

**Jiřina Jiřičková**

Základní umělecká škola  
Mladá Boleslav

## **A CONTRIBUTION TO MUSIC EDUCATIONAL WORK WITH CHILDREN OF AN EARLY SCHOOL AGE**

*Key words: music education, early school age, piano, model situations, rhyme*

When a baby is born, and even long before and after, mother hums to her child, sings to him songs, they listen to music, she rocks him to the rhythm, dances with him. This is to calm the baby, to cheer him up, to converge with him. As babies grow, they naturally encounter with other musical stimuli and respond to them. It happens in addition to their life outside the home especially in kindergarten. Some pre-school aged Czech children attend for example music lessons at private Music Schools Yamaha. Music lessons are also offered to varying degree at state Schools of Arts. In the Czech Republic, when children are six or seven years old, they begin their compulsory primary education in a 9-year grade school. For some children it may be the first time, when they have an encounter with musical education, which is open to all children regardless of level of musical skills and musical knowledge gained so far. Some children have already been to the music education mentioned above. For others, it will be their first time that they are confronted with music education in an institutionalized form. Therefore, the general music education of children of early school age is a great task. This is an effort to create emotionally rich musically challenging situations that all children involve in learning and to help children gain musical experiences and enjoyment, regardless of their potential. The essence of music teaching is naturally music. To approach music, teachers use, among other things, musical instruments in their lessons. The piano specifically is one of the most common instruments in Czech primary schools. The piano, as well as other musical instruments, attract children. They like playing piano performed by the teacher or by other children, piano playing encourages them to other musical activities, as well as activates exploring musical knowledge and refines their taste in music.

The piano is naturally possible to use in many ways in music lessons for children of an early school age. It can be used in all components of general music education: in vocal, listening activities, in music and movement and of course in musical instrument activities. The piano is used, as mentioned above, in the lessons not only by music teachers, but also by children. It is motivation for musical activities, as well as an aid in the specific musical activities.

A proposed case study of music educational work with a rhyme can show a wide range of possibilities of piano usage. The example is built on a model situation for music

education of children of early school age<sup>1</sup> and works with a rhyme that belongs to the curriculum at the 1st primary school and. Musical activities in the model example are arranged progressively. Subsequent return to activities that have already taken place is also allowed. The teacher selects a specific musical activity, decides on how long it takes, as well as in which school year the proposed musical activity will be placed. According to the individual musical skills and abilities of the children, the specific activity of children on the piano is to be understood as one way of various children's activities at the time. The aim of the immediate activity on the piano is not that all children have to play. With regard to the age of children, piano activities are playful activities, inspired by suggestions from elementary piano pedagogy. It should be noted that the piano here, despite the above-mentioned playful nature, remains a musical instrument, whose main function is aesthetically effective mediation of musical language. The following model situation of work with a rhyme shows the way from the correct articulation of children, fixing metre and rhythm, rhythmic polyphony achieved by the children, knowledge of keyboard, playing of elementary accompaniment to the rhyme and finally applying melody to the rhyme<sup>2</sup>.

## Conjuring with Piano

***Hokus pokus, tyke take tokus, hokus pokus, bim bam, bas!***

Maria Seeliger (Ehrenpreis, Wohlwender 1995, p. 8)

### 1. Rhythmic declamation

Prepare: pencil, paper, wooden mallets

- Call the magic formula with careful articulation, in a slow movement in 2/4 time:

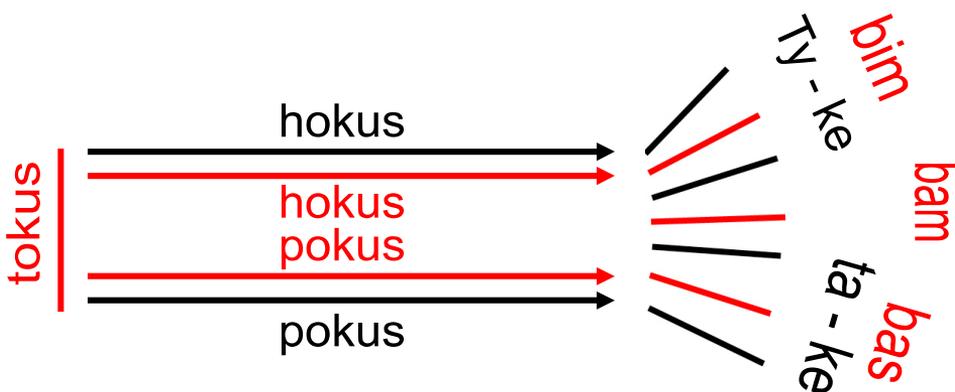
Hokus, pokus, tyke take tokus, hokus, pokus, bim bam bas!

<sup>1</sup> “Modeling of didactic situations is one of relatively frequent musical teaching methods that contribute to the improvement of teaching music at the 1st primary school [...]. Among other authors, Jaroslav Herden (1931-2010), Czech music pedagogue, proposed model situations in connection with listening activities. Another Czech author, Eva Jenčková creates model situations with a focus on music and movement activities. Modelling teaching situations means *making patterns of functionally ideal practices that respect the theoretical resources and conform to practice* (J. Herden, *Modelové situace v přípravě na poslech*, [in:] *Poslech hudby. Sborník příspěvků z konference konané ve dnech 27. a 28. dubna 1998 na Pedagogické fakultě UK v Praze*, Praha 1998, p. 39). The importance of model situations is that they allow to check how the proposed methods and forms of work operate in practice, and they encourage teachers to apply those techniques further” (J. Jiříčková, *Klavír jako didaktický prostředek učitele hudební výchovy na 1. stupni základních škol. Dizertační práce*, Praha 2008, p. 142).

<sup>2</sup> This case study is a part of a set of model situations, that the author of this paper has proposed as a part of her dissertation called, J. Jiříčková, *Piano as a didactic aid of the music teacher at the 1st primary schools*, Prague 2008.

- The teacher says always two bars of the magic formula. Repeat. Make sure that you simulate the movement and variety of dynamic levels properly.
- Game of the silent mirror (Careful articulation). In pairs, one says the spell silently, while the second makes sure that he understood. Then replace.
- Speak the spell with increasing dynamics, depending on how the teacher demonstrates.
- Divide into two groups. Say twice the spell in the groups. The second group will start on 3rd beat canonically the first group.
- Accompany the rhythmical declamation with playing on the body:
  - ho-kus*: hands rubbing, *po-kus*: hands rubbing,
  - ty ke ta-ke*: slap on the back of the hand, *po-kus*: 2x fillup,
  - ho-kus*: hands rubbing, *po-kus*: hands rubbing,
  - bim*: slap on the thigh, *bam*: slap on the belly, *bass*: slap on the chest
- Try to conjure up flying broom: while declaiming *hokus*, *pokus* draw two horizontal lines over themselves, while declaiming *tyke take* add four small whisks, *tokus*: draw the conclusion of broom on one and also separate the whisk handle on an other side. While declaiming *ho-kus*, *po-kus* add two more horizontal lines, then to *bim*, *bam*, *bass* touch in remaining three whisks.
- Conjure with hands in space. Add movement of the whole body to your own conjuring with hand.

### The proposed solution:



### Options of piano accompaniment of group declamation (achieved by teacher or by a chosen child):

- Playing on white or black keys, using pedal
- Playing with forearms, holding the right pedal
- Composed accompaniment to a rhyme by Luboš Sluka (Janžurová, Borová 2000, p. 38)

The image shows a musical score for a 2/4 time signature piece. It consists of two systems of music. The first system has four measures with lyrics: "Hokus, po- kus, ty- ke ta- ke to- kus,". The second system has four measures with lyrics: "hokus, po- kus, bim bam bas!". The score includes vocal lines with 'x' marks above notes and piano accompaniment in treble and bass clefs.

(It is also possible to use the original version of the accompaniment so that only notes in rhythm of declamation are played.)

## 2. Playing with word rhythms

- Divide into three groups, which recite at the same time:
  1. group: alternate the words *ho-kus, po-kus*
  2. group: repeat *tyke take*
  3. group: repeat *bim, bam* on the first beat
- Accompany the choral declamation with playing rhythmical Orff instruments. For example, 1. group: rubbing, 2. group: sticks, 3. group: tambourine.
- Repeat choral declamation together with playing ostinata (crotchet notes) on the piano. According to the height position of piano (low – medium – high), distinguish in declamation the intonation of an old evil sorcerer, a witch and a small witches' apprentice.
- Respond to playing of harmonic functions in a minor or major key on piano. It sounds gradually in several octaves. The changes express in your declamation: if it is the minor key, speak softly, if it is the major key, declaim loudly.

## 3. Instrumental onomatopoeia

- Work in small groups. Listen to the piano. The teacher accompanies the spell playing clusters on white, black keys or on both keys. Was it a scary spell on the piano or not? Select the appropriate Orff instrument and add instrumental playing.
- Present a scary spell first, then a funny spell.

#### 4. Elementary piano accompaniment

- This activity is intended for a smaller group of children. One sits down, two more take place on his left and right, stand.
- A child who sits in the middle: Accompany group declamation with stepping on the right piano pedal in rhythm *bim, bam*. Standing children: play with third toes alternatively two tones in the octave, always on the first beat. Recite *ho-kus, po-kus* at the same time. Other children in the group declaim rhyme so that the first child says one syllable or two syllables (make yourself understood) and the other child will follow immediately (again one or two syllables).
- Take turns on the piano, give support to stepping pedal hitting the piano desk.
- Another possibility of declaiming spell is piano playing of pentatonic ostinati performed by two to three children at the same time. Play ostinato (4 tones) on black keys. Try to play using just one hand, in unison or in countermovement.

#### 5. Playing across the keyboard

- Accompany the declamation of rhyme in 2/4 time always on the first beat. Play groups of two black keys across the keyboard. Other possibilities: groups of three black keys or combinations of two and three black keys.
- Play portamento first with the right, then with the left hand, alternately carry the hands over each other.

#### 6. Playing rhyme on the piano

- This activity is again possible with a smaller group of children. It is preferable to work using Grand piano. Play the rhyme using two tones (combine tones  $g^1-e^1$ ), two other players accompany with an ostinato fifth.
- Other children in the group try how various parts of the piano sound. Accompany the piano with weak hand-clapping or gently wood-sticks tapping.
- Take turns on the piano so that after playing the rhyme move one space right. A new player sits down on the free place.

#### The proposed solution:

The musical notation is written on a single staff in 2/4 time. It consists of eight measures. The notes are: G4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). The lyrics are: Hokus, pokus, tyke take tokus, hokus, pokus, bim bam bas!

#### For more experienced:

- Try to create your own melody to the rhyme, as a homework. You can present it in the next lesson, or you can take an audio or video recording.

- Accompany the melody to the rhyme with an ostinato quint.
- Write the rhyme set to music.
- According to his musical notation, play the music of your friend.

## 7. Getting wrapped

Prepare: chimes or metalofony

- Define two tones.
- The teacher plays one time music on piano. The child repeats it and continues arbitrarily in the tone area. Next child repeats the first and the second bar playing the recorder and continues. The next player plays four bars. You can continue or start from the beginning with a new melody.
- Previous players check, if necessary, they repeat their melodic fragment.
- *Getting wrapped* can be achieved on the piano so that the players take turns on the piano stool and play in one position, or, on the contrary, they can move their melodic fragments to another octave. “Conjure“ in the third, second and first bass octave.

**The proposed solution (playing in the third, second and first bass octave):**



## 8. Ostinato rhythm in piano accompaniment

- Sing the rhyme (g<sup>1</sup>). It is possible to accompany the singing with piano. The piano player can play alone, also two players can play at the same time, each a different rhythm.

Try the following options:



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## Summary

### A CONTRIBUTION TO MUSIC EDUCATIONAL WORK WITH CHILDREN OF AN EARLY SCHOOL AGE

This article discusses the role of piano as a didactic aid in early education. The piano is a great aid to motivate, sparks creativity, and effectively engages children in the learning process. A case study conducted by the author proposes different techniques of integrating the piano in the context of music lessons. The study contains a variety of musical activities and proposes specific teaching instructions to work with rhymes.

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