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### Typology of “Music Mirrors”

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**Reviewed publication:** Szymajda, A. (2016). *Od muzykoterapii do “muzycznego lustra” dziecka [From music therapy to the child’s “music mirror”]*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej, ISBN 978-83-65408-20-4, 174 pages.

Music therapy, a young scientific discipline which is still ‘in the making’, primarily uses research tools developed in the related fields of science, especially pedagogy and psychology. Therefore, every attempt to create its own research tools is extremely important, as it helps to build scientific identity of music therapy. In this context, Agnieszka Szymajda’s book is doubly pleasing. The author presented the results of her studies conducted among children at a preschool age, thus contributing to the development of music therapy and strengthening its scientific status. Secondly, she used her own tool, the IKES psychomotor test, which she developed together with Joanna Kruk-Lasocka: *Inwentarz do badania kompetencji emocjonalno-społecznych dziecka w wieku przedszkolnym (od 4. do 7. roku życia) [An inventory for testing emotional and social competences of a child at a preschool age (between 4 and 7)]*. It allows, for example, for predicting whether a child may experience difficulties in adapting to new situations connected with going to school and for identifying the areas which require teachers’ and parents’ special attention. In the appendix, the author included a detailed description of the inventory, together with the measurement scale and measurement cards, thus providing other researchers with a ready-to-use diagnostic tool based on eight interesting exercises.

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The study investigated the area of supporting the emotional development of a child at a preschool age through music therapy techniques developed within Szymajda's original programme, based on the concept of Nordoff-Robbins creative music therapy, one of the main schools of music therapy. The essence of its therapeutic process lies in establishing a "musical dialogue", in creating live music in a two-agent relationship between a child and a music therapist. This is one of the basic techniques traditionally used in the initial stage of work, which – in the subsequent stages – is replaced with ready-made instrumental compositions, songs and dances.

The study was divided into two stages. The first stage was a quantitative study conducted as an experiment which measured the impact of creative music therapy on the emotional development of a child at a preschool age. Its aim was to verify the usefulness of the programme in supporting emotional development of a child. The questions posed by the researcher concerned the changes in reading and in expressing emotions by children who had undergone creative music therapy. The experiment was conducted between January and July 2012 in two kindergartens in Wrocław, in a group of 88 children aged between 4 and 7. Children from the control group participated in standard music classes. The results obtained in this stage clearly demonstrated significant changes in the ability to express emotions in children who had attended music therapy classes. Their reading of emotions also improved, but the results were statistically insignificant.

In the second stage of the study, the researcher looked at how children with different emotionality reacted to creative music therapy, what features of musical behaviour they revealed, and how they interacted with music. This stage was a qualitative study conducted as a case study. The basic – but not the only – way of collecting data was to observe twelve children aged 4–7 during individual classes in a kindergarten over a period of ten months. The classes were individualised and adjusted to the needs and abilities of each child. In her description of the process of music therapy, the researcher focused mainly on the features of children's instrumental, vocal and motor improvisations and the changes taking place in them. On the basis of their creativity expressed in contact with music, the author

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developed a concept of the child's "music mirror", which reflected his or her emotionality. "The child's *music mirror* is a reflection of a 'musical encounter' between a child with a specific musical sensitivity and a person responding to that sensitivity. The relationship is initiated by the child, and the music therapist adapts to it by using appropriately selected forms, methods and techniques of creative music therapy, which allow him or her to follow the child's musical creativity" (Szymajda, 2016: 109).

The typology developed by Szymajda distinguishes the following music mirrors: creative, impulsive, sensitive, imagined, and experimenting. The author not only provided a list of the characteristics of musical behaviours and changes in the emotional area which happened in the period before and after music therapy, but also developed a strategy of selecting appropriate forms, methods and techniques of music therapy for each of the types mentioned above. This way she contributed to the development of Nordoff-Robins' concept and offered people who work with children the tools allowing them to adequately follow the child's "musical reflection" and thus to support his or her development, especially in the emotional sphere.

The author demonstrated her scientific maturity and shared with the reader how the programme evolved during the course of her study. The quantitative research itself revealed that creative music therapy increases the ability to express emotions, however, it was her fascinating observations of children's behaviour that motivated the researcher to undertake the next, qualitative stage. Such a strategy is not uncommon, as Krzysztof Rubacha notices, since qualitative research helps to understand how quantitative patterns change when confronted with the changing contexts (Rubacha, 2008). And although case studies were not planned initially, they led the author to much more interesting scientific discoveries, including the concept of "music mirrors". Moreover, the detailed descriptions of the music therapy process and of the changes in children's behaviour are both exciting and inspiring.

The methodological and research issues discussed above constitute the main parts of the book, which are also the most valuable scientifically; they are preceded by the first two introductory theoretical chapters.

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In the first chapter the author attempted to capture the essence of music therapy by briefly presenting its directions, forms, methods and techniques – developed both in Poland and abroad. The second chapter describes emotionality, the importance of emotional development and its impact on the quality of general development, and social and cognitive functioning of a child at a preschool age.

A serious shortcoming of the book is the lack of the programme developed by the author. Since it exists and yielded positive results in her quantitative study, the reader is somewhat disappointed by the lack of an appendix with the programme, which makes it impossible to have a look at it. Without it, there is no way one could be inspired to use it, as publishing only the results of a quantitative study deprives the book of its practical dimension and application. We are told that it works, but we do not know exactly what works. It is to be hoped that in the author's future publications the programme will be presented in detail.

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### References

Rubacha, K. (2008). *Metodologia badań nad edukacją* [Research methodology in education]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne.

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