

## ‘Education through music’ - The model of the Musikkindergarten Berlin

Short title:

The model of the Musikkindergarten Berlin

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## Abstract

In 2005 the pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim initiated the formation of the Musikkindergarten Berlin as the first kindergarten in which music is not only used as an occasional add-on but as the central education medium during every childrens' day.

Skills of especially trained kindergarten teachers combined with regularly visits of professional musicians of the Staatskapelle Berlin, the States Opera Orchestra, form the basis of a new education concept, in which the children experience music in all its different aspects and in its unique capability as a transfer medium into all the other educational areas.

Method, ambition and experimental ground hereby is not only education in or with music, but 'education through music' (D. Barenboim).

This article gives information about and examples of firsthand experiences during the last six years.

## Introduction

Everything began with an idea of the pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim, who wanted to have a drastically change of childrens' education. For him, playing and conducting music almost all the time of his life, music is a fundamental human expression. He often tells the story, that grown up in a home with both parents working as piano teachers, it was absolutely normal, that every person he met played piano and every time the doorbell rang someone came and played piano. Therefore piano playing for him was a natural part of human expression forms, something that one has not to learn in particular; only playing well seemed to be the important thing to learn. Triggered by his own experiences in which he could not only find elements of the world inside the music but also the other way around, learning a lot about the world through the music, he wished to offer children also this access to their lives.

## History and facts

In March 2005, one year after another group around Barenboim had built up a music school project in Ramallah Palestine, he wanted to establish a kindergarten in Berlin, in which “*not musical education, but education of children through music*” (D. Barenboim) could take place. Since this moment, many people try to fill this on the one hand rather natural, but on the other extraordinary and new idea in terms of pedagogical approaches with concepts, participants and life.

On the basis of an honorary non-profit association in which I hold the position of the chairwoman the Musikkindergarten was founded in September 2005. All members of the non-profit association come from a broad variety of interdisciplinary backgrounds and work until today unpaid but with great enthusiasm. The Kindergarten started in 2005 with 21 children, 3 educators and basically financed by a benefit concert of the Staatskapelle Berlin and Lang Lang under Maestro Barenboim. One year later the kindergarten moved house into the direct neighbourhood of the Staatsoper Unter den Linden and expanded. Since 2006 about 60 children with parents from usually more than 20 different nations and mixed social backgrounds are in four mixed aged groups of two to six years together with 9 educators and share the whole day inside the kindergarten rooms, outside in the garden or on smaller or bigger expeditions. During the years in addition to the weekly musicians’ visits 9 major music projects were realized in which instrumental musicians, singers, composers as well as diverse artisanal opera and music disciplines offered great support. In 2007 the non-profit association organized an international education congress under the title ‘Music educates’, in which the first experiences and objective observations were shown and discussed besides presentations of other international early childhood music education projects. Scientific evaluation and observation take place nearly since the beginning as well as pedagogic support for the educators. The musical concept of the kindergarten was published in 2010 [1]. In the nearer future a practical handbook of the experiences, methods, trials and errors of the kindergarten work will be finished to be accessible for all interested educators and institutions as a reaction of numerous of national and international demands.

Idea - and what the Kindergarten is not

The idea 'education through music' stands for a generally and comprehensive education of children with the help of music. Music functions as the central educational medium which reaches via transfer into all the main educational areas that are necessary to cover in the phase of early childhood.

But to state clearly: These transfers happen not automatically and not without guidance. With the right support then, for example, singing and learning to listen can help to develop speech abilities, independently from cultural backgrounds; music, rhythm and motion provide motor activity development; experiences with acoustic and sound phenomena build bridges to natural sciences and singing and playing music combine counting, recognition of structures and social competences. The medium music opens up doors to all educational areas and helps the children to find their way into the complexity of the world.

The Musikkindergarten Berlin is *not* a Kindergarten with simply additional musical services, it is *not* a kind of early music school and it is *not* a cadre training unit for little wonder children or potential future audiences. It is the daytime living space of 60 children, in which music interpenetrates all and acts as the central education medium.

Realization and Mimetic Pedagogic

The realization of all is depending on qualified musical inputs, which come from the professional musicians of the Staatskapelle Berlin honorary and regularly. From same importance is the competence of the educational kindergarten team, who have to transfer the musical inputs into greater interrelations and into the educational areas.

Children imitate – the good as well as the bad. The better the models, the examples are, the better can imitation succeed.

The way of pedagogic work in the Musikkindergarten Berlin can therefore be called Mimetic Pedagogic. The combination of the elements aesthetic education, play, mimesis and experiment establish the working space within the kindergarten.

Children access the world through playing, which is their primary acting mode. They are learning while playing. And during a game - fun and seriousness come together.

Music is also elementary shaped by the character of play: it is a play with notes, with the instrument, the own body, the own feelings and thoughts. One does not 'work' music but plays music. Childrens' access to their environment and music use both the principle of play which puts them closely together: The field of play forms the central overlap between childish world appropriation and musically phenomena.

The main principles mimetic pedagogic and an experimental mindset are basic for the daily work in the Musikkindergarten.

Mimetic pedagogic means teaching and learning via imitation. This technique gets by mainly without words, but needs an accurate demonstration as well as precise observation.

Experimental attitude defines the open and unfinished character of the work in the Kindergarten – educational ambitions should not be reached by a set of prefabricated recipes, but depending on a variable concept respecting and adapting the live interaction of musicians, children and educators.

Presence of musicians in the kindergarten is realized in different kinds: Weekly visits of one or more musicians in the groups as well as small concerts in the main music room. Due to a lack of practise rooms, the kindergarten offers members of the Staatskapelle different rooms to rehearse or teach students there. So the work in progress can be seen live. In addition while a project working phase, the musicians come more often in the kindergarten as well as the children visit musicians in the opera.

Education and music – relation, usage and function

Education and music can in a kindergarten setting be combined in four ways which lead to different functions of music (see Fig. 1):

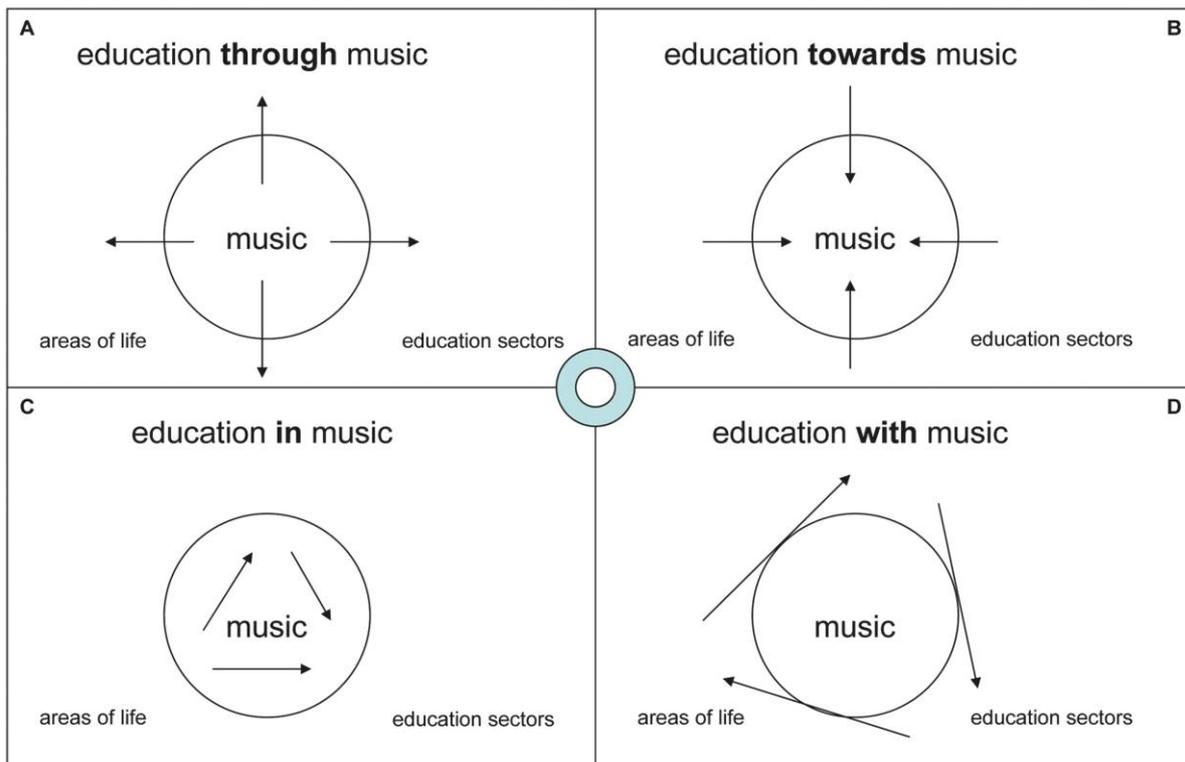


Fig. 1: Relations of education and music

### ***Education through music***

Focussing on education through music (see Fig. 1A), music acts as the educational medium, which initiate and carry processes of childrens' world access.

Out of the music other aspects of life are revealed that are inherent in the music. Auditory perception as well as differentiation is educated via live played music, communication processes in ensembles are experienced and discovered, dance and motor activity according to inner motion and the musically character are invented, techniques, instrumental conditions and simple physical principles of sound generation are examined, numerals and mathematical proportions in rhythms, songs or compositions are discovered.

### ***Education towards music***

Education towards music now describes the contrary way of education through music (see Fig. 1B).

Based on activities of the daily life the concentration is guided to suitable music phenomena. Music here is a planned step on the long and nested way of childrens' learning process.

Music functions as an educational element which enriches the childish world appropriation via constructing networks of aesthetic and cultural relationships.

### ***Education in music***

In the case of education in music, music represents the learning object itself, therefore this describes the traditional field of elementary musical education (see Fig. 1C).

In the domain of a kindergarten environment this means introduction and first contacts to basic musical features or terms like soft and loud, bright and dark, high and low, short and long. Here contents like playing together, getting to know instruments and their ways of playing build the central points of interest. Music here can be seen as a school subject with a target-oriented teaching and therefore with intend separated from other areas of life.

### ***Education with music***

The phrase 'education with music' refers to a definition of music as a didactic companion (see Fig. 1D).

Nothing is developed out of the music, nothing leads to music itself, but music is used as didactic material for an extra-musical interest. Examples are short instrumental episodes, learning songs or rhythmically spoken verses that mark periodic activities in the daily kindergarten routine.

To evaluate these four combinations of education and music – the 'education with music' is the most simple, but also least-fruitful way, because it does not take in care the significance of music itself.

Education in music is the traditional way of a subject- and goal-oriented training and comparable with offers like gymnastics or early foreign language lessons -  
- taught in best quality this could cope with the strict sense of music.

All four methods have their value and are used, but as basis of a broad and complex education system however education through and towards music is essential - because in those two ways the crucial point lies in the linkage of at best all areas of life with music.

#### Educational areas, music and transfer

In Berlin the main educational areas are state guidelines what means that kindergartens have to take care, that their children get in contact with each of these 7 fields (see Table 1):

Table 1: Educational areas in Berlin kindergartens

1 - body, motion, health
2 - social and cultural environment
3 - communication: spoken and written language, media
4 - visual thinking / form / art
5 - music
6 - basic experiences in mathematics
7 - basic experiences in natural and technical sciences

Music now is easily able to open up access to each educational field.

This can happen like the following simple example “Carneval of the animals” illustrates, which was also one of our earlier projects:

The children explored along the music appearance and behaviour of the different animals, their movements, their sounds. They went to the zoo, looked at the animals, smelled them, touched some of them and used all the impressions back in the kindergarten for further investigations: which animals live alone, which in groups, which in the sky, which in the water and why is this possible? They looked up in an atlas, where the animals came from and what their natural environment is, they learned, that in different countries they have

different names. It was easy to symbolize, that for the same distance an elephant and a mouse have to make a different amount of steps. They painted, built models, invented their own animal music and habitat areas and generated many more interests and fields of focuses on the way.

The musicians came with their instruments, played the movements, showed instruments and variations and finally after the children had worked at each field for weeks, some musical pieces were taken out and the children and educators took some of their findings into a little performance, which then was shown to the parents in a private concert. Also here, the way was the goal – not a representative show of drilled children at the end.

### Experiences

Visitors often are astonished because they expected a music kindergarten as a horrible loud place, even more, when they heard there were 60 children and they all have free access to all kinds of instruments the whole day. But the opposite is the case: Since we attach great importance to make the children sensible for their senses, music is used focussed and has its value only in combination with its counterpart, the silence.

In fact – some 'lessons' that no one has to teach the children by words are very simple, but very effective. For example, there exist soloists and tutti players, every player has to listen to the other -- even two musicians have to communicate with each other and not against each other in order to play a song that sounds well. They have to start together, find the right tempo and stop together and before playing they need to get in tune with the other instrument. And solo parts in almost all pieces can alternate, so it would not be helpful, to disturb someone's solo, because then the others might do this, when your own pretty solo comes. All these, harmony and disharmony can in the case of live played music be seen, be heard and sensed. And all these are unspoken patterns of social behaviour.

Measuring success of a kindergarten is complex and a further topic, which cannot be discussed here. But we have evaluations from structured

observations – and here independent scientists found that our children compared with aged-matched ones from other kindergartens reach during a short residence in the Musikkindergarten higher levels of social competences and communication skills. Also very positive effects were found on children with ADHD, the attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and children, who had other impairments of social interaction abilities.

What can regardless of scientific measurable data be stated is a high satisfaction of parents and children that attended the Musikkindergarten, also in comparison with the considered development of their own children or siblings in kindergartens of other concepts.

### Real life

This article will finish with a short episode from the Kindergarten that might be taken as an example for sensible senses and social competence or better social learning:

One day in a normal group a Columbian boy suddenly pretended not to understand at least one German word and began speaking Spanish. The kindergarten educators came to him, spoke with him, asked him about problems or worries of all kinds – but nothing helped. The boy remained stubborn, closed up and talked Spanish. In some way the educators resigned after several attempts and shifted their focus. A third person came into room after a while and found an amazing situation, because although all children were talking, no one was understandable: They all had adapted speaking Spanish, not really of course – but they imitated the spoken sounds and syllables and words with much fun and great inventiveness. Only several minutes later the Columbian boy suddenly understood again German.

The children simply did, what in other actions we exactly wished them to do – they watched the scene, they looked and listened carefully and via imitating they took the unknown language like a new acoustic phenomenon, like a song or like simply a speech game. It became something that with some practising every child could do. And while interacting with each other and also with the

Columbian boy they socialized and harmonized the situation unknowingly better than every adult or extern person probably could have done.

#### Reference:

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#### Acknowledgements

I thank all the people who help to realize the Musikkindergarten Berlin since all these years and fill the idea of 'education through music' everyday with life.