

Musical Therapy and its Role in the Development of Physically Challenged Children

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Abstract

The article is concerned with musical art-therapeutic technologies of intellectual and creative development of children with disabilities, behaviour and communication disorders, visual impairment, language dysfunctions and mental retardation. The creativity-driven abolition of diseases occurs by expressing the person's psychoemotional state and gaining positive psychoemotional experience. Modern music therapy is based on the ability of music to control the emotional sphere, the reduction of which results in the weakening of immunity. Musical works differ in the emotional-figurative content but normalize biochemical processes by influencing the human body through emotions.

Keywords: Musical therapy, development, children, health, creativity, inclusive education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Music sounds throughout the life of all people accompanying them in work and rest, grief and joy. In the form of music, people convey information about the world, share their feelings and experience, embody important images and ideas that reflect spiritual values, moral and ethical standards of some society. Since ancient times, people have been aware of unique healing effects produced by certain sounds. The interaction of music and medicine is one of the topical scientific issues considered at the junction of musicology, cultural studies and psychology. The search for new diagnosis and treatment methods is carried out in different directions. The interaction of people and nature in the modern technogenic civilization, the crisis of religious life, spirituality and morality in society as a whole makes scholars turn to native traditions and life styles. Music therapy is one of the means regulating these processes, which manifests a universal approach to a person as the unity of spiritual and physical components. Music therapy as a kind of art therapy provides psychological treatment through sounds and music. The creativity-driven abolition of diseases occurs by expressing the person's psychoemotional state and gaining positive psychoemotional experience. Musical creativity is crucial in overcoming psychological problems and developing an emotional perception of children with behaviour and communication disorders, visual impairment, language dysfunctions and mental retardation.

Myths of Ancient Greece and Egypt prove the fact that music works wonders and treats diseases. Pythagoras also mentioned the therapeutic features of music. He adopted the idea of the benevolent influence of music on the education of worthy citizens from Socrates and further developed it in "The State" and "Laws". Plato assigned the key role to music (among other arts) in the education of a brave, wise, virtuous and even-tempered person, i.e. an ideal citizen. On the one hand, Plato compared the influence of music and gymnastics ("beautiful gestures"); on the other hand, he said that melody and rhythm most of all captured one's soul and encouraged a person to imitate those beautiful samples that music art gave them" [1]. Aristotle argued that music should be used for the sake of upbringing and positive effect on the psyche: "Rhythm and melody contain images of anger and meekness, courage and moderation and all the opposite properties, as well as other moral qualities close to reality. This idea is proved by the experience when we perceive the rhythm and melody with our ears and our mood changes..." [1].

2. METHODS

In ancient Eastern cultures, especially the Egyptian one, people gave music magical meaning and highlighted its healing properties. Musical-therapeutic practices emerged at the early stage of human development and still exist in some cultures of Asia, Africa, America and Australia. "In mythologies of different nations, one can find many examples of miraculous healing with the help of sound and music. [...] Alongside the development of traditional culture, music began to play an important role in ritual practices. Compared with mythological representations, there was a shift from music and sound to the field of religion and medicine. Then people singled out religious rituals and healing rituals. [...] At the same time, music played an auxiliary role, i.e. it acted not as an end in itself but as a means of healing" [2]. American Indians used and still use the so-called "healing" songs in the musical folklore. During rituals of curing patients, Indians played special musical instruments, sang songs, used certain game techniques and gave performances accompanied by "healing" songs and playing on whistles, drums, tambourines, ratchets, etc. In the

culture of northern peoples of Russia, music also played a significant role in shamanistic rituals, including those related to the treatment of sick relatives. It acted through special vocal and instrumental performing techniques that were close to medical means.

Since the 17th century, people have found experimental evidences of the beneficial effect of music. In the 19th century, scientists realized that emotions caused changes in the pulse, respiration, speed, reaction, muscle strength, etc. Psychologists and neuroscientists note the tonic effect of a regular musical rhythm and an increase in the positive emotional mood when singing. Scientists also found that the sound of rattles had a beneficial effect on sick people due to the activation of alpha waves of the brain. Classical music positively influences the physical and mental state of a person, i.e. it calms down, harmonizes feelings, gives a person aesthetic satisfaction. Songs and instrumental pieces praise people's desire for happiness, peace and bright future, express high feelings and subtle experience, give people joy, hope and dream. The impact of music is such that it has a healing effect on children with behaviour and communication disorders, visual impairment, language dysfunctions and mental retardation. Musical art-therapeutic technologies are used to overcome psychological problems and develop emotional perception necessary for the development of creative abilities (emotional, artistic and heuristic orientation), the formation of an effective practical field (application orientation) and the orientation towards the development of the personality of physically challenged students (psychological and pedagogical orientation).

3. RESULTS

Different countries have various models and schools of art therapy. The founder of the Russian school is considered to be the Candidate of Medical Sciences A.I. Kopytin. In his opinion, the purpose of art therapy in education is to preserve or restore the health of students and their adaptation to conditions of educational institutions by implementing psychocorrective, diagnostic and psychopreventive abilities, and developing certain psychological and personal qualities of students [3]. Supporters of this art therapy school have summarized the experience of using art as a means of comprehensive educational, developing and corrective impact on physically challenged children (having hearing and sight disorders, mental retardation, behaviour and communication or musculoskeletal disorders). Scientists regard art therapy as a set of techniques based on the use of different types of art which allow carrying out psychocorrection through the stimulation of artistic and creative manifestations.

Music therapy helps harmonize physically challenged children with their social environment. With the help of music, one can teach a person to perceive a variety of sounds and rhythms of the surrounding world, to feel his/her own biorhythms, to reveal peculiar features of his/her voice and to show his/her creative individuality. Scientists have established that music has a vibrational, physiological and psychological effect on many spheres of human life [3-13]. Sound vibrations can stimulate metabolic processes in the body at the cellular level and improve the performance of respiratory, motor and cardiovascular systems of the body. While working with children, various acoustic, electronic and homemade musical instruments and other kinds of musical creativity are used in order to affect various functions of their body. Playing wind instruments helps to strengthen and improve the respiratory system. If a child suffers from weak motor skills of fingers, keyboard musical tools are of great help. Due to associative connections that arise from the perception and execution of

music, the mental state of a child positively changes. Thus, to relieve stress or activate the child's emotional sphere, teachers recommend listening to music and nature's recordings (sounds of the sea and forest, voices of birds and animals, etc.).

Musical and creative art therapy includes various types of vocal and instrumental activities, improvisation and creative tasks, the main of which are solo singing, listening to various musical interpretations, making music and improvising, moving to music and some theatrical elements. Suitable materials are selected in accordance with their accessibility, artistic expressiveness and real possibilities of their acquirement in the art-therapy process. The corresponding syllabus is based on a differentiated approach to learning, takes into account the age, individual, psychophysiological characteristics of children and their data. Children have different levels of training so the pace of children's acquisition of art therapy also differs. The most productive and effective forms of musical art therapy are improvising games, classes on playing instruments and singing in the process of improvisation, other creative tasks, etc.

4. DISCUSSION

Modern music therapy is based on the ability of music to control the person's emotional sphere, the reduction of which results in the weakening of immunity. Musical works differ in the emotional-figurative content but normalize biochemical processes by influencing the human body through emotions. According to Petrushin [14], the combination of harmony and tempo fully determines the emotional tone of a work if compared to other means of musical expressiveness. For example, major music not only causes a positive mood but also activates physiological processes. Global pedagogical practices widely use musical art-therapeutic technologies that aim to overcome psychological problems and develop the emotional perception of children. Music therapy is used in the process of listening to music and performing or writing music while singing or playing some instrument.

The analysis of scientific works on this topic demonstrates that the potential of music therapy in overcoming psychological problems and developing the emotional perception of children with behaviour and communication disorders, visual impairment, language dysfunctions and mental retardation can be fully realized through not only the development and application of the corresponding art-therapeutic techniques and technologies in education and adaptation processes, but also through the comprehensive study and comprehensive consideration of the result, which is typical of modern inclusive education. Of course, it is inappropriate to mention the full introduction of music therapy in the context of teaching physically challenged children. Some elements of art therapy organically fit into new objectives of inclusive education and those of music therapy for physically challenged children. Speech and musculoskeletal exercises, as well as imitative playing simple musical instruments greatly contribute to the development of the child's creative abilities. That way they create their own musical world in reality. This is the reason why this technique of teaching and educating an active creative personality striving to create and improve the world around is so successful.

5. CONCLUSION

Musical-creative activity and improvisation hold a special position in music therapy. Improvisation includes composing a song in a circle (the first child in the chain sings a phrase, the second comes up with a new line and the last one finishes the composition); playing famous musical tales (the teacher offers the plot of a fairy tale or some specific episode and children replay it in a musical scene); improvising a dance with musical accompaniment based on simple movements provided by the teacher. This form of work allows children to learn different genres and styles of music.

On the one hand, improvisation teaches children to perceive and reflect the world in an artistic and aesthetic manner; on the other hand, it gives them the opportunity to share their emotional experience with others and captures their attitude and emotional reaction to various life events through vocal or instrumental improvisation. The performance of creative tasks in the system of music therapy is one of the most effective methods. Searching activities in solving problems lay the basis for psychological stability in a variety of situations and helps to deal with stress, depression, despondency, aggression, irritability and, most importantly, low self-esteem and disbelief in one's talents. While engaging in musical creativity, a child acquires new knowledge, skills and abilities, shapes his/her personality, learns to formulate ideas and express thoughts, deepens life experience and improves the mental state, masters various life phenomena in musical and creative acts and better understands his/her individuality and inseparability from the outside world.

Musical and creative therapy greatly contributes to the formation of a life-affirming, creative-productive worldview of children and belief in oneself, which have positive impact on their self-awareness. Music therapy also aims to introduce children to music art, develop their motivation for creativity, create high spiritual and moral qualities and aesthetic feelings, identify and realize their performing and writing abilities, help in social adaptation and vocational guidance. Improvisation makes it possible to overcome existing complexes by increasing self-esteem and engaging in public speaking, to generate motivation for creative expression throughout the learning process, to achieve the emancipation of one's initiative and inner freedom, to understand one's abilities and develop one's determination, and to feel one's own importance in society.

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