

The Role of Musical Perception in the Formation of Aesthetic Taste

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ABSTRACT

Aesthetic taste is one of the most important spiritual qualities of the human personality — the capacity to perceive beauty, appreciate it, and derive pleasure from it. Although various forms of art contribute to shaping this capacity, music holds a special place among them because it acts directly upon human emotions and worldview. This article examines the role of musical perception in the formation of aesthetic taste, drawing on both pedagogical theory and the authors' own classroom practice. It argues that aesthetic taste is not innate but is cultivated through systematic education that begins in childhood, and that the perception of music — through its rhythm, melody, and harmony — enriches the inner world of students, stimulates creative imagination, and strengthens moral values. Psychological research indicates that music perception activates both hemispheres of the brain, intensifies emotional responses, and supports the development of aesthetic sensibility. Drawing on examples from Azerbaijani classical, folk, and film music, as well as folk dance, the article demonstrates that the integrated use of music and movement accelerates and stabilizes the development of aesthetic taste. The study concludes that musical perception is a cornerstone of aesthetic education, contributing not only to students' artistic development but also to their emotional regulation, cultural literacy, and harmonious growth as individuals.

Keywords: Musical perception; aesthetic taste; aesthetic education; music education; folk music; folk dance; emotional development; pedagogy; national culture

1. INTRODUCTION

Aesthetic taste is regarded as one of the most important spiritual qualities of the human personality; it is the capacity to perceive and appreciate beauty and to derive pleasure from it. Various forms of art play a significant role in shaping this taste, yet music holds a special place among them. By directly influencing human emotions and worldviews, music becomes one of the most powerful tools for aesthetic education. Music is not merely a matter of sound waves; through rhythm, melody, and harmony, it enriches a person's inner world and stimulates creative imagination. This process, which forms the foundation of aesthetic taste, deepens through systematic education beginning in childhood.

Psychological research indicates that the perception of music activates both hemispheres of the brain, intensifies emotional responses, and fosters the development of aesthetic sensibilities (Brattico et al., 2013; Nieminen et al., 2011). Developing an appreciation for music cultivates students' sensitivity to art, shapes their standards of beauty, and reinforces moral values. Pedagogical approaches in this field highlight the emotional impact of music, which positively influences students' psychological well-being by reducing stress and boosting motivation. Music therefore serves not merely as a form of entertainment but as a means of comprehensive development in the shaping of aesthetic taste; it is a powerful instrument that fosters spiritual enrichment.

Aesthetic taste is not merely an innate inclination; it is formed and developed through a purposeful process of education and upbringing. Music is considered one of the most effective tools in this process, as it enriches students' emotional and aesthetic worlds, stimulates creative thinking, and helps them grasp the criteria of beauty. Research in psychology and pedagogy highlights the role of music in aesthetic education: it develops children's artistic sensibilities, strengthens their imagination, and fosters the instilling of moral values (Hargreaves & North, 2010; Aliyeva & Akhmadov, 2019). When music education is implemented systematically during preschool and school years, a solid foundation for aesthetic taste is established. This process extends beyond simple listening, deepening instead through integrated activities such as drawing, dance, and dramatic expression. The present article examines how musical perception contributes to the formation of aesthetic taste, combining a review of pedagogical principles with observations drawn from the authors' own teaching practice.

2. MUSIC LESSONS AND THE FOUNDATION OF MUSICAL PERCEPTION

Music lessons in general education schools lay the foundation for students' musical perception. The knowledge gained in these classes enables students to understand and appreciate developments in the world of music. The instructional process introduces students to the fundamental elements of musical language and teaches the interplay between rhythm, melody, and harmony; consequently, they learn to analyze the structure of musical compositions. This foundation prepares students to make independent musical choices later in life. Systematic instruction within the school curriculum helps students understand music history and contemporary trends, so that they evolve from passive listeners into active participants. This process enhances their general cultural literacy and fosters an appreciation for the arts.

Music lessons also strengthen students' attention and memory, as each musical example adds new layers of knowledge. Group singing fosters a sense of collectivity, while during the listening phase students note the compositional characteristics of the piece. These methods deepen students' musical perception and encourage them to form an emotional connection with the music, so that they perceive musical works with greater awareness. Such skills directly influence aesthetic development: the combination of exploring genres and active listening establishes a solid foundation for taste, through which students come to understand the criteria of beauty. The experience gained in lessons prepares students to make aesthetic choices throughout their lives and stimulates their creative thinking, positively influencing their overall development.

3. THE FORMATION OF AESTHETIC TASTE THROUGH EDUCATION

Aesthetic taste is not innate; it is formed through the processes of education and upbringing. From an early age, students listen to a variety of music at home, on the street, and in concert halls or at festivals. This diversity lays the foundation for their taste, while the process of upbringing gives structure to these listening experiences. Students learn to compare the musical examples they encounter in various settings. Developing taste through education teaches students to select high-quality music and facilitates

their integration into the cultural environment. A systematic approach to musical education ensures that this taste becomes enduring, and students consequently gain a richer emotional experience through music.

The music teacher's role is to systematize the knowledge and musical examples the students encounter. By providing the necessary guidance, the teacher instructs students on how to select the finest examples of music, fostering their ability to make independent decisions. The teacher employs analytical methods during the lesson, encourages active student participation, takes the students' individual characteristics into account, and adopts an individualized approach. The formation of aesthetic taste begins in secondary school, and the primary responsibility lies with the music teacher. The secondary-school years provide a favorable environment for the development of students' conscious perception; during this period, the teacher conducts in-depth analyses, directs the students' attention to the meaning of musical works, monitors their aesthetic development, assesses their progress, and makes adjustments as necessary. Properly fulfilling this responsibility enhances the quality of aesthetic education, making secondary school a pivotal stage in the development of musical taste (Shahhuseynova, 2015).

4. THE MUSIC LISTENING STAGE

During the lesson, the music listening phase must be carefully structured to ensure students can truly comprehend the works they hear. In this phase, students analyze the composition's structure, emotional impact, and artistic characteristics, while the teacher facilitates active engagement through questioning. This stage helps students gain a deep understanding of the language of music, and the session must be well organized to prevent distractions. Students take notes while listening and discuss them afterwards; this method reinforces comprehension and develops their ability to make aesthetic judgments. Ultimately, the listening phase strengthens the students' emotional connection to music, so that they perceive musical works with greater awareness.

The music listening stage cultivates students' musical taste and emotions while fostering a positive mood. Students experience positive emotions during listening, which uplifts their spirits and boosts their motivation; the process also aids emotional regulation and establishes a harmonious connection between the students and the music. The cultivation of emotions is an integral part of aesthetic taste, and this process positively influences students' moral development. In general education schools, the music listening component must be organized to a high standard and based on engaging content, since developing musical literacy enhances students' analytical skills and ensures the stability of aesthetic taste. A high-quality listening experience provides students with professional musical knowledge, laying a foundation for their future development and fostering their comprehensive growth.

5. CLASSROOM PRACTICE: MUSIC, DANCE, AND AESTHETIC TASTE

As part of the research on this topic, and with the school administration's permission, the first author conducted lessons and prepared visual and video materials to gather further insights, incorporating relevant video examples into an open lesson at the school where she previously taught. These materials allow for the practical observation of how students perceive music and demonstrate the tangible development of their aesthetic sensibilities. During the filming, the students' emotional reactions, their enthusiasm during performances, and their engagement with the music were particularly striking. This approach bridges theoretical knowledge with practical experience, fosters an interest in music, and enhances students' ability to appreciate aesthetics, while creating a valuable empirical basis for pedagogical research.

In one of these materials, a student performs the “Turajı” dance, a traditional Azerbaijani folk dance distinguished by its graceful and delicate movements, in which the rhythm of the music and the movements of the dance complement one another perfectly. The dance’s rhythmic structure, the harmony of its movements, and its seamless integration with the music sparked interest among the students, evoked emotional responses such as joy and curiosity, cultivated aesthetic appreciation, and strengthened their connection to national culture. Through it, the performer expresses emotions while simultaneously learning about national culture. Folk dances such as “Turajı,” when integrated with music, allow students to experience a sense of rhythm, harmony, and artistic expression simultaneously.

Other folk dances — such as “Süleymani,” “Nəlbəki,” “Mizəyi,” “Cəngi,” “Naz eləmə,” and “Uzundərə” — also contribute to the development of rhythm and artistic thinking in students. Each dance creates aesthetic beauty through its unique rhythmic structure and movements, and when performing these dances, students combine music with physical movement in a way that strengthens artistic imagination. The dances teach students the value of their national heritage, and a developed sense of rhythm enhances their coordination and aesthetic perception. Practical observations indicate that the combined application of music and dance accelerates the development of aesthetic taste and makes it more enduring, reinforcing the national foundations of that taste.

6. MUSICAL GENRES IN AESTHETIC EDUCATION

Utilizing various musical genres is essential for developing aesthetic taste. Diverse musical works enrich a person’s emotional world and help foster a deep appreciation for beauty, offering students a wide range of choices and making their aesthetic perception multifaceted. By grasping the distinctions between genres, students refine their tastes, while this diversity broadens their emotional range. To this end, examples of both classical and folk music are employed, stimulating students’ artistic thinking and resulting in a more robust and enriched aesthetic sensibility.

6.1 Classical and Symphonic Works

Uzeyir Hajibeyli’s “Koroghlu” Overture is distinguished by its heroic spirit. Powerful orchestral sounds resonate with the students’ emotions, allowing them to experience the grandeur of the music; the overture evokes a sense of patriotism and shapes the students’ understanding of heroism and strength. The orchestra’s dynamic range elevates aesthetic appreciation, and listening to the overture creates a sense of emotional uplift while introducing students to the musical expression of national heroism (Hacıbəyli, 1985). The music from Gara Garayev’s ballet “Seven Beauties” is aesthetically rich and evocative, stimulating the listener’s imagination and fostering the ability to perceive visual and auditory images simultaneously. Distinguished by its subtlety and colorfulness, the ballet music leads students to create imaginative images as they listen, strengthening artistic imagination and exemplifying aesthetic harmony (Garayev, 1982).

6.2 Azerbaijani Folk Music

Azerbaijani folk music plays a significant role in developing students’ aesthetic taste. With its graceful and lyrical melody, “Sarı Gəlin” evokes delicate emotions, while “Laçın” sparks interest through its rhythmic and stirring melody, and “Şuşanın Dağları” evokes feelings of patriotism, longing, and joy. These songs help students appreciate the beauty of national music and positively influence the formation of artistic thinking. Listening to these pieces allows students to feel a connection to their cultural roots, enriching aesthetic taste with national elements and supporting students’ emotional development.

6.3 Music in Film and Theatre

Music in film and theatre enriches students' aesthetic perception. The music featured in the films "Arşın Mal Alan" and "O Olmasın, Bu Olsun" reflects the beauty of national music, and the harmony between the music and the characters on stage creates an aesthetic appeal. The music in these films is cheerful and rhythmic; it evokes positive emotions in students and showcases the richness of national musical culture. Because film music integrates with visual art, it broadens students' understanding of music and has a positive impact on their emotional and aesthetic development.

7. CONCLUSION

The perception of music plays a positive role in the emotional and aesthetic development of students and in the shaping of their aesthetic taste. Listening to a variety of musical pieces broadens their understanding of music, fosters an interest in the arts, and elevates their cultural awareness. The combined use of classical and national musical works is a fundamental component of the long-term educational process, through which students learn to deeply perceive and appreciate beauty.

Azerbaijani folk songs such as the lyrical "Sarı Gəlin" and the rhythmic "Laçın" help shape students' national aesthetic sensibilities, while the music of films such as "Arşın Mal Alan" and "O Olmasın, Bu Olsun" evokes aesthetic appreciation by reflecting the richness of national culture and the harmony of performance. Folk music fosters students' educational and personal development through emotional depth and cultural heritage, and the combined use of music and dance plays an especially important role in enriching their emotional and aesthetic worlds.

Music education in schools expands students' creative abilities, broadens their worldview, and enhances their cultural understanding. The systematic listening to examples of classical, national, and folk music helps cultivate a high level of aesthetic taste, through which students learn to appreciate art, express their emotions, and preserve national values. Music is not merely a form of entertainment; it is a vital cultural sphere that contributes to an individual's spiritual and aesthetic development, and musical perception thereby becomes a cornerstone of aesthetic taste, ensuring the harmonious development of future generations.

DECLARATIONS

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Ethical Approval: The classroom activities and audiovisual materials described in this study were conducted and collected with the permission of the school administration.

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