

MUSIC LISTENING AND PERFORMANCE: THE ARTISTIC AND PSYCHOPEDAGOGICAL RELATIONSHIP

Daniela Carmen ROȘOGA-POPA, PhD student, univ. assist.

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-6390-2051>

“Lucian Blaga” University from Sibiu, Romania

Abstract. The paper examines the relationship between music listening and performance from both artistic and psycho-pedagogical perspectives, highlighting their complementarity in musical education. Listening is defined as an active process of understanding and emotional engagement, in which the listener becomes a conscious participant, capable of perceiving musical structures and meanings. Performance is presented as a creative and expressive act that combines knowledge with emotional experience and artistic communication. The relationship between the two is bidirectional: listening enhances understanding, while performance consolidates musical experience. Their integration contributes to the development of musical thinking, artistic sensitivity, and aesthetic taste.

Keywords: music listening, performance, artistic communication, music education, aesthetic training, psychopedagogy.

AUDIȚIA ȘI INTERPRETAREA MUZICII: RAPORTUL ARTISTIC ȘI PSIHOPEDAGOGIC

Rezumat. Lucrarea examinează relația dintre audiția și interpretarea muzicii din perspectivă artistică și psihopedagogică, evidențiind complementaritatea lor în formarea muzicală. Audiția este definită ca un proces activ de înțelegere și implicare afectivă, în care ascultătorul devine participant conștient, capabil să perceapă structuri și semnificații muzicale. Interpretarea este prezentată ca act creativ și expresiv, ce implică îmbinarea cunoașterii cu trăirea emoțională și comunicarea artistică. Relația dintre cele două este bidirecțională: audiția dezvoltă înțelegerea, iar interpretarea consolidează experiența muzicală. Integrarea lor contribuie la formarea gândirii muzicale, a sensibilității artistice și a gustului estetic.

Cuvinte-cheie: audiție muzicală, interpretare, comunicare artistică, educație muzicală, formare estetică, psihopedagogie.

1. Introduction

Music Listening and Performance represent two complementary dimensions of musical experience, situated at the intersection between the artistic act and the educational process. Within the context of musical training, these two components cannot be separated, as together they underpin the development of abilities related to perception, analysis, expression, and reflection upon the sonic phenomenon.

Music listening, according to Alfred Tomatis [12] and Ion Gagim [7], [8], is not limited to simple auditory perception; rather, it constitutes a complex psychophysiological process involving the full participation of the individual — affective, cognitive, and bodily. The act of listening thus becomes a form of active knowledge and an experience of self-discovery, through which the listener transforms from a passive receiver into a co-participant in artistic creation.

Musical performance, on the other hand, implies the conscious transposition of expressive intention into a concrete sonic act. As Bârlogeanu points out, performance is established as an activity of signification, a mediation between the musical text and its inner meaning [5]. In the same line of thought, George Bălan introduces the concept of musicosophy, defined as a reflective method of conscious listening through which unity is achieved between the intellectual understanding and the affective experience of music [2], [3], [4].

From a psychopedagogical perspective, the relationship between music listening and performance can be understood as a circular process of knowledge–understanding–communication. Listening forms the receptive foundation, preparing the pupil or student to comprehend the musical message, while performance materializes this understanding into an expressive and individualized form. The process thus becomes bidirectional: conscious listening shapes performance, while interpretative experience deepens the competence of listening.

Consequently, the analysis of the artistic and psychopedagogical relationship between listening and performance makes it possible to identify the mechanisms through which music education contributes to the holistic development of the individual. Music is no longer perceived merely as an aesthetic object, but as a means of inner and interpersonal communication, of shaping aesthetic consciousness, and of cultivating human sensitivity. The purpose of the present study is to highlight this dual function—artistic and formative—of music listening and performance within the context of the contemporary educational process.

2. Music listening – a cognitive, affective, and formative process

In music education classes, one of the fundamental activities is music listening. However, in vocal training lessons (vocal study) this aspect is often diminished and replaced by practical work, individual study aimed at acquiring repertoire, and the development of vocal technique.

Music listening may be understood in two distinct senses:

- as a method of organizing the educational process;
- as a psychological and spiritual process of musical reception (to hear, to experience, to feel, and to understand music).

Musical listening activities represent one of the central forms of musical development for students. Listening to musical works is not a simple task; rather, it is essentially an act of knowledge, an intellectual and spiritual activity. Music listening presupposes the understanding of the message conveyed by a musical work and requires a prior inner preparation. A genuine listener resembles both the composer and the performer, as, while listening, one places oneself in multiple experiential perspectives.

Music listening also requires an appropriate didactic technique, and the development of this process involves its careful pedagogical guidance. It is therefore necessary to organize systematic guided listening activities in order to cultivate correct listening skills among students. Through conscious listening, students learn to perceive and identify changes in musical structure, formal sections, rhythms, dynamic nuances, and accents, as well as procedures characteristic of different musical events, which together contribute to the formation of a coherent musical-artistic message and image.

The french otorhinolaryngologist Alfred Tomatis maintains that during any act of listening, and especially during musical listening, the vocal cords involuntarily prepare themselves in the phonatory position corresponding to the sounds being heard and vibrate simultaneously [12].

The phonatory apparatus responds even to distant sounds. Does this imply that human beings are capable of perceiving sounds through the voice itself? Does the voice not only emit sound but also receive it? Recalling the correlation and interaction between hearing and phonation, as well as between the phonatory and auditory organs—which together form a unified system—such an assertion can no longer be regarded as inconsistent.

Among all the physiological changes produced by music in the human organism, breathing has the most significant effect, along with changes in blood circulation, glandular secretions, muscle tone, and other bodily processes. The very source of life is breath itself: on the one hand, breath, airflow, and the vital rhythm of respiration; on the other hand, tone, sound, and intonation. Intonation—indeed, to intone, according to the Romanian Explanatory Dictionary, means “to sing the beginning of a song” [6], to take or enter into the tone, that is, to perceive and internalize the energy of sound.

Studies in this field highlight the tonic effect of music on the human organism. The organic and psychological relationship between breathing and intonation, as well as between timbre and respiration, is evident. Musical sounds themselves are vibrations analogous to breathing.

It is widely acknowledged that music is primarily intended for hearing, and that the ear serves as the principal receptor of this art. Yet this represents only part of the truth. How can we explain the fact that individuals who are completely deaf (not merely lacking musical hearing, but hearing in general) are nevertheless able to respond to music? Moreover, their responses are not chaotic or abstract; rather, they correspond appropriately to each musical fragment. One may observe how accurately, gracefully, and harmoniously such individuals dance.

This suggests that human beings can “hear” music through channels other than purely auditory ones. There is nothing mystical about this phenomenon. Quite simply, music is a mechanical vibration that affects organic matter and influences human beings at the bodily level. The energy of the body resonates with the energy of sound. It is therefore natural

that other living beings—plants and animals—also respond to music; the underlying principle is the same.

Is it merely coincidental that music is employed in almost every sphere of human activity, from sports and production to medicine and religion? Music influences the human being both emotionally and physically [8].

In his book *Man in the Face of Music*, Ion Gagim formulates what he calls the status of the music listener, outlining the following aspects:

- “The condition of the listener. The listener’s role within the triad creation–performance–reception. The listener as the third creator of music. What does the listener create?
- The dimensions of the encounter with the musical work:
 - the affective–sentimental dimension;
 - the analytical–rational dimension;
 - the psychological–interiorizing dimension;
 - the reflective–meditative dimension” [8, p. 97].

3. Musical performance and the dimension of artistic communication

To sing or to perform a musical piece constitutes an artistic act. Each new performance represents a new creative process, a renewed vision that introduces new expressive colors. Some of these interpretations reflect the subjective nature of the performer’s inner world, including their temperament and artistic conception of the musical work.

In the writings of L. Bârlogeanu, we encounter the assertion that “a form of activity in relation to the work, which involves a different attitude on the part of the receiver, is that which reveals the movement of the work toward meaning, namely interpretation. This becomes possible due to the characteristic of the work to remain open to something beyond itself. This means that, by reading, listening, or contemplating, we associate a new discourse with the artistic one; we revisit it and establish a series of associations. Through interpretation we approach both the work and ourselves, and thus understand ourselves better by virtue of understanding the work” [5, p. 46].

The etymology of the word interpretation originates from the Latin term *interpretatio*, meaning to give a certain meaning, to explain, or to mediate. From an epistemological perspective, interpretation represents a fundamental cognitive process connected to knowledge and self-knowledge. In the Romanian Explanatory Dictionary (DEX), the term is defined as follows: “To assign a certain meaning or significance to something; to comment on and explain a text (especially an older one).”; “To render, by appropriate means, the content of a musical, dramatic, or literary work; to perform a role in a play or film; to perform a musical composition” [6].

It can thus be observed that the concept of communication constitutes the key to understanding interpretation, particularly musical interpretation as a collective phenomenon. In the Dictionary of Psychology, communication is defined as follows: “Communication is, first and foremost, a form of perception. It involves the transmission—intentional or not—of information intended to clarify or influence an individual or a group of receiving individuals. However, it is not limited to this. At the same time that information is transmitted, an action occurs upon the receiving subject, and a retroactive effect (feedback) is produced upon the sender, who in turn becomes influenced” [11, p. 75].

Communication represents an interaction between two or more individuals who exchange cognitive and affective information. In its usual form, communication constitutes an integral part of the practical interactions of human beings—such as collaboration, work, teamwork, and learning—and ensures the planning, implementation, and monitoring of these activities. Communication also fulfills a fundamental human need for contact with other individuals. The satisfaction of this need, which emerged during the course of the social development of humanity, is associated with the experience of joy and emotional fulfillment.

Understanding music requires, first and foremost, the reception of the work of art. In order to achieve this, the subject must master the art of musical listening. As G. Bălan states, just as there exists an art of reading, there also exists an art of listening. “The activation by sounds of our existential center—of emotionality—as a premise for profound revelations requires an apprenticeship in penetrating the mysteries of music, as well as the assimilation of its stylistic and structural particularities, which serve to complete and deepen the affective inclination toward ‘the art most intimately related to the highest esoteric knowledge’ [3, p. 230].

Music awakens powerful emotions and encourages, while simultaneously enhancing, reflection and the direct understanding of its meaning. The emotions generated by artistic creation serve as one of the indicators of the cognitive engagement with artistic phenomena. However, the purpose of art is not limited to a mere emotional impact. Bălan, musicologist and philosopher, outlines seven stages in the process of understanding a musical work:

- I – Emotional reaction;
- II – Imaginative perception, composed of mental representations;
- III – The effect of music on thought: reflections inspired by emotional states;
- IV – Purely musical thinking: the contemplation of music in its objective reality;
- V – The philosophy inherent in music, liberated from subjective thoughts;
- VI – The perception of music as a world in itself;
- VII – The existential level: listening to music as a vital necessity [2, p. 130].

Following numerous studies in the field, it has been concluded that the educational process of musical listening should not be spontaneous and unstructured, but rather planned and guided according to the following stages:

- Introductory discussion presenting the musical work;
- The actual listening to the musical work;
- Analysis and characterization of the musical work that has been heard;
- Re-listening to the musical work;
- Artistic evaluation of the musical work.

According to I. Lupu and G. Munteanu, under certain circumstances some of these stages may be omitted or combined. Depending on the intended objective, the introductory discussion may be absent, or the analysis and characterization may overlap with the artistic evaluation [9], [10].

In response to the question “What does it mean to be a conscious listener of music?”, G. Bălan states: “It means being exclusively focused on the music you are listening to, not allowing yourself to engage in any other activity while listening, and not permitting others to interrupt your listening. Above all, it means engaging your thinking—that is, the intellectual perception of music—going beyond the pleasures and emotions, which are often very transient” [4]. Extracting and reframing the most important elements of the above thesis, listening to music becomes a true act of knowledge only in the fourth stage, when music is separated from its emotional and intellectual impact. Therefore, the main means of investigation must be active listening. Musical art is a complex process of consciousness that collects feelings, impressions, emotions and ideas. Access to the essence of music is facilitated by the fusion of experience and understanding, sensitivity and spirituality, joy and thought.

It is essential, in order to clarify the meaning, purpose, and content of the act of musical listening, to refer to the concept of musicosophy developed by the musicologist George Bălan and later expanded by Professor Ion Gagim. From this perspective, musicosophy is regarded as “a method of listening to music through which the listener becomes aware of what is conveyed in musical language. It represents an introduction to what may be called the art of listening to music and is based on the repeated listening to the same musical work and to increasingly smaller segments of the music being heard. This is, in fact, similar to the approach of the performer when preparing a concert or a musical piece for public performance. The performer divides the piece into progressively smaller sections, striving to clarify and internalize them. In much the same way, the listener—although lacking an instrument such as a piano or a violin—uses a recording device, a musical recording that can be interrupted whenever desired in order to examine the music more deeply in its details. Thus, step by step, the listener comes to grasp the entire musical movement—an andante from a symphony, an allegro from a concerto—until it is fully

assimilated, until the musical ideas become clear and are experienced as intimately as one's own thoughts" [4].

Conscious listening to music therefore represents a third essential element, alongside composition and performance. In this way, the listener ultimately discovers their authentic vocation—that of becoming a creator of music, because without the listener everything loses its meaning, including the work of Beethoven and the talent of the pianist who performs it. In such a situation, everything fades and disappears, reduced merely to meaningless applause that undermines the profound effect that music should exert upon human beings. Understanding music and penetrating the musical ideas that constitute its structure represent the true mission of the listener. Only then do great composers such as Bach, Mozart, or Beethoven find a genuine partner in the dialogue of the spirit.

I. Gagim remarks that “musical communication is entirely intuitive, because in the relationship between human beings and music a form of communication, a dialogue, must occur. To communicate with music also means to internalize it, to build it into the very foundation of the self. In this way, its qualities become the property of the individual” [7, p. 89].

The methodology of assimilating music through listening may be compared to the methodology by which an instrumentalist—such as a pianist—learns a musical work. This process involves a gradual approach based on repetition and practice, the analysis of the work into its constituent elements and their subsequent recombination, as well as the learning and mastery of each passage, movement, musical moment, and technically demanding section.

Thus, it can be observed that the methodology of performance, like that of musical listening, is based on the same process of knowledge–understanding–communication (Figure 1).

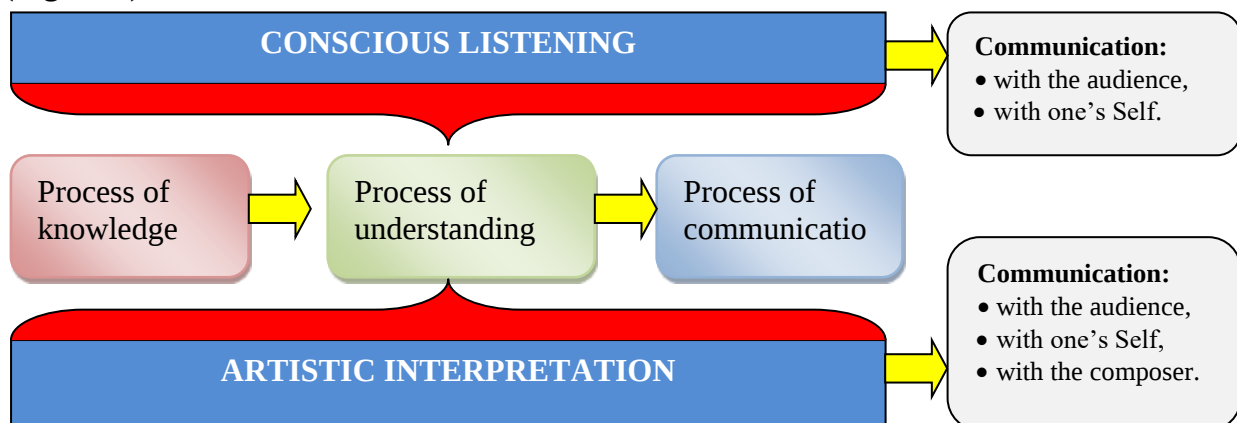


Figure 1. The processuality of the acts of musical listening and performance

The process of knowledge acquisition represents the first stage in both creative acts—musical listening and performance. The listener analyzes musical language from an auditory perspective, establishing both emotional and rational connections with the musical

message, thereby arriving at a profound level of understanding. Conversely, the performer studies the musical text with the same objective: to penetrate the essence of musical language, to decipher the artistic ideas embedded within it, and to identify the most appropriate means of rendering and recreating them through personal interpretation.

During conscious listening, the listener communicates not only with the composer, but also with oneself, seeking personal reflections upon the message and its underlying ideas. Similarly, the performer aims to synthesize this artistic product and to valorize it through a faithful musical interpretation, relating the artistic ideas to their own interpretative abilities—virtuosity, mastery, talent, competence, and musical culture.

When an individual listens to music, the act is not limited merely to hearing; rather, the music is sung inwardly within the listener's inner being. Music activates a series of internal processes, influencing the rhythm of breathing, blood circulation, heart rate, glandular secretions, and muscular tone. It has been observed that when someone sings or genuinely experiences the joy of a melody, whether visibly or imperceptibly, their eyes may become moist [7].

Music radiates a particular inner luminosity. The vocal apparatus vibrates in harmony with the melody, as though we ourselves were singing. Our entire being becomes involved in this process. One may easily notice how, when captivated by a melody, a person begins to tap their foot rhythmically or sway gently. What other art exerts such a direct impact upon human beings? For this reason, to listen to music essentially means to make music. Consequently, musical listening may be regarded as a musical activity in the most authentic sense of the word.

4. Conclusions

The analysis of the relationship between musical listening and performance highlights the profoundly interdependent nature of these two dimensions of music education. Musical listening does not represent merely an act of auditory perception, but rather a process of knowledge, introspection, and affective participation. Through conscious listening, the individual enters into direct contact with musical language, discovering the structure, expressivity, and spiritual message of the musical work.

At the same time, musical performance proves to be an act of communication and creation, in which the artist translates inner experience into a living sonic form. The performer does not reproduce a work passively; rather, they renew its meaning, becoming a mediator between the composer's intention and the audience's experience. In this sense, performance becomes a natural continuation of listening, while listening itself represents a premise for authentic performance.

From a psychopedagogical perspective, the integration of these two processes into educational practice contributes to the development of musical thinking, the formation of

aesthetic taste, and the cultivation of a conscious relationship with the art of sound. Music education achieves its ultimate purpose when the pupil or student becomes capable of active listening, expressive performance, and communicating through music their own emotions and ideas.

In conclusion, listening and performance cannot be separated within musical training, as together they form a complete circuit of artistic knowledge and personal development. By cultivating these competencies, the educational process acquires a profound formative dimension, transforming music into an instrument of expression, reflection, and inner balance.

Bibliography

1. BAGDASAR, N. *Teoria cunoștinței*. Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 1995.
2. BĂLAN, G. *Cum să ascultăm muzica*. Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998.
3. BĂLAN, G. *În căutarea maestrului*. Iași: Institutul European, 1990.
4. BĂLAN, G. *Musicosophia – arta de a asculta muzica*. Interviu cu Lucreția Berzintu, 20 septembrie 2019. <https://www.napocanews.ro/2019/09/musicosophia-arta-de-a-asculta-muzica-interviu-cu-prof-dr-george-balan.html> [accesat 10.03.2026].
5. BÂRLOGEANU, L. *Psihopedagogia artei*. Bucharest: Polirom, 2001. ISBN 973-683-713-0.
6. DEX. *Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române*. Online. Disponibil: <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/sensibilitate> [accesat 10.03.2026].
7. GAGIM, I. *Dimensiunea psihologică a muzicii*. Iași: Timpul, 2003. ISBN 973-612-049-X.
8. GAGIM, I. *Omul în fața muzicii*. Bălți: Presa Universitară Bălțeană, 2000. ISBN 9975-9555-5-X.
9. LUPU, I. *Educarea auzului muzical dificil*. Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1988.
10. MUNTEANU, G. *Didactica educației muzicale*. Ediția a II-a. Bucharest: Editura Fundației România, 2007. ISBN 978-973-725-908-0.
11. SILLAMY, N. *Larousse: Dicționar de psihologie*. Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 1998.
12. TOMATIS, Alfred A. *The Ear and the Voice*. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005. ISBN 978-0-8108-5137-5.

Recepționat / Received: 16.02.2026

Acceptat / Accepted: 19.03.2026

Email: danielacarmen.popa@ulbsibiu.ro