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The Level of Musical Aptitudes and Instrumental Timbre Preferences as Determinants of Music Achievements (According to the Author's Own Educational Research)

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1. Introduction

The diagnosis of natural potential of human predispositions to learn music such as: musical intelligence, musical aptitudes, timbre preferences in music perception enables one to determine the conditions for music education. Such knowledge also helps teachers understand and support students individual musical development. Carrying out research on this issue not only gives consideration to gathered knowledge, but also raises scientific activity leading to formulating a complete perspective on music education. All those mentioned support the effectiveness and, foremost, modernity of music pedagogy. This paper includes the outcomes of the Author's own educational research carried out in Poland, inspired by the Gordonian *Music Learning Theory* (Trzos, 2009).

2. Musical aptitudes

According to Edwin Elias Gordon, audiation is the basics of musical aptitudes. It also gives grounds for the Gordonian *Music Learning Theory*. As Darrel L. Walters puts it, the audiation category is connected with the trial to compare the importance of visualization in visual perception sphere (and its adoption) with imagery process in auditory perception sphere (Stokes, 1996: 97).

Musical aptitudes constitute a strong determinant of students achievements in learning music. Although not being the only determinant, aptitudes are an essential factor in learning. It must be underlined that the Gordonian theory is based on the distinction between musical aptitudes and achievements. W. Ann Stokes notices that such a distinction can be very useful in various contexts (Stokes, 1996: 99). What is more, Rosa-

mund Schuter-Dyson and Clive Gabriel go even further claiming that any aptitude tests are achievement tests to a certain extent, because as any achievement tests, they determine the initial aptitudes of the individual (Shuter-Dyson, Gabriel, 1986: 20). This is a very important claim especially when one wants to diagnose the level of particular musical aptitudes via musical aptitude tests. Aptitudes are the outcome of nature and inborn potential, as well as, previous experience from the surrounding environment. In spite of the fact that some people have high aptitude potential, they may not be strongly affected by the environment in the process of music inculturation. Regarding such students as poor students (due to their low learning achievements) may appear to be false and may not value their probably high potential for learning. The high potential student may be viewed differently depending on teacher's specialization. Students may not be interested in learning music while being instructed without taking into consideration their potential of musical aptitudes. Only applying the E. E. Gordonian psychometrical tests adjusted to students age (such as: *Primary Measures of Music Audiation* – PMMA, *Intermediate Measures of Music Audiation* – IMMA, Musical Aptitude Profile – MAP, *Advanced Measures of Music Audiation* – AMMA tests) can guarantee a proper and objective assessment of musical aptitudes.

3. Instrumental timbre preferences

Predispositions to learning music are also determined by preferences related to instrumental timbre perception: timbre and register. *Those preferences are related to the tone of a musical instrument which is used for instruction* (Gordon, 1984: 18–24). Gordonian theory stresses the paramount importance of instrumental timbre preference.

To put it bluntly, Gordon's opinions, supported by his own research results, attach great importance to students preferences as crucial, right after musical aptitudes, individual determinants in teaching process (Gordon, 1999: 368–371).

It is impossible to study the issue of preferences without giving consideration to the Gordonian audiation theory, i.e. musical reasoning. Research on instrumental timbre preferences devoid of context of Gordonian theory would not provide conclusive results.

Gordonian theory constantly stresses the importance of preference diagnosis for a timbre of an instrument which would be used by a child for learning music, irrespective of his/her aptitudes (Gordon, 1984: 19–

24). Even high preferences of timbre do not compensate for student's low musical aptitudes (Gordon, 1984: 19–24). Together with musical aptitudes, they set favourable individual conditions for the student beginning to learn music.

Gordon pinpoints the fact that MAP Test (or any other responsible for the developing or stable musical aptitudes nature) should be carried out together with *Instrumental Timbre Preference Test* (Gordon, 1984: 18–25). Predispositions diagnosis aims at selecting gifted students and encouraging them to learn music using a proper instrument. It may not only enhance their contact with an instrument, but also affect their success in learning music. Specially designed Gordonian *Instrumental Timbre Preference Test* (ITPT) appears to be a very useful tool in the above mentioned context.

4. Type of research

This research was carried out on Polish students at the age of 10–17 who have just started learning music using a wind instrument (aerophones). As far as the method is concerned, the *quasi-pedagogical experiment* with additional diagnostic questionnaire were applied. The research was conducted on the group of students who have just started their first year of playing a wind instrument in Polish public schools (groups Child. A; Child. P₁) and in amateur and private school contexts (group Child. P₂). Students who had their instrument determined with the use of Gordonian *Instrumental Timbre Preference Test* (ITPT) and its results formulated Child. A group. It should be remembered that every subject was tested via ITPT, but the test results in case of the remaining Child. P₁; Child. P₂ groups did not influence the choice of an instrument. Additionally, musical aptitudes were analysed with the use of Gordonian *Musical Aptitude Profile* (MAP). The author used the *student self-assessment* questionnaire rate to present some selected research results.

5. Research results

5.1. Preferences vs. students self-assessment

The relationship between the self-assessment of musical preferences of students who start learning music and the results of testing them via Gordonian ITPT were analysed. The analysis results show that 41% of the subjects, when describing their own preferences, present the opinions

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5. Research results

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that are conforming to the E. E. Gordonian ITPT test outcomes. What is more, 34% of the subjects, conforming to Gordonian ITPT, indicated a very similar instrument. The conformity to the results of Gordonian ITPT have not been identified in case of 25% of the subjects. It may be assumed that this group has their preferences for the timbre of other instruments, i.e. aerophones. The general distribution of the results is given in Table 1.

Table 1.
The results of Gordon's ITPT test and self-assessment of the subjects

The results of Gordon's ITPT test and self-assessment of the subjects. N = 166					
Student preference self-assessment just in accordance with the outcomes of ITPT		The student who picked a different wind instrument but from the same category		The choice of instrument from a different category in student self-assessment	
N	%	N	%	N	%
68	41	57	34	41	25

Source: the author's own educational research

To provide clear analysis of the relationship between Gordonian ITPT and students self-assessment, the author checked how the discussed interrelation is distributed in the groups under study (who were also selected considering their place of instruction). Table 2 presents this issue.

Table 2.
The results of Gordon's ITPT test and self-assessment of the subjects in different groups

Groups	Student preference self-assessment just in accordance with the outcomes of ITPT		The student who picked a different wind instrument but from the same category		The choice of instrument from a different category in student self-assessment		Σ
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Child. A	34	61	10	18	12	21	56
Child. P ₁	15	26	28	48	15	26	58
Child. P ₂	19	37	19	37	14	26	52
Σ	68		57		41		166

Source: the author's own educational research

People from Child. A. (61%), who learned to play an instrument in conformity with ITPT, supported the Gordonian ITPT test results in their *self-assessment questionnaire*. One can understand that students self-assessment, though it cannot replace ITPT test, may constitute, together with test result, a very important factor in shaping teachers knowledge about students individual preferences for learning music. In case of the majority of subjects, it was possible to gain such knowledge even before they started learning to play at school.

Comparing the relationship between psychometrically-tested preferences and subjects self-assessment gave rise to the questions concerning accurate choice of an instrument for learning. It is of special importance when it comes to subjective impression of children. The satisfaction with the choice of an instrument for learning depends on whether timbre appears to be interesting to students. That is why, one should take into consideration such an issue in educational context.

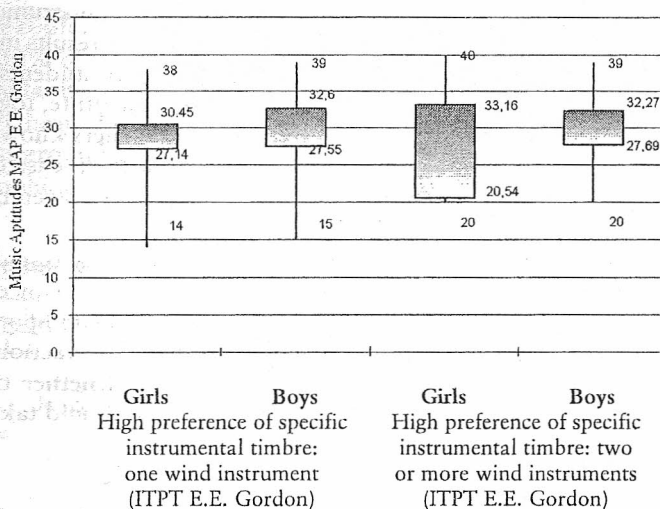
5.2. Tone timbre preferences vs. musical aptitudes

There is no close connection between the level of stable musical aptitudes (tonal and rhythmic) measured with the use of Gordonian *Musical Aptitude Profile* (MAP) and the occurrence of preferences measured with Gordonian *Instrumental Timbre Preference Test* (ITPT). According to MAP Test, high level of musical aptitudes does not influence the level and number of preferred timbres. The above mentioned claims are illustrated by Figure 1.

An analysis of correlation between tonal and rhythmic aptitudes, and preferences was carried. Having considered the statistics, one may see a low correlation between the number of preferred instrumental timbres and the level of *tonal musical aptitudes* ($C = 0,22$). Such a correlation turned out to be statistically insignificant at the set rate of $\alpha = 0,05$ ($\chi^2 = 8,87$).

The analysis also revealed low correlation between the number of preferred instruments and the level of *rhythmic musical aptitudes* ($C = 0,29$). Such correlation, however, turned out to be statistically significant at the set rate of $\alpha = 0,05$ ($\chi^2 = 15,05$).

It may be assumed that the students predispositions analysis conducted with use of test is possible and necessary because of correlation between musical aptitudes (tonal and rhythmic) and students preferences. However, such a correlation proved to be statistically significant only in case of rhythmic aptitudes.



- Mean of results of pure rhythmic musical aptitudes (MAP) E.E. Gordon
- Mean of results of pure tone musical aptitudes (MAP) E.E. Gordon

Figure 1. The relationship between musical aptitudes (MAP) and the occurrence of instrumental timbre preferences (ITPT)

Source: the author's own educational research

5.3. Musical aptitudes and tone timbre preferences vs. achievements in learning how to play a musical instrument

Pearson's r correlation result was used to determine the degree of correlation between musical aptitudes and students' timbre preferences, and their achievements in learning to play a wind instrument. Those tasks, also called a miniature (1, 2, 3):

- miniature 1 – prepared with the help of their teachers;
- miniature 2 – prepared individually without the help of the teacher;
- miniature 3 – for *a'vista* performance.

Five independent competent judges carried the analysis and assessment of a test *W - Kendalla*. Estimate two types of rating scales achievements (continuous and additive) were applied for criteria based on the proposal of E. E. Gordon (Gordon, 2002: 15–19; Trzos, 2009: 88–91).

Additionally, the level of musical aptitudes was taken with the use of Gordonian MAP Test, and statistical analysis was carried out within the scope of two dimensions of aptitudes: tonal (*Tonal Imagery Test*) and rhythmic (*Rhythm Imagery Test*).

The analysis of statistics enabled one to perceive generally low contrary correlation between the level of subjects tone imagery and their achievements ($r = -0,09$). This correlation turned out to be statistically insignificant at the set rate of ($t = 1,17$). The analysis of the distribution of correlation between tonal aptitudes and achievements in learning to play a wind instrument concerning the groups under study is given in Tables 3, 4:

Table 3.

The relationship between music achievements and tonal musical aptitudes (results Tonal Imagery MAP E.E. Gordon' test)

Distribution		Achievements						Σ
		Low		Mean		High		
		N	%	N	%	N	%	
Tonal Imagery MAP E.E. Gordon	Low	7	25	16	57	5	18	28
	Mean	17	15	75	68	19	17	111
	High	6	22	17	63	4	15	27
	Σ	28		108		30		166

Source: the author's own educational research

Table 4.

The results of correlation between students' achievements in learning to play a wind instrument and tonal musical aptitudes

Groups	Correlation	t	Significance
Child. A Learning to play <u>in accordance</u> <u>with ITPT test preferences</u>	-0,04	0,3	No
Child. P ₁ Learning to play <u>not in</u> <u>accordance with ITPT test</u> <u>preferences</u>	-0,35	2,72	Occur
Child. P ₂ Learning to play <u>in accordance</u> <u>with and not in accordance with</u> <u>ITPT test preferences</u>	0,19	1,37	No

Source: the author's own educational research

The analysis of the statistics also shows low correlation between rhythmic aptitudes and achievements in learning to play a wind instrument ($r = 0,09$). Moreover, this correlation is statistically insignificant at the set rate of $\alpha = 0,05$ ($t = 1,17$). Detailed correlation analysis concerning the division into groups is given in Tables 5, 6:

Table 5.

The relationship between music achievements and rhythmic musical aptitudes (results Rhythm Imagery MAP E. E. Gordon' test)

Distribution		Achievements						Σ
		Low		Mean		High		
		N	%	N	%	N	%	
Rhythm Imagery MAP E.E. Gordon	Low	5	25	12	60	3	15	20
	Mean	20	17	76	67	18	16	114
	High	5	16	20	62	7	22	32
	Σ	30		108		28		166

Source: the author's own educational research

Table 6.

The results of correlation between students' achievements in learning to play a wind instrument and the level of rhythmic musical aptitudes

Groups	Correlation	t	Significance
Child. A Learning to play <u>in accordance</u> with ITPT test preferences	0,01	0,07	No
Child. P ₁ Learning to play <u>not in accordance</u> with ITPT test preferences	-0,12	0,91	No
Child. P ₂ Learning to play <u>in accordance</u> with and not in accordance with ITPT test preferences	0,27	1,99	Occur

Source: the author's own educational research

The contradictory character of correlation is crucial in Child. P₁ group where the higher level of musical aptitudes is, the lower students' achievements have been reported. In Child. P₁ group students learned to play a wind instrument with a timbre which was contradictory to their preferences. Such a situation may have reduced their motivation for

working on perfect tone and intonation, or it may have discouraged them from learning (especially students with high musical aptitudes). However, even if musical aptitudes had been high, they wouldn't have deeply influenced students' achievements in learning to play instrument on its own.

While researching musical aptitudes with Gordonian MAP Test and students achievements with Gordonian ITPT, it has been noticed that students' average musical aptitudes in school of music and extraschool education (irrespective of preference results differences) do not differ in a statistically significant way at the rate of $\alpha = 0,05$ ($Z = 0,5$; $Z = 1,95$). What is really interesting, carefully selected students of schools of music (when it comes to musical aptitudes) share a similar rate level in this respect (Manturzevska, 2001: 98–99). Such a feature of stable musical aptitudes homogeneity was also reported in the group of Polish primary school students in the research of Maciej Kołodziejski. According to Kołodziejski, aptitudes examination with the use of the same Gordonian MAP Test enabled him to claim that *groups are homogeneous when it comes to the level of stable musical aptitudes* (Kołodziejski, 2008: 141).

6. Conclusion and implications for further research

On the basis of research results, one can conclude (among others) that the musical aptitudes are not the only one and sufficient determinant of students' musical achievements (Kotarska, 2001: 110–111). It is not always possible to predict students' achievements just on the basis of the level of their aptitudes (Gordon, 1999: 70; Gordon, 2000: 45–46). Apart from that, the potential concerning students' preference for specific instruments should be considered. The author's own educational research results call for implications for further study on the coexistence of tone timbre preferences and musical aptitudes as the prerequisites of students' predispositions to music education.

Implications for further research:

1. Definitely more people from group A, namely the group instructed in accordance with instrumental timbre preference (25%) achieved top results after a year of training. Only 3% of students from the controlled group, which was instructed not in accordance with or against their instrumental timbre value preference, achieved the same level.
2. In accordance with the preference for quality, the choice of a wind instrument has significant influence on student achievements in learning how to play this instrument.

3. Group A, being taught with the use of instrument according with their preference (specific values of Gordon's ITPT test), achieved better results after a year of training.
4. One can see low correlation between the number of preferred instrumental timbre and the level of tonal and rhythmic musical aptitudes in the scope of tonal and rhythm imagery. This correlation turned out to be statistically unimportant (tonal musical aptitudes) and important (rhythmic musical aptitudes) on the assumed level $\alpha=0,05$.
5. One could easily identify high preference of the majority of people (but not everyone – 15%) long before student contact with an instrument at school.
6. Low relationship between the level of tonal and rhythmic musical abilities (test results) and instrumental quality preference has been identified.
7. Why the source and character of developing instrumental timbre preferences need researching. It touches upon audiation context of Gordonian *Music Learning Theory*. Author's own educational research gives rise to the following questions:
 - A. Is it possible to determine a common audiation ground for the development of preferences and musical aptitudes?
 - B. Is it possible, similar to aptitudes, to determine, depending students age and music experience, a threshold (the age of 9?) when the developing aptitudes and preferences become stable?
 - C. Is it really possible for the preferences to become stable (similar to musical aptitudes)?

Muzikālo spēju līmenis un instrumenta tembra izvēle: to ietekme uz sasniegumiem mūzikā

Pavels A. Tšoss

Kopsavilkums

Diagnosticējot cilvēka muzikālo tieksmju dabisko potenciālu (muzikālo inteliģenci, muzikālās spējas, tā vai cita mūzikas tembra izvēli), mēs varam noteikt mūzikas izglītībai nepieciešamos apstākļus. Iegūtās zināšanas palīdz skolotājiem izprast un atbalstīt audzēkņu individuālo muzikālo attīstību. Šīs problēmas izpēte balstās ne tikai jau uzkrātajās zināšanās,

bet arī zinātniskajā darbībā, kuras rezultātā formulēta mūzikas izglītības perspektīva. Viss iepriekšminētais veicina mūzikas pedagogijas efektivitāti un it īpaši tās laikmetīgumu.

Šajā rakstā autors iepazīstina ar savu Polijā veikto pedagogisko pētījumu. To iedvesmojusi Edvīna Eliasa Gordona mūzikas mācības teorija. Pētījuma rezultāti ļauj secināt, ka muzikālās spējas nav vienīgais faktors, kas nosaka audzēkņu sasniegumus mūzikā. Tēmas izstrāde jāturpina, pievēršot īpašu uzmanību muzikālo spēju saiknei ar tā vai cita mūzikas tembra izvēli, kas ietekmē arī panākumus mūzikas izglītības procesā.

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