

MUSIC AND DRAMA ACTIVITIES IN LEARNING ABOUT THE FOREST AND ITS IMPACT ON COMMUNICATION WITH YOUNGER CHILDREN OF PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE

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Affiliation: The paper is part of the solution of the research task APVV 18-0484 Forest pedagogy and education for sustainable development in pre-primary and primary education.

Abstract: We can integrate children's learning about the forest and the topics of the forest environment as part of environmental education into any educational area. The educational areas of Art and Culture, or Language and Communication, and their specific activities connected with musical, literary or dramatic activities, are no exception. By reading about the forest environment, targeted perceptions of nature, or musical-dramatic games, we can also influence the emotions or behavior of children and their communication skills. Musical-dramatic activities in connection with the literary template on the topic of the forest were the subject of our research in children of younger school age, who are placed in alternative institutional care - in the center for children and families. We investigated the potential of music-dramatic activities for children's communication and socio-emotional skills, if we apply them as part of extracurricular activities in the process of preparing children for performance.

Keywords: Musical activities, musical-dramatic activities, literary text, forest environment, communication, socio-emotional skills.

Introduction

Through activities with the adults closest to the child - parents or grandparents, the child learns to understand the differences that they sense, and find in the surrounding country. It can be a problem if the child does not grow up in a biological family, but is placed in alternative institutional care - a center for children and families. The article brings us some research findings from pedagogical-artistic work, which we carried out with children who have not grown up in a biological family. As part of out-of-school education - in hobbies and activities, we regularly carried out musical and dramatic activities with them. We used them from a screenplay whose literary motif was the theme *How the Forest Roars*. The subject of our pedagogical research was the potential of music and art activities for communication skills, also the socio-emotional qualities of the personality of a child of younger school age. In our study, we present partial results of the research. We focus on the potential of artistic activities for the development of the child's communication.

In the introductory part of the article we deal with the essence of aesthetic education and its intersections with environmental education. We relate art-educational activities to the perception of natural beauty. Specifically, we focus on the beauty of the forest environment and its importance for humans. In this way, we can lead children to beauty, cultivate them, but also lead them to think about the need to protect all living things. In the next part we explain how we proceeded with children - participants in research in our pedagogical-artistic research activities. We implemented it with children from the center for children and families as part of their extracurricular activities. In this chapter, we explain specific musical-dramatic activities which are based on our script. The final part of the paper is devoted to research. In it, we have described the methodology of our pedagogical research and we bring some results that are related to the development of children's communication skills through targeted musical and dramatic activities.

1 Links between-aesthetical and environmental education

Music, literary and dramatic education are part of aesthetic education and educational areas Art and culture (music-dramatic activities) and Language and communication (literary and

literary-dramatic activities). Aesthetic education can be considered a pedagogical approach, in which we focus on highlighting the beauties all around us. The beauty of the natural environment, specifically the forest environment, is no exception. It is in the forest that we can discover unique

creations of nature. Many trees are original works of art. The sight and perception of such peculiar natural phenomena are connected with experience, with emotions, but also with imagination, memory, thinking and speech. These perceptions, which are part of cognitive processes, stimulate the child not only to seek beauty, but also to be able to create and protect it.

A literary template on the topic of the forest, which we can process into a script and then work with it through musical-dramatic activities, can be a suitable didactic tool, but also a suitable research tool to find out if we know through these creative aesthetic games and activities to support children's communication, including socio-emotional skills.

1.1 From aesthetic perception to aesthetic experience and values

Mistrík (2007) considers aesthetic education to be a pedagogical and deliberate influence on aesthetic taste, aesthetic value orientation, and helps to develop aesthetic perception, the result of which is an aesthetic experience. Aesthetic experiences that result from the perception and observation of particular natural phenomena can lead to expressive aesthetic activities and aesthetic attitudes. It also satisfies our aesthetic needs. Musical-dramatic activities in connection with literary-dramatic activities, the central motif of which is the forest, can bring the child an aesthetic experience. The condition is that the child actively engages in creative activities. This process will bring the child not only an aesthetic experience, but also the formation of value orientation and the opportunity to improve in communication skills.

Henckmann and Lotter (1995) define aesthetic experience as the readiness of a person to maintain and develop aesthetic experiences. In accordance with Mistrík (2007), we would like to remind that in this way we can also create an aesthetic value orientation for children. Later, they can appreciate and respect aesthetic values, i.e. the relationship of human to objects and phenomena that he creates through aesthetic experience.

Průcha, Walterová and Mareš, (2007) state that aesthetic education develops especially aesthetic abilities and feelings, the ability to observe aesthetic values in human products, both in everyday life and in nature, and cultivates the relationship to art and beauty. That is also why, in accordance with Mistrík (2007), we can distinguish between natural artistic and non-artistic aesthetics or beauty. We can consider unique natural formations or events as aesthetically natural, or if we create works of art from bark, fruits, or tree roots, etc. The artistic aesthetic is the result of creative artistic activity (literary text, ceramics, musical composition, choreography, etc.). By non-artistic aesthetic, we mean discovering beauty through fashion accessories, through design, or in sports performances, etc. When we want to develop aesthetic education in children, we try to implement it mainly through aesthetic-educational activities - music (singing, instrumental, perceptual, music-movement or music-dramatic), art (drawing, painting, modelling, graphics, photography, etc.), literary (play with word, rhythm and rhyme, children's verbal folklore, poetry, prose, literary-dramatic), dance (also as part of music and movement activities).

In all aesthetic-educational areas of education, we enable children to perceive, experience and create beauty through an encounter with art, i.e. through artistic-educational activities, which also develops their ability to create and process aesthetic taste. Through their own creative aesthetic games, children express their view of the world. It is this ability that is necessary in the perception and evaluation of the surrounding reality, including the natural environment.

We lead children to environmental protection through environmental education. Činčera (2007) states that the

philosophy of environmental education is based on environmental ethics. We consider environmental education to be an important element in the upbringing of every child, because in the future it will influence the state of its immediate environment through its daily actions. One of the areas of specific socio-emotional goals of environmental education in primary education are also goals that aim at:

- the beauty of nature,
- to assess the natural environment,
- the protective attitudes towards nature.

Here are some of them: to sensitively perceive the beauty of nature, its charm and uniqueness, to evaluate the natural environment, to express relationship and protective attitudes to the natural environment and to express them through various artistic means of expression, practically apply habits of nature care, share feelings, experiences, impressions from care for nature and view them.

1.2 The forest and its (aesthetic) value for humans

As we stated in the introduction, in our contribution we narrow the natural environment to the forest environment. We dare to say that just by discovering the beauties of the forest environment, through its colours, sounds, shadows, movement, unexpected natural still lifes of the plant or animal empire, we can discover natural and artistic and non-artistic means in the forest environment with children. These can become the basis for the expressive level of aesthetic activities in education. At the receptive level, we can stimulate children with illustrative didactic means. They can be fairy tales with a forest motif, or poems, illustrations, photographs, or recordings of animal sounds that depict the environment of the forest.

The forest is therefore a topic, respectively also a source of topics, which significantly affects the educational field of Arts and Culture. It can be assumed that if we mediate the child's life in the forest through artistic means, when entering the real forest environment, the child will be more sensitive to this environment's specific stimuli. It can also be assumed that the child will form a relationship with the forest and will want to return to it and get to know it better.

The topics in which we teach children about the forest environment - wildlife, deciduous and coniferous trees, animals in winter, anthill, etc., should probably be based on the idea that the forest is one of the most valuable assets that mankind has for its own renewable capabilities. The forest also brings us aesthetic stimuli. Čaboun et al. (2011) recalls that the forest also has specific psycho-aesthetic effects on humans, created by a combination of light and shadow, colours, shapes, smells, sounds, etc. Forests are no longer just trees and their primary function is not only in the extraction of wood raw material. Foresters take care of the forests.

Foresters are also interested in cooperating with schools. They can be developed as part of further education in the accredited program Forest Pedagogy. Forest pedagogy is learning on the principle of activating methods and forms of experiential learning - Learning about the forest in the forest. We therefore involve as many senses as possible in learning and build on the principle of learning through our own experience. We not only provide children with knowledge, but we also develop the psychomotor and socio-emotional side of their personalities. We lead children to the importance of protecting forests for humans, not from humans. It is children who are often prone to sensitively perceive every cut tree, so it is necessary to show that farming is a part of our lives. For this reason, we consider it enriching for children and teachers, if some topics at school can be taught by a forester - forest teacher, because they know the environment of the forest intimately. When they understand these contexts as young children, they are less likely to be subject to one-sided views in adulthood when they have the opportunity to influence public events.

2 Music and Drama activities in developing the topic of the forest

Every art-educational activity significantly contributes to the cognitive, psychomotor and emotional development of the child. Examples are dance, or more precisely physical activities of children, in which they express the wind, flight and fall of leaves, a wedding dance of bees, or a dance in the air of maple fruits. The child can express their flight by angled or arched dance movements. Motivation for dance variations can also be a theme through fairy-tale motifs - the dance of forest fairies, the dance of mushrooms in a clearing, or the motivated walking of forest animals in various situations. We will add a dramatic expression to the dance or movement expressions, because its condition is the child's decision-making. In this way we can stimulate their communication and social skills. In the following section, we will describe some of the procedures we followed in our research of scenario and selection of musical-dramatic activities.

2.1 Music and drama activities when working with a scenario

The expressive level of art-educational activities helps the child to cope with psychophysical tension. The child must decide how to express their idea. An example can be movement in the forest - walking, running, successful overcoming of natural obstacles. We know how to gradually integrate musical-dramatic activities into these physical activities. In this way, we also proceeded in our pedagogical-research extracurricular activities. We worked with the screenplay *Crying Toadstool* (Kollárová, 2000), which inspired us to choose musical-dramatic activities. As part of the research, we held 10 meetings. Attention was paid to the development of the forest theme, especially the application of musical and dramatic activities.

In the forest we find many topics and ideas for aesthetic (or attempts at artistic) expression of children's ideas. When children meet art and beauty, we soften them. This is a humanistic approach to education, no special strategies of educator are needed. The children had a variety of information about the forest. Our task was to reflect on this information within the hobby and to use it adequately in extracurricular practice so that they know what topic we are going to develop together. We helped them to incorporate the new information about the forest that they gained in our creative process into their knowledge system using appropriate activating methods. It was not enough to explain to children that people often make inappropriate and dangerous interventions in the environment, but we motivated them to feel the need to get involved in solving these inappropriate interventions. To feel the need to protect the environment.

To facilitate environmental education through musical-dramatic activities within the framework of education outside teaching, we can also use the dramatic activity of children. We also used a game with an object - a fabric and a mimic puppet. This was inspired by Kováčová (2014), who considers her puppet to be a suitable didactic tool for developing emotional education and building relationships. The story of the chosen fairy tale, which we worked with in our research, took place in a forest environment. We prepared a theatrical performance with the children. In the research, we focused on the creative process, not on its final form and public presentation. We used the literary text by D. Mrázková *How the Forest Roars* (1971), from which we wrote the screenplay *Uplakaná muchotrávka* (Kollárová, 2000. Urbanová (In Králová, 2002) reminds us that a child needs the art of theater to help him. The literary treatment of themes from the forest environment is close to children, they are still relevant, but their didactic grasp is more problematic. It can be topics like: rescue of animals or plants, felling of forests, soil loading and construction, hunting animals for leather or furs, pollution of rivers, forests, etc. We also processed some of the mentioned topics in scenarios (more specifically Kollárová, Leitmannová, 2014).

In the introductory meetings, we assumed that if we want to acquaint the child with art and aesthetic stimuli as much as possible, this teaching must be based on trust. Musical-dramatic activities are built on survival. So we also included games and exercises for trust. We thought of relationships - teacher and child, teacher and children, child and children. We were inspired by the themes from the book *Can You Talk About Trees?* (Wohlleben, 2017) and together we discovered an imaginary journey through the forest by poems, pictures, sound recordings.

We also used blind exercises in dramatic activities to get to know and build trust. On top of that we used a game with tones. The children were conducted in pairs over a specified melodic interval. Through movement exercises or pantomime, they expressed the butterflies of the family, beetles, flies, while the movement was accompanied by their own melodic vocal expression, later they were inspired by listening to music. This is how they experienced smaller adventures - they watched, compared, learned to respect in space, to feel the group. It brought them joy and a positive experience.

In the next meetings, we always focused on the voice warm-ups in the stories. Each vocal warm-up was included at the beginning of the meeting including games and breathing exercises, phonation, articulation and rhythmic exercises. We gradually involved phonation. Through vocal plays, we explained how the leaves breathe. By movement and staccato rhythm, then by a bound melody in the legate, we expressed by dance the movement and falling of leaves from a tree - serrated or with a straight edge. Their musical-movement expression of coniferous or deciduous trees was interesting. By playing instrumental instruments, they expressed a notched bark, or its peeling from a tree. The needles of the trees motivated them to stand upright and walk in the tempo of the music recording. We used the game with a decreasing melody when the bark falls from the trees, when the cones fall. For the graceful movement of children, we helped each other with scarves and colored ribbons. We used the fabrics and their colors to express the gait and character of the animals. We completed the walk with rhythmic instruments or a melodic motif. Interesting melodic motifs were created when the seeds of the cone were carried by the wind. The fruits of the beech were a grateful impulse for the play with the rhythm and Orff's instrumentalist. The children invented rhythmic and melodic motifs while playing squirrels while picking and eating and hiding nuts. Suggestions for games with children's instruments and rhythmic instruments can also be found in Vančová, Osvaldová (2019). The script also inspired us to perform circular music and movement games. The music game *Miracle Wheel* helped us to convey to the children how a tree grows and increases its trunk circumference. In a musical-dramatic etude, we explained that the roots of a tree are like a pump. It pumps water through the trunk to the top of the tree. This was also the subject of a melodic play with an emphasis on changes in dynamics and tempo.

In spring, not only mushrooms but also animal families can be seen in the forest. They have become our motivation for musical and dramatic activities. The children expressed a pace-rhythmically motivated walk - an adult and a young, or sneaking in the woods so as not to scare the animal family. Trees or forest animals were the themes for playing with rhythm and rhyme, either in melody or in words. In the preparation of our performance, we used rhetorics, rapotanks, reproaches, riddles, in connection with vocal plays. For children, static activities focused on attention and perception were also inspiring - standing like a tree (straight, crooked), like a rock, being in the ground like a root.

The singing of birds is also inspiring for the musical expression. Birds emit tones, or melodic or rhythmic motifs. They are attentive and sing when they feel another bird's singing pause. It is at regular intervals. We used these exercises as perceptual activities. At the same time, we taught the children that we should let someone talk, finish singing, before we start singing ourselves. We have also enriched musical-dramatic games with word games. Proof of this was the play of dialogue games -

children in the clearing, meeting a toadstool, a wolf with a hunter, a wolf with a fox or a snake. These are excellent exercises for psychomotor skills and for developing attention and listening. Some expressions of the birds' speech served us as tongue twisters, but also as themes for a song. We used the game of bird singing for vocal improvisations - they are happy to see a friend or an enemy-expression in high or low tones, ascending or descending melody. In the echo game, we used the objects we had in the room. In pairs, they had a melodic dialogue - two toadstools, a toadstool and a tree - using singing, rhythm, dynamics, tempo-rhythm. The other couple guessed what they might be talking about.

We presented only some musical-dramatic plays, exercises and improvisations, which we proceeded in our research, in order to observe and reflect - group interview after meetings with participants to find out what potential musical-dramatic activities have for the development of communication, including socio-emotional children's skills.

3 The research about applying the forest theme musical-dramatic activities with children from the center for children and families.

As part of our voluntary activities, we found that children are interested in participating in several leisure activities with an artistic focus. For this reason, we decided to offer specific children from the center for children and families actively used free time through cultural and artistic hobby activities. These were musical-dramatic activities, which also included other musical activities. We decided to carry out applied pedagogical research with children, with the premise of enriching their social, communication and emotional aspects of personality development. In our case, it is applied pedagogical research, the aim of which was to explore the potential of musical-dramatic activities for stimulating and developing social skills and emotional experience of children.

We carried out musical-dramatic activities with the children - participants of the research regularly during their leisure activities in the afternoon hours. We worked with the whole educational group on the screenplay by D. Kollárová *How the Forest Knocks* (1999), which we wrote on literary motifs from D. Mrázková's book *The Weeping Toadstool* (1981).

3.1 Theoretical background to research

To explore the potential of musical-dramatic activity - we decided because the social side of personality is closely linked to the emotional development of the child. According to Langmeier and Krejčířová (2006), their emotional development is behind the social side of the personality. It is also proven by many experts (Petty, 2013, Helfert, 1930, Daněk, 2019) that art influences emotions, but also determines human behaviour, which is reflected in other communication, respectively. social skills.

In the HDČ research, but also in the pedagogical-didactic level have devoted themselves Hatřík (1997), Felix (2013), Langsteinová (2002), Kollárová (2014), Pírníková (2004), Sondorová (2020). We dare to say that very little attention is currently paid to them and that they are represented rather seldom in research. At the research level, the enriching knowledge for us was the stimulating work of Hatřík (1992, 1997), who, according to Kupková (2001), had a natural tendency towards a child participant. He creatively applied a number of impulses and themes in integrative musical-dramatic projects, which he implemented in the environment of children in the Children's Town of Trenčín - Zlatovce. Hatřík was the author of several cycles of musical fairy tales (*Mechúrik Koščúrik* with friends, *Ballads about wood*, *The legend of the birch*, *Dwarves*). He was the author of not only the text but also the music component.

The interest in musical-dramatic activities is also confirmed by the research of Evjaková (2016), who focused her research field on pupils of the basic art school. The author of the research

states that the musical-dramatic activities contributed to the development of the pupils' personalities and adds that in their implementation it is good for the teacher to have knowledge in the field of basic directing procedures. We would like to draw attention to the fact that this work with children from an art school is carried out within the scope of hobby activities, and therefore we would like to draw attention to the fact that with children from CDR, music and drama activities are carried out within the educational group and during their compulsory afternoon activity. In addition, the fact that they are participants who are handicapped or have a weaker communication ability must be taken into account.

Kaščáková's (2019) research also became stimulating for our research. The results of the research point to different perceptions of music in children. She found that children have well-developed rhythmic and singing-reproductive skills. Musical play, play motifs, playful elements are a natural and at the same time the most engaging means of direct contact with music. These results also became the starting point for further research.

Research studies related to the operation of musical activities in the environment of institutional care are found more in the Czech Republic. Daněk (2014, 2016, 2018) offers several research data that were the inspiration for our research. During the collaboration, the author's effort was to improve the quality of life of children in institutional care. The results of the research confirmed that the cooperation of the orchestra enabled these children to increase their musical education. However, the author highlighted in his research the phenomenon of the family, which is absent in these children. In our case, this factor was not decisive.

3.2 Research problem, objectives and issues

At the beginning, we approached the pedagogical diagnosis of children. Eight children were involved in the research. We diagnosed at the beginning and end of our study, paying attention to all participants in the group and comparing our findings with the data we obtained from an interview with their educator.

In the research, we focused our attention on identifying the potential of musical and dramatic activities for the development of children's communication skills. We decided to solve this problem through a qualitative methodology of pedagogical research. We used methods:

- semi-structured interview (with the educator) - this selected method offered us a broad interaction and a deeper look at the approach between the researcher and the participants;
- observation (during 10 meetings) - we placed a great importance to this method. Because it allowed us not only to observe and make field notes, but also to analyze the process;
- group semi-structured interview (after each meeting with children) - we obtained research data, which we collected from participants' direct reflections on interactions in the creative process.

We met with the participants once a week for 10 weeks. One meeting lasted 90 minutes. Our research tools were observation sheets and interview protocols. An important variable in the research was musical-dramatic activities - specific preparations for meetings - creative pedagogical-artistic work with children and script. When evaluating the data, we proceeded with a qualitative content analysis of the text - written protocols from interviews, observations and interviews. We analyzed these by open coding and then we proceeded to selective coding. By synthesizing categories and their relationships, we have tried to enrich the theory.

In the study, we present results that answer our one research question - What changes can we notice in children's communication if we apply regular musical and dramatic activities?

3.3 Research results - verbal and non - verbal speech

We approached the evaluation of the collected research data by content analysis of the text. These were texts - written protocols from the observation, from group interviews after individual meetings and from the entrance and exit interview with the educator of the researched educational group. The results showed that we can agree with the theory that music and dramatic activities are an adequate opportunity in the environment of institutional care to improve children's communication and social skills.

From the analysis of the above-mentioned research data, we can state that we noticed the greatest shift from non-verbal to verbal communication in a participant with an autistic spectrum. In the introductory meetings, the mentioned participant expressed himself non-verbally - by gesture, facial expression, eye contact. We noticed his involvement in the activities and the change during the instrumental activities on Thursday's meeting. At the subsequent meeting, he also manifested himself in verbal communication. Here we hypothesize that if we integrate musical-dramatic activities into educational work, we can positively influence the communication of children with special educational needs.

In our case, this was shown in a child with a confirmed autism spectrum. The mentioned participant in the introductory meetings did not answer to us, he did not engage in communication at all. The resulting data showed that in verbal communication he used simple sentences, compound sentences. These were sentences that reflected his opinion on something. These were not sentences towards the partners in the game. In non-verbal communication, these were more gestures towards the group. The final interview with the educator also confirmed that after the implementation of the research, the participant really changed in communication for the better. She also appreciated his active involvement in musical and dramatic activities in the group. The participant had previously rejected the group organizational form.

The communication of the participants with the researcher was active during the research, but the participants responded in the introductory meetings only to our invitation. We did not reach a significant change, where they got involved and did not come up with ideas until the fifth meeting. Observation data in conjunction with the interview showed that some participants respected their communication partner and stopped jumping into speech, were able to listen, followed each other in communication, and respected someone else's opinion. Observation and an interview with the educator confirmed that children's screaming and loud communication were minimized, which was very common in the introductory meetings.

We dare to say that behind the positive development of verbal communication is not only musical-dramatic activities, but also group interviews. We realized this after every meeting with children. Participants needed someone to hear their opinion and to know that their opinion was of interest and respected. It is questionable whether group interviews were not a dependent variable in this research. Through a joint conversation, the participants learned to perceive the evaluation of their own level of abilities, which according to Geldard and Geldard (2008, pp. 245 - 267) are crucial from the developmental point of view in children of younger school age. The authors further state that evaluating the level of one's own ability and comparing oneself with the performance of others adds to children's self-awareness.

Children's musical instruments - Orff's instrumental - have also become a means of communication for children. With them, the participants expressed the characters from the script. At the seventh meeting, the participants began to actively respond to dramatic situations from the forest environment and were interested in more information about the forest environment. As part of musical and dramatic activities, we applied role-playing games. In them, the participants gave the forest environment human characteristics (old and lazy tree, proud and fast wind,

etc.). Verbally and non-verbally communicated in the role of trees, animals. An example is when they took on the role of a mushroom or moss, they softened their vocal expression and gestures. This is proof that they understood proportionality, characteristics and actively used their imagination in thinking and speech.

The participants also underwent an active change in the articulation and modulation of the voice. Research participants showed better articulation, which we focused on in vocal-intonation, rhythmic and musical-dramatic plays. We devoted ourselves to breathing exercises to support diaphragmatic breathing, vocal exercises in which we experimented with the voice in its natural and unnatural position. We varied its strength, height with practice texts. The script contains several word games with rhyme and rhythm, funny phrases and tongue twisters. They gave them confidence and courage, as they began to develop and improvise their own ideas to enrich the script on the topic of the forest. We can therefore confirm that musical-dramatic activities also support children's verbal creativity.

In conclusion, we will only summarize that musical-dramatic activities within leisure activities can rightly be considered a significant factor in the development of verbal and non-verbal communication in children of younger school age. It has also proven in our research to be positive for promoting communication with children with impaired communication skills. However, this would deserve further investigation. The strongest manifestations that we recorded by comparing the obtained data were from non-verbal communication - making contact by touching the forearm, shaking hands, touching the elbows and shoulders to the sign of interplay. In facial expressions, it was maintaining eye contact during communication and a smile. In verbal communication, the most frequent of positive changes were the formation of sentences. At the beginning, it was more about words, phrases, or a simple sentence. The biggest problem for them was listening to one-another and not interrupting the communication. However, we consider it highly positive that they were not afraid to ask for help and formulated their request in a cultured way. They clearly and comprehensibly formulated their ideas for further creative-artistic activity, while developing the topic. This is proof that they were fully involved in these activities and did them with interest.

4 Conclusion

By motivating children through art-educational activities, we cultivate their narration, but also their non-verbal expressions. Through art-educational activities, therefore also musical-dramatic activities, we develop the ability of inherits to perceive and individually evaluate stimuli from the external environment. After all, natural phenomena are a frequent inspiration for the creation of artists. By approaching education through children's own creative experiments, we lead them to form their own opinion, to the ability to present it and gain confidence in this presentation. For aesthetic education in conjunction with environmental education, the basic denominator is perception and experience. An unsuitable relationship with the protection of the environment may later manifest itself as a predatory relationship from which only man will benefit. We should therefore seek and find educational strategies that will enable us to lead children to a responsible, humane and rational approach to the natural environment. Our research has also shown that one of such strategies is the opportunity to get to know and form a relationship with the natural environment through art and educational activities, specifically through music and dramatic activities. We can only protect a forest if we understand its value to humans. It is a continuous process by which we reveal to children not only the beauty and values of the living, but also current and future environmental problems. Our task is to show them how we can improve these relationships not only with nature but also with people.

The fact that musical-dramatic activities can be one of the means that can also help children with disabilities, specifically with the autism spectrum, at least in support of their verbal

communication, should be considered valuable findings. For this reason, we dare to express the opinion that musical-dramatic activities deserve their attention in pedagogical research. Through music-pedagogical research, we brought findings in the field of music-dramatic activities carried out in the conditions of spending free time in centers for children and families. The centers are a substitute of institutional care for children who do not grow up with biological parents. Our research can be an inspiration for deeper scientific research in the field of musical-dramatic activities in the conditions of education outside teaching.

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Primary Paper Section: A

Secondary Paper Section: AJ, AL, AM, DO