musician families can also be better prepared for the performances, auditions and end-of-year exams.

Teachers together with parents plan instrument purchases and provide practical help to select the best instrument for children. A good instrument choice is decisive in the development of young musicians, and therefore the school is doing its best to provide useful help to families.

Summary

Preparation for a career in music is a long process that lasts from kindergarten age to the time young musicians get their first job. The role of primary teachers is crucial in this process. Beyond the development of instrumental and general musical abilities, the school need to deal with the psychological development of students, provide them enough extracurricular programs enabling them to get to know the professional work of musicians, their difficulties and key of their success.

All this requires adequate institutional co-operation, personal professional contacts, up-to-date teaching and mentoring work. If these conditions are fulfilled, establishing a good relationship with the parents is also of great importance.

Ilona Andor School's management and staff intends to provide the most complete music education to their students and give assistance for talented students to continue their studies. The complexity of the institution, its human resources, its institutional co-operation and its basic philosophy are designed to help gifted students to be successful at the entrance exam of music secondary schools and academies. The mother institution look forward their proud and grateful return to the institution where their studies were started.

Teachers of the school follow Kodály's principles and continue Ilona Andor's work to give adequate assistance for the gifted to be either talented and successful musicians or music experts.

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Appendix



