

## **From Vivaldi to Mozart – The Classical approach to Foreign Language Teaching**

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*“Music is so naturally united with us that we cannot be free from it even if we so desired.”*  
(Boethius cited by Storr, 1997)

*The 21<sup>st</sup> Century has seen a resurgence of the ancient field of music therapy, which is now growing rapidly. In the literature of music therapy, reports can be found of success in the treatment of a variety of physical and mental disorders from depression, and anxiety, to cancer and heart disease. This paper explores the role that Classical and Baroque music can play in learning by creating the optimum learning state, a “relaxed, integrated body and mind”. It draws upon a combination of 20 years of teaching experience as well as research focusing on the relationship between music and the mind.*

*Through practical demonstration participants will experience how classical music can be used in foreign language teaching not randomly, nor merely as a background effect, but as a powerful tool which may assist in language acquisition by achieving alert relaxation, improving long term memory, fostering engagement, enhancing creativity, altering moods, encouraging collaboration, improving relationships and inducing a state of positive expectation. The philosophical and scientific underpinnings will be presented from the perspective of Suggestopedia, a method based on an understanding of how the human brain works and how we learn most effectively.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper is the culmination of the practical application of classical and baroque music in a variety of teaching situations over the last 20 years. The main aim of this presentation is on the one hand to inform participants of the fundamental tenets of Suggestopedia and the relationship between music and the mind and on the other to inspire participants to become confident and creative users of classical and baroque music as a tool to enhance learning in the ESL classroom.

After a brief glimpse at my own journey of discovery in the use of music to learn by, an overview of the history and evolution of Suggestopedia will be presented. This will be followed by a more in-depth look at the physiological and emotional responses to music and an analysis of why classical and baroque music have such unique properties. Emphasis will be placed on the effect of music on memory and learning. Finally, participants will experience a range of composers from both the Baroque and Classical eras and a closer analysis of the particular qualities and potential uses of each composer will be presented.

*“What is this magical medium that moves, enchants, energizes and heals us? In an instant, music can uplift our soul. It awakens within us the spirit of prayer, compassion and love. Music can dance and sing our blues away. It conjures up memories of lost lovers or deceased friends. It lets the child in us play, the monk in us pray, the cowgirl in us line dance, the hero in us surmount all obstacles. Music helps plants grow, lulls children to sleep and marches men to war. From the first cry of life to the last sigh of death, from the beating of our hearts to the soaring of our imaginations, we are enveloped by sound and vibration every moment of our lives.”* (Campbell, 1997, p4)

### **THE EDUCATORS' ROLE**

My first experience of the use of Baroque music in learning was when I completed my TESOL certificate in 1986. All the learning materials were presented to the sound of carefully selected baroque music. I was inspired and have used music ever since, at first, randomly and without full cognizance of how and why it worked but over time, more consciously and methodically. My awareness developed further with exposure to the concept of Accelerated Learning which swept through Australia in the 1990's and impacted the whole learning culture.

The essential premise of AL is that your ability to learn, absorb and retain information is entirely dependent on your mental, emotional and physical state of being. This is important information for teachers because teachers have the power to influence students' states. There are many ways in which this can be achieved and the use of music is one of them.

## **SUGGESTOPEDIA**

### **Dr Georgi Lozanov, Bulgarian Psychiatrist and Professor in Education**

Lozanov, was the first scientist to systematically research the factors involved in rapid learning. The techniques he evolved, "The Lozanov Method", were the first to fit the category known as "Whole Brain Learning" It is the Lozanov method which has later given rise to related concepts such as "Super learning and Accelerated Learning" Lozanov coined the term Suggestopedia.

Dr. Lozanov developed his method out of concern, not only for the need for education to accelerate learning in order to keep up with rapid technological advancement, but for the mental, physical and spiritual health of the learner. He believes that his system not only allows a child to go through school without trauma and stress, retaining the natural thirst for learning that is our birthright, but also enables him/her to uncover innate but hidden capacity and talent which Lozanov calls the "reserve capacities of the mind". (*Suggestology and Suggestopedia. The Theory of the Lozanov Method.*(1976, p18)

Suggestopedia, a blend of the words "Suggestion and Pedagogy", is a method based on an understanding of how the human brain works and how we learn most effectively. It was originally applied in foreign language teaching and it is claimed that this method can teach languages approximately five times as quickly as conventional methods. (1976) Some of the key elements of Suggestopedia are: A rich sensory learning environment including the use of pictures, colour, music, etc., a positive expectation of success and the use of a varied range of methods: dramatised texts, music, active participation in songs and games, etc.

Suggestopedia is based on the idea that with the conscious adaptation and modification of the environment positive suggestions to improve learning are more likely to yield results. There are many factors involved in every suggestion; body language, voice, expectation, attitudes, emotions and the environment are all elements of suggestion. Suggestopedia, then is the scientific application of suggestion in the realm of education. It utilises positive suggestions and procedures which alter negative belief patterns about learning abilities. When combined with music and other arts, suggestion links the conscious and subconscious mind, the left and the right brain and enables the individual to learn at a vastly accelerated rate. (Lozanov, 1978)

## **WHY BAROQUE AND CLASSICAL?**

Lozanov's choice of music from this period was not random. Many classical and baroque composers held strong spiritual beliefs. They also believed there was a sacred geometry underlying all creation known as "The Golden Mean". This was a set of perfect ratios and proportions found in all living structures – a worthy goal for reproduction in art, architecture and music. "The resulting creations, if they were in harmony with the proper mathematics, would resonate accordingly with life, power and spirit. Most of the greatest composers produced musical works specifically constructed to fit within idealised mathematical forms and harmonies." (Webb 1990, p43)

Their music, Lozanov found, produces the right frequencies and sounds which harmonize the functioning of the body and the brain. This harmonising creates within human beings the necessary conditions for a natural transition from chaos and disharmony towards "order, harmony, consistency, logic, inspiration and delight." (Schuster, 1976, p23) These principles also create the conditions needed for a regulation of the naturally arising state of mind where reserve capacities are revealed and tapped.

## **PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF MUSIC**

A Critical element to increased learning capacity, Lozanov found, was a relaxed, integrated body. As he studied the practitioners of yoga, he discovered that certain yogis were able to achieve extraordinary integration of both physical and mental conditioning. Lozanov concluded that the optimum learning state was one in which "all physical functions operated according to a unified pattern i.e. heartbeat, breath-rate, and brain waves were smoothly synchronised into an integrated whole." (1976, p24)

Short of sending his students to the nearest yogi ashram, the quickest way to achieve this state of physical and mental integration was to play specific kinds of music at certain times in the learning process. Other physiological effects of music include the effects on heart-rate, blood-pressure, and metabolism. Music can also be used as an adjunct in pain control and facilitate recovery from illness. In fact, the ancient field of music therapy has seen a resurgence in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and is now growing rapidly. In the literature of music therapy, reports can be found of success in the treatment of depression, anxiety, nervousness, tension, insomnia, high blood pressure, headaches, asthma, brain damage, cancer, heart weakness, Parkinson's disease, tuberculosis etc (Campbell, 1997)

## **EMOTIONAL EFFECTS OF MUSIC**

We all know that music influences our emotions. Most music is only listened to in the first place because it makes us feel something, and as memory is strongly linked to emotions, the brain is activated to store the information as memory. "So when we use music to accompany language learning we are creating a meaningful situation for students thereby activating episodic memory. (Begley, 1996, cited in Kolarik, 2005 EA conference) Music also stimulates the release of endorphins and thus has the capacity to greatly influence the mood of the listener. Most of us have a melody which when we hear it, brings back memories with strong emotional content and exquisite detail. Yet, whilst the response to music in general is very individual, there are certain pieces of music which have been found to cause like physical and emotional responses in many people simultaneously, such as marching music. Thus teaching language through music enhances not only linguistic competence and performance, but also perception skills. Language as music links emotions, memories, concepts, values, and behavior.

## **EFFECT ON MEMORY AND LEARNING**

According to the centre for New Discoveries in Learning, (Texas) the 60 beats per minute beat pattern activate the left and right brain. The simultaneous left and right brain action maximizes learning and retention of information. Activities which engage both sides of the brain at the same time, such as playing an instrument or singing, causes the brain to be more capable of processing information. Lozanov's system involved using certain classical music pieces from the baroque period which have around a 60 beats per minute pattern. Research into the Lozanov method has revealed that foreign languages can be learned with 85-100% efficiency in only thirty days by using these baroque pieces. (O'Donnell,1999)

Anthony Storr, in *Music and the Mind* claims that: "The part of the brain concerned with emotional responses is different from the part which perceives structure. The appreciation of music requires both parts." (1997, p89) The ancient Greeks understood how music could help them remember more easily, hence they sang their dramas. According to Aksnes in "Learning and the Brain", learning a language is related to music skills because when you mentally repeat or process a new word, sentence, you have to imagine sound, rhythm, and the resonance of the words as if you are saying them out loud. It requires several internalized dynamic systems. (Aksnes,1989)

In 1982, researchers from the University of North Texas performed a three way test on postgraduate students to see if music could help in memorizing vocabulary words. The

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students were divided into three groups. Each group was given three tests – a pre-test, a post-test and a test a week after the first two tests. All of the tests were identical. Group 1 was read the words with Handel's water music in the background. They were also asked to imagine the words. Group 2 was read the same words also with Handel's Water music in the background. Group 3 was only read the words without music and without being asked to imagine them. The results from the first two tests showed that group 1 and 2 had much better scores than group 3. The results for the third test a week later showed that group 1 performed much better than groups 2 or 3.

However, simply using music while learning does not absolutely guarantee recall but it can possibly improve it. Background music in itself is not a part of the learning process, but it does enter into memory along with the information learned. Recall is better when the same music used for learning is used during recall. (1999)

### **MUSIC FROM THE BAROQUE ERA 1600-1750**

The term Baroque was derived from the Portuguese "barroco," which meant pearl of irregular shape, widely used in the jewellery of the time. As in jewellery, the art of the time was decorative, vigorous and ornamental. Baroque music in general can be used to achieve alert relaxation. A preparatory stage in which students are helped to relax and move into a positive frame of mind, with the feeling that the learning is going to be easy and fun.

**Vivaldi's** music is stimulating, full of "vim, vigour and verve".(Webb, 1990, p25) It is good for mental and emotional clearance and un-clutters the atmosphere with vitality and rhythmic clarity. Vivaldi is noted for his novel use of rapid scale passages and extended arpeggios. His music is romantic, vivacious and expressive.

Play Vivaldi's "Four Seasons", which has almost universal appeal, when class energy is lagging and needs pep. To create a more reflective mood – Vivaldi Concerto for 4 Violins and String Orchestra in B flat major R 553 can be used.

Musical historians end the Baroque period at the year of J.S. Bach's death 1750. **Bach** more than any other composer, seems to stimulate intellectual ability. If a student has difficulty "getting" some concept, or making sense of it; or has a feeling of not being smart enough, Bach's conceptual music helps tremendously. Bach is ideal when you want your students to work individually on a complex, structured task.

His music is governed by the rules of counterpoint as much as by the rules of harmony. Contrapuntal music enables a student to "ride" multiple trains of thought. While Bach's music evokes power, immensity and grandeur, it has the effect of making complex subjects easily understandable. Have trainees synthesise a number of information units, different topics or complex concepts at the sound of "J.C. Bach, Symphony in G Minor Op.6.No.6 CPE Bach, Orchestral Symphony No.2" (Webb, 1990)

**Handel's** music was pre-eminently formal in character; consequently it was formal in effect. "It expressed a love of outward ceremony and adherence to convention." (Schuster, 1976) Handel's music produces a feeling of conformity; and gets everybody together.

Handel's music offers a rhythm that keeps students going and caught up in the lesson or project until it is completed, so it is good for team projects. Play Handel to help your students focus on specific sequences and formalized approaches in cooperative learning situations. This is in contrast to the effect of Bach's work, which tends to "space out" people as they pursue their own private creativity. Handel is also a great substitute for an antidepressant as it lifts the spirits. "I know no better cure for a fit of depression than an Organ Concerto by Handel. These extroverted works were designed to soothe, to please."(Towe, notes for the Musical Heritage Society)

## MUSIC FROM THE CLASSICAL ERA

The dictionary defines “classical” as a “general sense of excellence to its highest degree, especially as it pertains to the culture of ancient Greece and Rome.

**Haydn** perfected the instrumental language of the late 18<sup>th</sup> C, a dynamic development of themes and motives. He is known for his personal style marked by “expressive harmony, structural logic and endlessly varied moods.” (Webb, 1997, p46) Haydn is an appropriate musical choice for beginning an accelerative learning experience as people are just starting to establish rapport with the teacher and subject matter. His music evokes the childlike nature in all students. It’s hard to listen to Haydn and be sad. It is sharp, fresh and sparkling with zestful tunes and rhythms. Some suggestions include: “Cello Concerto No 1 in C, Moderato, Symphony No 67 in F Major; Symphony No 66 in B Flat Major, 3 Violin Concerti in C Major, G Major and A Major.” (1997, p45) Haydn’s music is also very effective with High School students particularly when your aim is to generate enthusiasm for a subject such as is required for group projects and performances in the dramatic arts.

### Mozart

*“Something miraculous hovers about the music of Mozart. One sees how it is put together, whither it is bound, and how it gets there, but its beauty of sound and perfection of style, its poignancy and grace defy analysis and beggar description. For one moment in the history of music all opposites were reconciled, all tensions resolved. That luminous moment was Mozart”* (Machilis,1970)

When students begin to feel confident and familiar with a subject matter, it is the ideal time to use Mozart, for example at the production phase of a lesson. His music is useful for linking together scattered pieces of a problem and for fitting disparate elements together into an authentic, harmonious, well-ordered whole. (For example, essay writing or sequencing tasks)

One simple way students can improve test scores is by listening to certain types of music such as Mozart’s Sonata for Two Piano’s in D Major before taking a test. This type of music releases neurons in the brain which help the body to relax.

Mozart’s concerts can be used to present the material to be learnt in an active way. For example, in a foreign language course there might be the dramatic reading of a piece of text, accompanied by a concert like – Mozart Oboe Concerto in C major, K 314. The use of concerts encourages students to integrate a large amount of material in a global fashion. *According to Lozanov, “a well-executed concert can do 60% of the teaching work in about 5% of the time”.* (Lozanov, 1978, p28)

**Beethoven** arrived at a time when explosive issues were being decided and powerful forces were shaping society and Beethoven’s music. Beethoven was a product of tremendous upheaval which had been fermenting all through the 18<sup>th</sup> C and culminated in the French Revolution. His music is inexorably linked with these social and political events. Above all, Beethoven’s music gives your students a sense of mastery. It is virile music which empowers students and makes them feel good about themselves and the subject matter. Sometimes angry, sometimes peaceful, Beethoven’s music has courage, strength, and willpower, granite-like in its force. Beethoven’s music is especially effective with your non-assertive students and promotes individual exploration of material. Selections include: Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-Flat Major. Op 73 (Emperor) Violin Concerto in D, Opus 61, Moonlight Sonata. (Webb, 1990, p37)

## CONCLUSION

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Never before in history has such a wealth of music been available on such a large scale as today. Modern technology has provided us with a spectrum of music on a scale previously unimaginable. With the modern availability of sound reproduction, classical music has never been listened to by more people than in modern times. For example, Mozart's magnificent string quartets were not even performed once in his lifetime and they were played infrequently even 100 years after his death. (1997) Perhaps the time has come for educators to pose the question;

*"Has music earned a permanent place in the fundamental nature of education? Or is it still considered just an ornament? The question of music as a part of leisure, versus its power as an enabling agent for human learning, is now at hand." (Campbell, 1997, p65)*

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**List of Music for Learning**

1. HAYDN Cello Concerto No 1 in C, Hob. VIIB – Moderato 9:03
2. MOZART – Andantino, 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement from the Concerto in C for Flute and Harp, K. 299 – 9:07
3. HANDEL – Fireworks Solomon – Arrival of the Queen of Sheba 3:23
4. HANDEL - Xerxes – Larghetto - 3.39
5. HANDEL - Water Music - Air
6. BACH – Partita No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1004 Allemanda 3:58
7. BEETHOVEN Symphony No.5 – Allegro con brio 6:52
8. BEETHOVEN Piano Concerto no 5 “Emperor”, Op 19 – Adagio &rondo: Molto allegro -14:36
9. VIVALDI– Concerto for Violin, String Orchestra and Basso continuo in E major, Op. 8.No.1, RV 269 “Spring”
10. VIVALDI – Spring continued
11. VIVALDI – Spring continued
12. MOZART – Andantino grazioso from Symphony no 24 B Major, K. 182 2:51
13. MOZART – Twelve piano Variations on “Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman” (Twinkle, twinkle little star) 12:00