

DIDACTIC STRATEGIES DRAWN FROM THE MUSICAL EDUCATION TEXTBOOKS OF ROMANIAN MINORITY SCHOOLS IN THE SERBIAN BANAT

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Abstract: *The Serbian Banat (actually that part of the historical Banat - approx. 1/3 of the total - which after the events of 1918 remained in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, later to today's Serbia) includes even at the present time a significant Romanian community, settled along the border with Romania, some villages being over 80% Romanian from an ethnic composition point of view. In such a context, the present study aims to bring into attention the way in which, in accordance with the requirements of Serbian education laws and concepts, the music education classes in the schools of the Romanian minority of this region proceed, presented in a comparative manner with the way in which the education system from Romania sees the music education lessons.*

Keywords: *Music Education, Serbian Banat, Romanians in Serbia,*

INTRODUCTION

The geographical region called *Serbian Banat* designates, in the last hundred years, an administrative entity of the Republic of Serbia, located in the North-East of it, along the border with Romania, more precisely with the region of the *Romanian Banat*. In fact, we understand by the *Romanian Banat* and the *Serbian Banat* the two descendants of a single administrative unit of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, called *Banat*, which was divided at the end of the First World War between the two countries mentioned above (then called the Kingdom of Romania and the Kingdom Yugoslavia) in a proportion of 2/3 to Romania and 1/3 to Serbia. There is still a very small portion of land that belonged to the historical Banat which today is part of Hungary, but on which there are no human settlements¹.

Due to these historical realities, the fact that the border dividing Banat is relatively new (a little over a hundred years), as well as the fact that Romanians and Serbs have coexisted for a very long time in the historical Banat, alongside other nationalities, it is obvious that the border at the end of the first world war, although drawn on the basis of the ethnic majority percentages, left a significant Serbian community in the present-day borders of Romania, but also a significant Romanian

¹ Francesco Grisellini, *Încercare de istorie politică și națională a Banatului*, Editura Facla, Timișoara, 1983

community in the borders of today's Serbia, settled mainly in localities near the border with Romania .

More precisely, according to the censuses of the Serbian state, nowadays, in the Serbian Banat, there is a community of Romanians who number 35,330 people living in 42 localities². The Romanians in the Serbian Banat are coordinated by the National Council of the Romanian Minority, they have Churches and Schools in their own language, cultural and sports formations that represent them at various events, publications in Romanian as well as broadcasts on the main radio and television stations of the Autonomous Region Vojvodina (of which the Serbian Banat is a part). There is even a university educational entity, the school of teachers from Vârset, an extension of the Faculty of Pedagogy of the University of Belgrade that prepares the future teachers of the Romanian minority schools in the Region. There is also a section of the Romanian language at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Novi Sad that prepares, among other things, future teachers of the Romanian language from Romanian minority schools.

Becoming more specific, due to the long historical presence of Romanians in this territory, some Romanian minority schools (such as those in Coștei, Nicolinți, Seleuș and others) have considerable age, having existed for more than 200 years³.

In addition to the two university entities mentioned above, currently, in the Serbian Banat there are 37 educational institutions with teaching in the Romanian language, from preschool to high school level, four of them (Grebeaț, Nicolinț, Coștei and Sân-Mihai) being intended exclusively for the Romanian minority, due to the fact that the localities in which they are located have a predominantly Romanian ethnic composition.

MUSICAL EDUCATION IN THE ROMANIAN SCHOOLS OF THE SERBIAN BANAT.

Referring now in a more specific way to the subject of our research, we must first of all specify the fact that, obviously, regardless of the language in which it is taught, musical education in Serbian schools (so including those taught in Romanian) is the subject of a single curriculum. Music education accompanies students from the first grade of compulsory education until at least the completion of the 8 classes of normal schools, then, depending on the chosen specialization, it can accompany the student until the completion of high school.

² The information regarding the Romanian minority is collected from the official website of the 2011 census <https://web.archive.org/web/20171122193601/http://webrzs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/Public/ReportResultView.aspx?rptId=1210>

³ Pavel Gătăianțu, *Lokve ieri și azi*, Editura Libertatea, Novi Sad, 1989

An extremely important fact to note would be that, for any connoisseur of the Serbian culture (and this aspect also extended to the cohabiting minorities in this country) there is the desire to sing not only in an organized way (in Serbia there is a large number of choirs, not only professional but even of the city, of the village, of various organizations, etc..) but whenever this occasion arises, socially speaking.

This fact has an explanation that goes beyond the trends of the local culture or the fashion of the time because at least for the last hundred years, and especially after the Second World War, the discipline dealing with music education in Serbian schools was called **Singing**. Only later, after the 2000s, was it called **Musical Culture**, but the tendency remains the same, to emphasize **Singing** more than anything, as a starting point in any educational endeavor.

This trend seems to have very old origins in the Serbian education system, information about the subjects studied at the Romanian general school in Sân-Mihai in the 19th century also indicating the name **Singing** for Musical Education.

Moreover, well ahead of the trends of the time, there was for certain periods of time the merging of two school subjects into one, called **Gymnastics and Singing**, an aspect exploited today by many modern methods of teaching music⁴.

In Romanian minority schools, as in the case of other minority schools, the curriculum allows in addition to a minimal imposed Serbian repertoire, the use of the musical background of the respective minority, a fact that also contributes solidly to the preservation of the national identity of the minorities and contributes to the general opinion of that minority regarding the freedom they enjoy within Serbia⁵.

It is also noted that, in Romanian schools or departments, teaching is carried out exclusively in Romanian, a fact that cannot be found in all countries neighboring Romania where there are Romanian communities and minority education.

Coming back, we specify the fact that until today, music education (including the Romanian minority) is tributary to the reforms made with the establishment of the Yugoslav Socialist Republic (reforms that we mentioned previously, and which included a series of didactic strategies tested and modified according to of needs between the years 1948 – 1960).

Thus, we can practically divide music education in Romanian minority schools into two big stages, according to the first 8 compulsory grades:

- The stage of learning musical notes and semiographic elements of music, carried out between grades 1-4
- The stage of the development of musical culture and practice, held between grades 5-8

⁴ Idem.

⁵ Gligor Popi, *Românii din Banatul Sârbesc*, Editura Libertatea, Pancevo, 1993

The stage of learning musical notes is based on the didactic models and strategies followed in learning literature, namely the fact that a child first learns to read, then focus on the ability to read itself and not on going through and understanding difficult texts or the grammar of the language. Likewise, in the case of this system of music education, the emphasis falls on developing the ability to read, understand and finally play the musical sounds according to the requirements of the score. It is a stage considered to be extremely important as it prepares the student for the choral activity which is the main activity in grades 5-8. The emphasis is therefore rather on understanding the musical semiography without focusing on too complicated theories behind it.

In the second stage, that of grades 5-8, the emphasis falls on the development of musical culture as a whole, more precisely on choral singing (the activity for which the student was par excellence prepared in grades 1-4) but also on listening to music pieces with the aim of discerning the different musical genres and currents as well as teaching some elements of music theory. During high school studies, the approach of music education classes is to deepen to a higher level all the previously studied elements.

It is therefore noted that in the Serbian education system, including that of the minorities, the emphasis falls on the practice of vocal singing as a starting point for the development of all the components that together form an individual's musical culture.

We must also note the fact that the Musical Culture discipline is allocated one hour per week in each year of study. Also, an interesting aspect to note is the use, in grades 1-4, for learning to read music, of the Tonika-Do method, which, like the Tonic-Sol-Fa method, represents a solmization system based on syllables and hand movements.

DEBATE

Without wanting to present one system of music education as superior to the other, observing the system used in the Romanian minority schools in Serbia and comparing it with the one in Romania, we cannot see any fundamental differences between them in terms of music education.

We therefore present them in the following strictly from the perspective of the impartial observer.

So, in the Romanian educational system, music education textbooks tend to introduce (albeit in a progressive, sustainable and appropriate way) step by step all the elements of musical culture (including music theory, elements of musical stylistics, musical genres, etc.). In the Serbian educational system, the emphasis is initially on the ability to sing with the voice, which becomes the foundation on which musical culture is created and subsequently accumulated. There is also less emphasis on actual music theory (through the use of the Tonika-Do method), aiming to create practical musical skills. This approach has a special meaning if we refer to the fact that it creates not only individuals with some musical knowledge but genuine amateur musicians, an

important element to note in the current context of Romanian general education, in which there is a marked decrease in choral activity, the students being practically widowed by one of the desired goals of music education: the possibility to perform, even in an amateur context, thus exposing their work and the knowledge gained in the Music Education discipline.

There is no doubt that the way in which Romanian education has built, over many years and through renowned specialists, the strategies related to music education in general education, has many advantages and presents an indisputable sustainability. However, through the music education textbooks of the Romanian minority in Serbia, the Romanian researcher in the field of music education can access, in his own language, an extremely interesting approach, which, although it is eminently practical in its beginning, in the end reaches remarkable results also in the field of music theory and musical stylistics, providing the individual with an adequate musical education.

In a context like that of today's mainstream Romanian musical education, we consider it extremely beneficial to reevaluate our own didactic strategies also through the lens of the Serbian education system. In our opinion, it is extremely possible that by adopting strategies of a more practical nature at the beginning of mass music education, the effectiveness of music education in our country will increase significantly.

CONCLUSIONS

Music education in Romanian schools in Serbia today is based, like Serbian general education, on certain didactic principles that initially adopt a practical, singing-based approach to music education as a foundation for the further development of a more elaborate musical culture of the individual. Obviously for connoisseurs of Serbian culture, this strategy pays off as the appetite for singing as well as the developed sense of musical hearing of the Serbs as a people are recognised; this aspect is also valid for the minorities of Serbia. This fact is not related to genetics or social constructs, but to an extremely coherent musical education strategy. In this context, at the time of quite significant challenges, Romanian music education could be inspired by the Serbian didactic teachings and would certainly find there elements worthy of being integrated into its own education system.

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