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## Pedagogy of Play in the Music Education of Third Grade Elementary School Students. Research Report

Pedagogika zabawy w edukacji muzycznej uczniów klasy trzeciej szkoły podstawowej – raport z badań

### KEYWORDS ABSTRACT

pedagogy of play,  
music pedagogy  
of play, music  
education, early  
childhood education

Classes taught at school should be a space where students have the opportunity to fully develop, discover themselves, awaken and develop their potential and passions, as well as to acquire the knowledge necessary for effective functioning in the world. The use of properly selected methods during classes is essential to create an environment in which children can study and develop. Pedagogy of play incorporates a wealth of methods that offer a number of benefits and advantages that come with learning through play. Play triggers joy in children, creates space where they can be themselves, explore and be creative while improving the competencies necessary for life. Pedagogy of play also creates a favorable environment for working with children in music classes. The freedom and dynamics of play perfectly match the child's musical activities. The main purpose of the study was to investigate how children function and perform during classes that incorporate musical pedagogy of play. The study was conducted using qualitative field research conducted at Bogdan Jański Elementary School in Kraków, Poland. The results of the study suggest that pedagogy of play creates a friendly environment for the development and formation of various competencies in children during a music class.

## SŁOWA KLUCZE ABSTRAKT

pedagogika  
zabawy, muzyczna  
pedagogika  
zabawy, edukacja  
muzyczna, edukacja  
wczesnoszkolna

Zajęcia prowadzone w szkole powinny być przestrzenią, w której uczniowie mają możliwość pełnego rozwoju, odkrywania siebie, rozbudzenia i rozwijania swojego potencjału i pasji oraz zdobywania niezbędnej wiedzy do prawidłowego funkcjonowania w świecie. Stosowanie odpowiednio dobranych i wyselekcjonowanych metod zajęć jest bardzo istotne, aby stworzyć dzieciom środowisko, w którym mogą się kształcić i rozwijać. Pedagogika zabawy to bogactwo metod, które oferują korzyści płynące z nauki poprzez zabawę wyzwalamą w dziecku radość, stwarzającą przestrzeń do bycia sobą, eksplorowania, twórczości oraz doskonalącą kompetencje niezbędne do życia. Pedagogika zabawy stwarza również bardzo korzystne warunki do pracy z dziećmi na zajęciach muzycznych. Wolność i dynamika zabawy idealnie komponuje się z muzyczną działalnością dziecka. Głównym celem badań było poznanie funkcjonowania dzieci podczas zajęć muzycznych z wykorzystaniem pedagogiki zabawy. W pracy posłużono się metodą jakościowych badań terenowych. Zostały one przeprowadzone w Szkole Podstawowej im. Bogdana Jańskiego w Krakowie. Wyniki badań sugerują, że pedagogika zabawy stwarza przyjazne środowisko do rozwijania i kształtowania różnorodnych kompetencji dzieci podczas zajęć muzycznych.

## Introduction

Play is inextricably linked to childhood. It is one of the earliest activities undertaken by children, through which they develop their ingenuity and creativity, while honing the multiple competencies needed for proper functioning. Play has a rich tradition in child rearing. Already Plato believed that upbringing and teaching should be based on freedom and autonomy rather than coercion (Kędzior-Niczyporuk, 2008). This gave rise to the creation of pedagogy of play the main idea of which is to stimulate learning through play that sparks interest and engages the child while giving them pleasure and a sense of security.

There is no doubt that music plays an important role in human life. It is of great significance in the formation of a child's personality, as well as their aesthetic, emotional and artistic sensitivity. Its greatest value is its beauty, which leads to deep aesthetic experience, and its phenomenon consists in its unique and inimitable nature, which has an impact on individual development (Sacher, 2015). The artistic value of music is also connected with the depth and richness of feelings, emotions and moods associated with experiencing it. Urszula Bissinger-Ćwierz, who uses the term "musical pedagogy of play", defines this method as "any joyful musical expression and reception, expressed as sound, singing, vocal improvisation, rhythm, movement, dancing, playing instruments, painting, drawing, role-playing, defining emotions

and experiences while exposed to the influence of music” (Bissinger-Ćwierz, 2007). Music-related methodological inspirations in pedagogy of play are drawn from rich and diverse sources. The facilitation activities fit in well with the modern concepts of music education E. J. Dalcroze (Bogdanowicz, 2015) and C. Orff (Kataryńczuk-Mania, 2022) aesthetics R. Steiner (Choczyński, 2013), creative movement R. Laban (Kierzkowska, 2018), and W. Sherborne and active musicianship advocated by B. Strauss (Burczyk, 2019). Similarly, the developments in art therapy, music therapy (Konieczna-Nowak, 2013), and choreotherapy, which includes dance, have been regarded as important contribution. The facilitation of music in pedagogy of play is not a new concept of music education and upbringing, but a methodological suggestion that enriches the already existing systems. It is a syncretic methodology of music-based group activity, combining a variety of pedagogical, psychological and cultural trends. It should also be seen as an active form of learning about music in a very broad sense. Such facilitation further aims at creating a “language of music and art” that should take into account the natural abilities and current mental predispositions of the audience. Good contact and the opportunity to “converse with the language of art” have a fundamental impact on the development of music competence understood as a stock of knowledge, experience and skills in this field. To encourage musical activity, it is good to use a variety of activities that allow direct contact with sound, movement, image and words, offering one the opportunity to receive music with the body, heart and mind. Bissinger-Ćwierz distinguishes the following methods promoting personal and musical development (2007, p. 11):

- introductory methods for lesson starters;
- methods involving dance as a form of artistic expression;
- methods developing vocal expression;
- methods relying on the use of instruments;
- methods integrating music, visual arts and paratheatrical activities;
- relaxation methods.

Musical pedagogy of play, combining the autonomy, freedom and joy of play with all forms of musical education, creativity and motor activity that music brings, enables the creation of a space in which children discover themselves and the world, develop their sensitivity, awareness of their own body and space, as well as learn how to establish interpersonal relationships (Mardell et al., 2023).

## Purpose and Research Problem

The main purpose of the study was to investigate how children function and perform during classes that incorporate musical pedagogy of play.

The main research problem has been defined as whether and (if yes) to what extent activities using musical pedagogy of play constitute a teaching-learning environment that develops the basic general skills promoted by the curriculum of integrated early childhood education.

The main research problem formulated in this way requires that specific research problems also take the form of questions:

1. Whether and – if yes – to what extent the use of musical pedagogy of play in class facilitates the acquisition of such skills such as:

- active attitude towards new experiences;
- perseverance in pursuit of one's goals;
- reflective reasoning;
- effective communication;
- understanding game/play instructions;
- performing tasks independently;
- presenting personal point of view;
- generating interesting and unconventional ideas;
- interacting and working in a group;
- establishing positive relationships with others;
- providing assistance;
- understanding and interpreting one's own and other people's experiences and emotions?

2. Which games are most popular among students:

- introductory (class starters);
- based on dance (integration dances, dance-rhythm improvisations);
- developing vocal expression (music games involving sound, movement and rhythm, playing with voice, playing with songs);
- involving instruments (percussion instruments);
- integrating music, art and paratheatrical activities (art games with staging games, with art and music);
- inducing relaxation (soothing and calming effect, active relaxation)?

3. What teaching aids make working with a group easier and more attractive?

## Method

In order to look for answers to the above research problems, qualitative field research was carried out. As stated by E. Babbie, this method allows “direct observation of social phenomena under natural conditions” (Babbie, 2019, p. 309). The author points out that the use of the term “qualitative field research” allows one to distinguish

this observational method from others that are designed to provide data for quantitative analysis. This is because the premise of field research is to provide mainly qualitative data, or “observations that cannot be easily reduced to numbers” (Babbie, 2008, p. 321). The key advantage of this method is that, through a direct encounter with a given social phenomenon, it enables the researcher to achieve a holistic perspective of the problem under study and thus gain a deeper insight and a more complete understanding of it. Field research is particularly suitable for learning about those attitudes and behaviours that can best be understood in their natural setting. Moreover, conducting interviews should be an integral part of the entire field research process. Their purpose was to gather feedback on the activities conducted from all children participating in the study. The interview made use of the sentence completion technique: “During the activities I liked/didn’t like...”. The children, immediately after the classes, answered the same questions in turn. The study was conducted at Bogdan Jański Elementary School in Kraków from November 20 to December 22, 2023. The total of five classes were conducted, held weekly during five consecutive weeks. Twenty-three third-grade pupils were surveyed. None of the participants in the study attended music school and thus no one showed more knowledge and skills in music education than the others.

## Analysis and Results

Children involved in the study participated in activities using musical pedagogy of play. The games were selected from a wealth of suggestions available in such publications as: *We Learn by Playing. Third Grade*, and *Musical Pedagogy of Play in Group Work*. All games were very carefully selected and adapted to the conditions in which they were to be carried out, as well as to the age, interests, abilities and skills of the children. Well-prepared games should be oriented to the needs of the participants rather than the teacher. They ought to take place in an atmosphere of acceptance, safety and friendship, and they are to promote collaboration while being diverse and creative.

The following methods used in each class are part of the musical pedagogy of play:

- introductory – serving as lesson starters;
- using dance as a form of artistic expression;
- developing vocal expression;
- involving the use of musical instruments;
- integrating music, visual arts and paratheatrical activities;
- relaxation.

U. Bissinger-Ćwierz (2007) defines the term “method” as general categories of play identified by the purpose they serve. By “techniques” she means specific activities such as play, exercises and games (p. 11).

The survey was followed by an analysis of the results, which are detailed below.

### 1. Autumn games with music by Antonio Vivaldi

Objectives:

- to create bonds within the group;
- to stimulate imagination;
- to improve concentration;
- to develop motor expression;
- to exercise the organs of speech;
- to develop the ability to cooperate with others;
- to shape music taste.

Aids: paper, scissors, crayons, soundtracks – a piece by Antonio Vivaldi entitled *Autumn*.

*Autumn*, tambourine, rattles, sleigh bells, Antonio Vivaldi’s piece: Concerto for strings in D minor, RV 128, Largo.

Number of participants: 22

Stages of the class:

- “Music notes” – each child creates a business card on a cut-out music note – writes his or her name on it, decorates it and glues it to his/her T-shirt;
- “Falling leaves” – the children listen to the sound of leaves and dance like leaves falling from the tree. When the music falls silent, they lie down on the floor;
- “Cacophony of syllables” – one child leaves the room. Each of the children in the room is assigned a syllable of a word, e.g. “ka-szta-ny” (chestnuts), “ka-łu-ża” (pond), “zo-łę-dzie” (acorns). The child returns to the room, the other children sing their syllables to a popular Polish folk rhyme (*Wlazł kotek na płotek [A cat has climbed the fence]*), and the task is for the child to guess what word the group is singing;
- “Impulse” – the children are seated in a circle, each holding a musical instrument. They are asked to successively send an impulse according to the rhythm of Antonio Vivaldi’s *Autumn*;
- “Illustrating music in silence” – the children listen to *Autumn* by Antonio Vivaldi. Their task is to illustrate it with crayons to express their feelings;
- “Active relaxation” – the children lie down face up on the floor. The teacher plays some baroque music and gives instructions:
  - a) Lying eights – children trace a figure of eight in the air first with the right hand, then with the left hand and then with both hands. Later they trace the figures with their right leg, then the left leg and, finally, with both legs;

- b) Gymnastics – children touch the left elbow with the right knee and vice versa;
- c) Symmetrical scribbles – they trace patterns, geometric figures, letters and complete words in the air using the right and left hands simultaneously;
- d) Marching – children bend the left leg at the knee, bend the right hand at the elbow and make smooth, alternating movements.

In-class performance of third-grade pupils:

The first class aroused a lot of curiosity and excitement in the children. They were very interested in the facilitator and the games they were introduced to. The feedback the children gave was often along the lines of: “I liked everything because I like dancing, singing and drawing”; “It was fun because I like music a lot”; “I liked it because it was fun and creative”. The children showed engagement and persistence while working; most of them demonstrated respect and acceptance towards others; they did not laugh at their peers, and they were kind and non-judgmental. For the most part, they approached the task independently and, when possible, produced interesting and creative ideas. The art game “Illustrating music in silence” turned out to be the most popular, followed closely by the “Cacophony of syllables”. The observational data was reflected in the interview conducted with the group. The art game was accompanied by Antonio Vivaldi’s music, which inspired the artwork. During the interview, the children said that “it was nice to draw to the music”; “this music is nice”. They found the second game enjoyable as “It was interesting and funny”; “I had fun”; “It was very funny”. The game that integrated music and art, even though most interesting, was apparently misunderstood. The children were asked to use crayons to draw or doodle to the music in order to express their own feelings; they were supposed to transfer the emotions evoked by the music onto paper. However, they went on to draw whatever they felt like, including horses, music notes, an autumn landscape, or even themselves. These creations were inspired more by the topic of the class and the games they had previously performed rather than the emotions felt while listening to the music. Of all children only one boy did the task as directed. With all the other children it was difficult to observe a reflection of their own emotions. The game that received the least attention was the “Active relaxation”. The children’s task was to lie on the floor and follow the teacher’s instructions while listening to baroque music. The children were unable to calm down and instead they were loud, talking to each other. This should not, however, be seen as misbehaviour. Watching them, one could get the impression that they were bursting with emotions and energy. The activities that preceded the relaxation game had made the group very lively, and the children could not calm down enough afterwards. During other games: “Notes”; “Falling Leaves”, and “Impulse”, the children did not show much involvement or perseverance, but their joy of play, movement and musical expression was obvious. The attitudes and behaviours to be observed in the study participants were selected based on the advantages and benefits

offered by pedagogy of play. However, not all of them were directly observable. In the case of these activities, it was difficult to capture the ability to interpret emotions experienced by classmates or the willingness to help others.

## 2. In the wonderland. Discovering the magic of music

Objectives:

- to develop in children the ability to interact with each other;
- to develop smooth movements;
- to exercise vocal organs;
- to practise concentration;
- to develop cooperation skills;
- to shape one's music taste;
- to develop the ability to interpret music.

Aids: percussion instruments, cards for drawing lots, soundtrack: music from the *Harry Potter* movie by John Williams.

Number of participants: 21

Stages of the class:

- "Welcome spells" – the teacher greets the children with the following words:

*Hocus pocus, everybody focus...*

The teacher repeats this greeting several times, in different ways: shouting, whispering, very slowly, etc.

- "Puppet" – the children get into pairs. One is a puppet, enchanted by the other with an imaginary wand used to control the partner. The task is performed to the *Harry Potter* soundtrack;
- "Chain of sounds" – the teacher comes up with a sound (e.g. a witch's laughter, fear, witchcraft, etc.), the children repeat after the teacher in chorus, then each child in turn comes up with a sound while the other children repeat;
- "Spell" – the teacher divides the children into four groups by drawing cards numbered 1 to 4. Each group comes up with a "spell" which is expressed by the sound of instruments, body and voice. All groups present their "spells" in front of the other children;
- "Enchanted pencil" – the children draw music note cards and find their match to work in pairs. One of each pair draws lines and shapes on the back of the other to the rhythm of music from the *Harry Potter* movie and the other mimics the movements felt on the back;
- "Flying carpet" – by lining up from tallest to lowest children find their match in height and weight to perform the task; next, the teacher divides them into



3 groups of 8. The children take the 4-point kneeling position one next to the other, and one child lies down on top of them imitating a “flying carpet”.

In-class performance of third-grade pupils:

Of all the games, two: the introductory “Welcome Spell” and the art game “Enchanted Pencil” generated the greatest interest. While performing the two games, the children were very persistent and involved. There was also a considerable interest in the “Spell” game, during which the pupils were supposed to come up with spells and express them with the sounds of instruments, body movements, singing/ words. However, this game, which the majority of the children enjoyed, was affected by the lack of integration between some groups who were supposed to work together. Some of the children did not want to cooperate since, as they said, “they were not fond of some other kids in the group”. This game also generated group conflicts. The children struggled to reach an agreement as to what the spell should sound like and how it would be presented. Some of the children even stood aside and did not want to participate in the task. When interviewed, the children reported that they found this game more attractive than the others, yet some openly stated that they did not “get on” with their peers, which was the reason why they did not like it. The groups that reached an agreement presented their spells with great joy and involvement, they demonstrated the skills in co-operation and networking. The game was accompanied by a variety of emotions. It was observed that the negative emotions were connected with relationships among peers rather than with the game itself. However, even the most attractive games and teaching aids did not facilitate the positive attitudes toward peers. In this game, the main teaching aids were percussion instruments which proved to be very helpful as they inspired the children when they were inventing the spells and expressing them through their body movements. According to the interview, the game the children enjoyed the most was the “Flying Carpet”. There were only three girls who said they did not fancy this game because it was “dangerous”. They said they were afraid they would “get hurt”, “fall” or “a heavy friend would crush them”. This confirms the previous observations, as those girls were reluctant to participate in the game and it was assumed that they found it unattractive or that they did not like the other children in their group. The “Enchanted Pencil” was another game that the children described as “attractive” during the feedback interview. It was observed that they were eager to cooperate with their partners and demonstrated creativity through their very interesting and imaginative works. This game was accompanied by music from *Harry Potter* which proved very inspiring and aroused emotions in the children, which they demonstrated through artistic expression. The observations led to the conclusion that the game that attracted the least interest was the “Chain of sounds”. The children seemed to be confused and did not quite know what the activity required from them. They had difficulty coming up with new and interesting noises, and needed

inspiration and help from peers or the teacher. Some had trouble imitating the noises that others came up with and then kept silent or made a completely different sound. The “Puppet” game proved attractive, but the children did not perform it as directed. Instead of playing the role of a magician who directs a person with a “wand”, they imitated the partner like in another well-known game called the “Mirror”.

### 3. Santa-themed music activities

Objectives:

- to practise associations;
- to develop the “giving” and “receiving” attitudes;
- to practise concentration;
- to develop large motor skills;
- to develop the ability to cooperate with others;
- to develop motor, vocal and theatrical expression;
- to form creative attitudes;
- to exercise patience and ability to calm down;
- to exercise perceptiveness and agility.

Aids: soundtrack – the *Jingle Bells* song, ball, sleigh bells, all objects found in the room.

Number of participants: 22.

Stages of the class:

- The “Gift” – everyone offers a “gift” to the person sitting on the left; that is, the children invent and name objects beginning with the first letters of their names, e.g. Teresa – turkey;
- “Musical impressions” – the children get into groups of three and stand one behind the other. The child in front is the leader and the two behind are imitators. The child in front improvises by dancing to the music while the other two imitate his or her movements. Then the leader changes. The game is accompanied by “Jingle bells”;
- “Sing as much as you can” – the children sit on the chairs to form a circle while the teacher stands in the center. Everyone sings the “It’s snowing” song. When the teacher throws the ball on the ground, everyone changes places, and the teacher looks for a place to sit. The person who doesn’t find a place stays in the middle. All participants start singing again and the game continues;
- “Naughty Elves” – the children are divided into two groups that face each other. Between them stands a “conductor” who conducts the groups one at a time (at his discretion). The group the conductor is not conducting at the moment and is behind his back, takes on the role of “naughty Elves” who disturb the performance. The task of the conductor is to catch the guilty “Elf”. Such an “Elf”, if caught, becomes the conductor;

- “Sounds of the sleigh” – the children are divided into groups and assigned roles. In one group there are actors and musicians. The children are tasked with creating and acting out a scene with Santa Claus in the leading role. The rest is left up to the children to work out. The task of the “actors” is to act out the scene while the “musicians” are supposed to create a musical setting for the scene.
- “Soundless Bells” – the children move sleigh bells so that no sound is made by them.

In-class performance of third-grade pupils:

As regards these activities, all the games proved to be very popular among the children, with the introductory game “Gift” and the relaxation game “Soundless Bells” being most attractive. During the former, the children became very involved in coming up with “gifts” for their classmates. Whenever they struggled to come up with something starting with a given letter of the alphabet, they said funny, non-obvious things, which brought them a lot of joy and satisfaction. Many positive emotions were observed, together with a lot of kindness towards each other and the ease of making contact with others. The other suggestion (the relaxation game), during which the children’s task was to move the sleigh bells so that they did not make a sound, turned out to be both very exciting and interesting for them. The children were very excited about this game, and any sound made by the bells generated strong emotions in them. One could see great concentration on the correct performance of the task. In addition, the children were eager to cooperate and, if necessary, instructed each other on how to move the bells correctly and offered help. The sleigh bells turned out to be a great teaching aid and were definitely the main attraction of this game. The children reported that it was this game that was most often mentioned as the most attractive and interesting.

Another game that the group also enjoyed was “Sounds of the sleigh”. The task was to invent and reenact scenes about Santa Claus. The game generated a lot of positive emotions. The children were very cooperative and involved in performing the task. The majority played their roles correctly while the scenes they presented were very imaginative and original. To develop background music, the children used various percussion instruments and numerous objects available in the room. For example, they used chairs and pillows to create Santa’s sleigh while reindeer harnesses were made from sashes available in the room. Another game mentioned by the children was the “Naughty Elves”, which also relied on the use of percussions. Initially, some children had difficulty understanding its rules, but over time, after observing their peers, they understood how the game worked. The children playing the game felt a lot of emotions and excitement, and the fact that they could play the role of “naughty Elves” and make “noise” with instruments brought a lot of joy and fun. The “Musical Impressions” game produced a high level of children’s involvement, willingness

to cooperate and strongly positive peer-to-peer relationships. All of the children had very interesting ideas and came up with original movements and gestures. The game was accompanied by the famous song called “Jingle bells”, which positively influenced the mood in the group as the song’s rhythmic and melodic nature was reflected in the children’s dance. The “Sing as much as you can” game was reported as the least interesting of all the suggestions. The children’s concentration was mainly directed at the ball and how to change and find a place to sit as quickly as possible, rather than at singing, which was essential to this game.

#### 4. Winter-themed music activities

Objectives:

- to establish tactile contact;
- to practise sound – movement response;
- to practise body posture;
- to practise concentration;
- to develop motor expression;
- to develop the ability to cooperate with others;
- to practice motor coordination and develop gross motor skills;
- to calm down.

Aids: percussion instruments, soundtracks: Antonio Vivaldi, *Winter*, *Snow is falling* by Shakin’ Stevens, dice, candles, paints, cards.

Number of participants: 13.

Stages of the class:

- “Good morning” – the children walk around the room. When the teacher plays a particular instrument, they greet each other in a predetermined way: e.g. rattle – they greet using hands, tambourine – they greet with elbows, etc.;
- “Group expression of music and movement” – the teacher divides the class into 3 groups. Their task is to come up with a dance of snowflakes to the *Snow is falling* song. Afterwards, each group performs their dance;
- “Bad winter” – the teacher divides the children into 6 groups, each group is assigned a part of the popular Polish folk song *Zima zła [Bad Winter]*. One person throws the dice. The group whose number is drawn will then sing their line. The task is to throw the dice and sing until all parts of the song have been sung. This can be done against the clock and repeated several times:
  - group I – Hu! Hu! ha! Hu! Hu! ha! Our winter’s bad!
  - group II – It pinches noses, it pinches ears;
  - group III – It gusts snow in the eyes;
  - group IV – With a whirlwind in the field it rushes!
  - group V – Our winter’s bad!
  - group VI – Our winter’s bad!

- “Conductor” – the teacher divides the class into sections of percussion instruments and conducts the “orchestras” to *Winter* – a piece by Antonio Vivaldi;
- “Winter postcard” – listening to *Winter* by Antonio Vivaldi, the children use candles to draw a winter landscape on a sheet of paper and then paint the sheet with paints using their fingers;
- “Massage with instruments” – the children get into pairs and then give each other a massage with percussion instruments.

In-class performance of third-grade pupils:

The games that proved to be the most popular with the children were: “Group expression of music and movement”, and “Massage with instruments”. During these games, the children showed great involvement in the activities, demonstrated persistence and cooperation with their peers. Feedback received from the children confirmed our earlier observations as they most often mentioned these games as the most attractive. During the dance game, the children showed their ingenuity and created interesting dance patterns. The play was accompanied by a lot of positive energy. Inventing moves and cooperating with their classmates brought the children a lot of joy and satisfaction, and the presentation of dances was met with respect, acceptance and applause. The children created a dance routine to the song *Snow is Falling* which is very joyful and lively. One could feel the energy that came with the music in the children’s behavior and dance. In this game, music, as a teaching aid, proved to be inspiring and encouraging. The game the children also found very attractive was the one in which they massaged themselves with instruments. Interestingly, playing this game, the children took inspiration from previous activities. When massaging a friend or colleague, they tried to do it in such a way that the instruments did not make any sound. The instruments in this game inspired them to look for unconventional solutions. A game that also aroused interest among the children was “The Evil Winter”. Despite the initial difficulty in understanding its rules, they generally enjoyed the game. Much excitement came from tossing dice and the designated parts of the song that the children were asked to memorize. During this game, they demonstrated their ability to interact with each other. “Winter Postcard” and “Good Morning” aroused less enthusiasm. The art game using candles and paints made the children very curious, because, at first, as they said, “they couldn’t see what they were drawing” and they found it exciting, whereas later they could paint with their fingers and “get dirty”, which gave them a lot of fun. Antonio Vivaldi’s song in the background served as an inspiration, boosting creativity and setting the pace for doing artwork. The game they liked least was the “Conductor”. The children reported that they were already familiar with this game and “didn’t want to play it again”. In this case, it is difficult to assess whether the game was unattractive, or whether it lacked a “whiff” of novelty, which normally has an invigorating effect and promotes involvement.

### 5. Christmas is coming – a musical celebration

Objectives:

- to integrate the group;
- to familiarize children with graphic notation;
- to consolidate the concepts of high and low sound;
- to develop the sense of rhythm;
- to develop musical sensitivity;
- to calm down.

Aids: soundtracks: Polish carols, *We wish you a Merry Christmas* (song), round cards – “baubles”, crayons, glue, paper Christmas tree, cards, percussion instruments.

Number of participants: 18.

Stages of the class:

- “Write my name” – each child approaches the nearest person who writes the first letter of the child’s name; the game then follows by asking the next person to write the second letter of the name, and so on;
- “Christmas prancing” – the children are introduced to the lyrics of the song called *We wish you a Merry Christmas*. Then, the teacher gives the first command: “Make a turn when you hear the word ‘Christmas’”. The teacher turns on the music and the children follow the command. Next, another movement is added: “Hop when you hear the word ‘wish’”. The teacher turns on the music and the children perform the two commands. The game continues like this as more commands are given:
  - Christmas – turn;
  - wish – hop;
  - merry – clap your hands;
  - happy – squat;
  - we – touching hands with knees;
  - New Year – wave your hands above the head;
  - you – point your hands at others.
- “Sound tree”. The teacher draws a Christmas tree on the board. Various musical symbols are then added to the tree: “f” (*forte*) – right and left side of the Christmas tree; “p” (*piano*) – right and left side of the Christmas tree; “<” (*cre-scendo*) – in the middle of the tree between *piano* on the left and *forte* on the right; “>” (*diminuendo*) – between *piano* on the right and *forte* on the left; *soprano* – at the top of the Christmas tree; *bass* – at the bottom of the tree (in the trunk); and vowels, e.g. “ooo”, as baubles. The teacher then explains the meanings of all of the symbols and names. The task is to sing according to the teacher’s instructions: for example, if the teacher points to the vowel “ooo” followed by *soprano* and *forte*, it

- means that the children will sing the voice “ooo” in a high voice, loudly. The teacher pointing to *diminuendo* means that the children should sing quieter and quieter;
- “To the rhythm of carols” – the children are divided into 5 groups, each group taps out the rhythm of a selected carol and the task of the other groups is to guess the title or sing a fragment of the carol;
  - “Decorate a Christmas tree” – each child receives a round piece of paper and decorates it to make a “bauble”. Then the teacher plays some Polish carols and each child, one by one, to the rhythm of the music, come up to the tree and glues their bauble saying one Christmas wish. The task is completed when the Christmas tree is filled with all the children’s baubles;
  - “Rhythmic farewell” – each child makes up his/her own farewell on a musical instrument, the other children “respond” in the same way.

In-class performance of third-grade pupils:

The most popular games were the “Christmas pranks” and “We decorate the Christmas tree”. The children especially enjoyed the dance game. Their task was to make the right move or gesture depending on the word they heard in a song. The children were positive and joyful during the game. There was a lot of excitement, too, and when someone failed to make a move at the right moment, the children found it funny and laughed. On the other hand, the art game, with its elements of paratheatrical activities, came with plenty of emotions. One could see the great impact of the background carols, which brought a festive dimension to the activity. While making their wishes, the children showed great involvement and sensitivity. The game aroused a lot of joy in them and brought an atmosphere of kindness and fun. Making wishes was difficult for some children since they were confused about what to say. Then their peers helped them by giving some prompts. Decorating baubles and attaching them to the Christmas tree appeared to be the most attractive of all the activities. The children created very interesting and unique items. They showed ingenuity and creativity and some even managed to demonstrate truly original creations, such as origami baubles.

The introductory and closing games did not arouse much interest in the children. The “Write my name” game proved to be too easy as the task was performed very quickly and without much involvement. The “Rhythmic farewell” did not excite the children either, even though one could observe some emotional response towards the end of the activity. While playing, the children reported that “it was fun” and “it’s a pity there won’t be any more of these activities”. During the “To the rhythm of carols” game, the children faced numerous difficulties. They were reluctant to cooperate with each other, failed to agree on what song to play on the instruments, and were unable to maintain an even pace when performing the song. The difficulties encountered made it difficult for the children from other groups to guess carols performed by other groups. The least attractive game for the children was the “Tree of Sounds”. First of all,

it turned out to be too challenging. The participating children did not understand the musical symbols explained by the teacher and later during the game they got confused and failed to follow the instructions. They quickly lost interest in the activity and several withdrew from the game. During the game, instead of following the instructions shown by the instructor, the children tried to imitate her singing.

## Conclusion

The field research presented in this paper has confirmed that classes using musical pedagogy of play provide a teaching-learning environment that develops the basic general skills required at this stage of education, i.e. arousing cognitive curiosity, developing creativity and the awareness of experienced emotions, the need and ability to identify with social groups, as well as skills in logical, critical and creative thinking. As the results of the study suggest, the method of musical pedagogy of play creates favourable conditions for the development of basic skills in children alongside appreciation of musical experience and self-expression while fostering diverse, mutual contacts and group integration. Music, in turn, shapes the children's personality, sensitivity and influences their mental and physical development. The abundance of activities offered by the musical pedagogy of play enables the achievement of teaching and learning outcomes and makes the educational process more attractive. In addition, games that integrate music, visual arts and paratheatrical activities were most appreciated by the children, which is not at all surprising. Children enjoy colors, sounds and movement, experience strong aesthetic emotions, and easily succumb to the influence of art as spectators and listeners. Child creativity is a dynamic activity that offers a great potential for personality formation. It develops creative skills while teaching children how to think and ask questions. Such activities give children courage, boost their confidence, and put them in a happy, invigorating mood. Musical, artistic and paratheatrical games can provide pleasant impressions and experiences while developing the child's emotional and mental capacity. In particular, activities that integrate music and visual arts develop imagination, which is an important aptitude factor in any field of art. It is, as it were, a driving force that stimulates intellectual and mental processes. Among the teaching aids that the children found most attractive was also the music itself. The children often stated that they enjoyed exposure to music during various activities. The use of percussion instruments during the classes also met with great interest, especially as one of the games required that the instruments be used without making a sound.

In conclusion, it can be assumed that musical pedagogy of play constitute a teaching-learning environment that is characterised by emotional security, joy of learning



and creativity. It brings a lot of pleasure, which means energy, fantasy, communication, and makes group work more spontaneous, focused and surprising. All children's activities using musical pedagogy of play help to build an atmosphere of relaxation and freedom. They awaken latent curiosity, as well as engage and invite children to interact with the surrounding reality.

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