Chapter 3
Developing the Students' Thinking and Learning Skills in the Instrumental Lesson

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ABSTRACT

Developing the learners' thinking and learning skills can be defined as helping the latter not only to acquire a deeper understanding of the content they have to learn, but also to master a method enabling them to become independent learners. Learners should be guided to reflect on their learning, in order to be aware of their own learning strategies, to understand which advantages and drawbacks characterize each strategy, to distinguish how and when to use the different strategies, to identify the most suitable one on a case-by-case basis, and to be able to apply it to further their learning. After a reflection on the pedagogical issues raised in particular by the instrumental lessons, the study puts forward a proposal of how to develop the students' thinking and learning skills, focusing on a masterpiece of the flute literature: Johann Sebastian Bach's "Allemande" from the Partita in A minor, BWV 1013.

INTRODUCTION

In an ecosystem a living organism interacts with other living organisms and with nonliving components such as air, water, and mineral soil. In 1973 Germain applied the ecological perspective to the relationships between the individual and his/her social environment, affirming that the entirety of these relationships determines the individual's life situation (Germain, 1973). According to this view, a student's ability to perform well academically can be enhanced or vice-versa hindered by his/her relationship with teacher and classmates.

In music performance lessons, which are usually organized as one-to-one interactions and get more and more demanding, students may experience both dealing with a new piece and the interaction with the teacher as stressors, resulting in physiological and emotional tension. Due to this tension, the student may perform poorly, and consequently experience negative feelings of low self-esteem.

As teacher and student form a system within the educational setting, and each behavioral act of the participants produces change in the system, it is imperative that the teacher's approach to the instrumental lesson be aimed at enhancing the student's feelings of self-confidence. The present study, which draws inspiration from the ecosystems theory and from studies on foreign language learning, maintains that this goal can be achieved developing the students' thinking and learning skills by means of cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

This study, whose main goal is to propose a way to enhance the students' feelings of self-trust by means of a purely pedagogic method, is structured in three sections: the first centers on music performance and some aspects of performance studies, the second focuses on strategies to develop the students' thinking and learning skills, and the third offers an example of the proposed model of instrumental lesson, concentrating on Bach's Allemande from the Partita BWV1013.

BACKGROUND

In musical performance the performer interprets what is notated in the musical score, which is often a task of overwhelming complexity due to the high number of interacting aspects that shall be taken into consideration (Seashore, 1967), and translates it into a sequence of tones. Fidelity to the score is necessary, but not sufficient: a living performance requires identifying the underlying structure of the piece in order to assign to it the appropriate tempo, and to the single tones forming a specific sequence the appropriate loudness, temporal value, and timbre. All these features may present microvariations within the single tones (Clynes, 1983), which can be performed by means of specific motor behaviour (Schaffer, 1980).

Traditional methods of teaching are successful in developing what the Greeks termed tekne (Fisher, 2013), which makes students able to perform a piece according to the suggestions of the teacher. Yet are these methods also successful in developing the higher-order thinking, what the Greeks called phronesis (Fisher, 2013), which makes students able to carry out an autonomous analysis of a piece's structure, in order to choose the appropriate motor behaviour obtaining the desired musical features?

Building on the works of these renowned scholars, the present article aims at a more limited objective: to make some suggestions on how students can be guided in the analysis of Bach's Allemande, in order to promote the development of their thinking and learning skills, promoting a more mature performance.

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

Issues, Controversies, Problems

Performance as Interpretation

According to some authors, *musical performance holds a crucial role in the art and experience of music. Classical performers in particular can shine their own light upon the composed work and express their creativity* (Bernays & Trauber, 2014: 1). Such individual creativity can be expressed performing the piece at a specific tempo, stressing particular elements by means of appropriate dynamics while putting others in the shade, articulating some phrases legato and others staccato, and so on.

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