

Chapter # 35

TEACHING TOWARDS JOY AND INVOLVEMENT WITH WESTERN AND ARAB CLASSICAL MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

Listeners at concerts of classical music, both Western and Arab, are dwindling. Educational policy does not invest enough to preserve the gifts of previous generations. We will argue that what prevents teachers from introducing their pupils to this music is the absence of teaching methods that make listening to unfamiliar music challenging, engaging, and fun. This chapter introduces new pedagogy and a program of prepared concerts for teaching classical music in primary schools and preschools. One of the innovative methods of teaching is the "Musical Mirror" approach, based on the principle that movement gestures are the source of musical gestures and their use aids in the individual's cognitive and affective identification with the music. Conclusions drawn from the study are based on responses to questionnaires and interviews of practicing teachers, both those who are teaching Western and those who are teaching Arab music. The use of Musical Mirrors and Graphs raised teachers' confidence for teaching complex music because it deepens their understanding and generates excitement and identification with the music which they then transfer to their students. Furthermore, the concert program provides a professional framework with opportunities for collaborative learning both for themselves and their pupils.

Keywords: musical mirrors/graphs, active listening, Constructivism, music cognition, Arab/ Western Classical Music.

1. INTRODUCTION

Educational policy in the Western world does not appear to invest enough effort in preserving the arts. Arts education in schools is often relegated to outside the core curriculum (Dewey, 1919; Dewey, 1934; Heilig, Cole, & Aguilar, 2010; Jorgensen, 2003; Katona, 2016). Even though one of the functions of education should be the transmission of culture from generation to generation (Taba, 1962), schools most often fail to fulfill this obligation in general, and very often in the case of transmission of musical culture. School music teachers prefer to teach other styles so that Western classical music is pushed to the margins. The music taught in schools is increasingly focused on teaching popular music, folk music, rock, etc. It seems that educational policy does not invest enough in preserving the gifts of previous generations. In many schools, teachers prefer to please their students by focusing on music that the students listen to (with great enjoyment and expertise without any need for guidance from their teachers) rather than challenging them to become acquainted with musical worlds that are closed to them. Thus complex, classical music of most cultures is marginalized.

A survey in four countries (England, Germany, USA [in the state of North Carolina], and Finland) found that only in one place (North Carolina) was general music taught in elementary schools by music specialists (Shvadron, 2019). In many, if not most, European countries (France, Holland, Italy, Poland, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro) music in early grades is taught by the classroom (homeroom) teacher (Girdzijauskienė &

Sakadolskienė, 2016). It is likely that general teachers who are not musicians do not have the ability to teach complex music and use methods for teaching music that require above-average musical skill (Shvadron, 2019). We believe that the main reason why children are not exposed to classical music is the lack of appropriate, profound, interesting, and creative teaching methods and learning strategies.

In this chapter we examine the impact on teachers of using the “Musical Mirrors” approach developed by Veronika Cohen (1997; 2015) in teaching Western and Arab classical music. We also examine the impact of the Israeli “Touch the Music” live concerts program on music teachers.

It is important to note that in music education classes in Arab society music teachers used to teach the songs of the Lebanese singer Fairuz and the songs of Palestinian folklore. This means that in the past they only used light vocal music. However, when they began to use the approach of musical mirrors, they were also able to present more complex instrumental Arab music that they had not previously been exposed to in elementary school music classes. Examples include works of Muhammad Abd al-Wahab and Umm Kultum, and complex forms of Turkish music such as al-Samai and al-Langa.

1.1. Pedagogic Approach

The goals of music education are to enable students to derive meaning from a musical experience and to use music as a means of self-expression. Wiggins (2001) explains that in order to learn one needs opportunities to construct personal understanding. In schools where the principles of constructivism are applied students' original ideas are valued, along with those of their teachers.

Studies show that when children listen to a musical work, they perceive the music as whole gestures and not as a collection of separate sounds (Cohen, 1980).

The teacher must engage in musical activities with a holistic approach that presents musical gestures in their entirety. Musical concepts should be taught in the context of the specific musical piece in which they appear (Wiggins, 2001). The method that Cohen developed to meet this need is the Musical Mirrors approach (Story Time Production, 2020).

1.2. Musical Mirrors and Graphs

Cohen created an approach that she calls “Musical Mirrors”, for learning music through movement that allows a holistic perception and response. A “Musical Mirror” is the movement analog of the cognitive and emotional process of the listener. Mirror movements express an analysis of all the important aspects of a musical piece and reflect the organizing action of the listener. The approach is based on the principle that movement gestures are the source of musical gestures (Cohen, 1997; 2015).

This belief in movement gestures as the source of musical gestures was based on observation and analysis of kindergarten children's musical play (Cohen, 1980). Filippa et al. (2020) argue a similar point namely that “music cognition is not just a matter of perception, but involves the whole human body” (Filippa et al., 2020, p.3). Recent research in embodied music cognition validates the principles that guides the development and use of Musical Mirrors.

For about a decade, embodied music cognition has become an influential paradigm in music research. The paradigm holds that music cognition is strongly determined by corporeally mediated interactions with music. They determine the way in which music can be conceived in terms of goals, directions, targets, values, reward (Leman, Maes, Nijs, & Van Dyck, 2018, p.2).

Musical Graphs can serve as alternatives for Musical Mirrors. Cohen defines Musical Graphs as capturing the movement of the Musical Mirror on the page. A Graph is not a notation of discreet auditory events- but representation of the mind's organizing activity that turns sounds into music.

When the teacher makes use of a Musical Mirror the musical piece is presented to the learner as a gestalt and he/she intuitively grasps its details from the movements. Next, the teacher asks questions that raise awareness of what the student has intuitively understood. At the end of the process the student is invited to present his/ her creative response through a dance, a graph, his/her own mirror, or a piece of music that he or she composed. Each of these creative responses are based on the musical ideas the student has learned to recognize in the piece.

1.3. Concert Programs

Various scholars review live concerts for school children, but only a minority describe significant preparation for them. Brand (2000) writes: "Concerts of live music in various ensembles are perceived as part of music education around the world, and are considered as an effective way to develop musical appreciation, musical perception and appropriate behavior" (Brand, p.2). Wasiak (2005) recommends deepening and exploring the educational effectiveness of children's concerts, as well as comparing different teaching methods. He also recommends close collaboration between music educators, musicians, and researchers - to maximize the educational value of children's concerts. The study presented below on the "Touch the Music" program exemplifies such collaboration.

The role of preparing the children for the concert is entrusted to the music teachers, while the selection of the repertoire and the preparation of the teachers are the responsibility of the academic team from the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance. The performance is entrusted to professional artists. The preparation and ongoing support the teachers receive is an integral part of the program. The latter includes written booklets that contain in-depth analysis of the pieces, suggested activities for each piece for different age groups and workshops.

Open Window- program created by Noga Fox, Jerusalem supervisor of music, created a space for cooperative learning and opportunities for sharing the experience of teaching various pieces amongst teachers who participate in the program. The rationale underlying the concert preparation is that

children should prepare for this active (mentally active) musical encounter with the same intensity and clarity of purpose with which they prepare for other musical events, such as a school concert where they themselves perform. The principal of one of the schools where such an active partnership exists summarized the value of the project as follows: "The lessons give meaning to the concert; the concert in turn gives direction and meaning to the music curriculum (Cohen, 2004, p. 47-48).

While this program has been continuously on going for 30 years in West Jerusalem and 18 years in the North of Israel it has been only sporadically present in East Jerusalem schools and the Arab sector in the North.

1.4. Music Education in Arab Society in Israel

Israeli schools (with a very few exceptions) are divided according to the child's primary cultural background (Jewish or Arab), each with its own curriculum. In this chapter we explore the impact of using Musical Mirrors as a teaching approach in both sectors.

In the last decade we have witnessed a change in music education in Arab society. More parents than in the past began to send their children to study music in community centers and music conservatories in various localities. Resources for music studies in the northern region for the Arab society have been increased, but the programs are still not adapted to the Arab population and the Arab musical culture (Ben-Zeev, 2006).” It is desirable that there be an Arab musical education that is different from any other music education, that reflects Arab qualities, the uniqueness of Arab musical culture” (Touma, 1974, p.370).

Cohen and Laor (Cohen & Laor, 1997) also support the need for a curriculum for music education that is based on a thorough acquaintance with Arab musical culture, along with an acquaintance with Western music. Since the aesthetics and material of Arab music are quite different from those of Western music, emphasis in Arab schools should be on imparting Arab music culture. This should include: acquaintance with the repertoire of classical Arab instrumental music, songs from Arab folklore, the history of Arab music (composers and genres), and aspects of Arab music theory (the theory of Maqam, Arab rhythms, etc.).

2. OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the study is to examine whether and how Musical Mirrors can provide an appropriate teaching tool for in-depth listening to Western and Arab classical music. The research questions were:

- 1) Does the “Musical Mirrors” approach encourage and support teachers in teaching classical music as an integral part of their lessons?
- 2) How does the “Musical Mirrors” approach affect teaching of Arab music? Is its effect different from the effect in the teaching of Western music?
- 3) Does the format of written materials, workshops, and live concerts prepare and support teachers so that they feel comfortable teaching complex music that expands their pupils’ musical horizons?
- 4) What is the effect over time of the concert program “Touch the Music” on teachers?

3. METHOD

The study was conducted in a mixed method, which poses an advantage to mutual strengthening of the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the study. Data were collected from various sources using diverse data collection methods: interviews, questionnaires, and written evaluations. The qualitative (interviews and open questions) and quantitative results (questionnaires) were analyzed separately on the same phenomenon in order to validate the findings, confirm them and draw wide conclusions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

3.1. Sample

In the first phase of the study 42 music teachers participated from two districts (the Jerusalem and the North District). The teachers' sample was based on the analytical induction method, according to which the researcher selects interviewees who he believes will contribute to the theory (Sabar Ben-Yehoshua, 1990). They were chosen because they participated in the “Touch the Music” Concert Program for several years. In the second phase of the study 28 music teachers from the Jewish sector participated. Some participants participated in the “Touch the Music” program for many year; others were younger teachers who have joined more recently. From the Arab sector 23 experienced music teachers who use the “Musical Mirrors” approach participated.

3.2. Procedure

The research reported here took place in two phases. Phase I was conducted in 2011-2012 (Shmuelof, 2012). Phase II, involved two parallel studies conducted in 2022 - one in the Jewish sector and one in the Arab sector. In the 2011-2012 study 12 teachers from Jerusalem and the northern district of Israel were interviewed. In addition to interviews, written evaluations, and personal reactions by teachers who participated in the program were examined. Following the interviews and conversations with the teachers, the principles that distinguish the program and methods of teaching emerged and were clarified. In order to obtain as complete a picture as possible, questionnaires were sent to teachers asking about the contribution of the program to their teaching. Thirty teachers answered the questionnaires.

Ten years later the authors felt that there was a need to reexamine how teachers evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the use of “Musical Mirrors” and the “Touch the Music” program on their teaching today. For this purpose, questionnaires were distributed through digital platforms using WhatsApp teachers’ groups in the Northern District and in Jerusalem. In parallel to this research, Arab music teachers were also sent questionnaires to assess their evaluation of the use of the “Musical Mirror” approach and its effect on the teaching of Arab classical music. These teachers were invited to also participate in phone interviews, or express their thoughts at the end of the questionnaire.

3.3. Data Analysis

The interviews were analyzed for common themes regarding teacher satisfaction with the program, perceived success, suggestions for improvement, etc. Following the interviews, the principles that distinguish the plan became clearer: what in it contributes to the teachers’ satisfaction, as well as questions about how best to conduct future workshops.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. First Phase

The first phase of the research (Shmuelof, 2012) revealed that participating in the “Touch the Music” program put listening to complex artistic music at the center of the music lesson and that in order to do this music teacher needed the support of a program and framework of professional training. Dana (pseudonym) reported that after 20 years of teaching the program reminded her of goals that she had forgotten over time. Over the years she focused more on singing, and did not devote time and resources to quality listening. In addition, participation in the program improved the professional self-esteem of the teachers. In the words of one teacher: “It upgraded me as a teacher” [and] brought interest and something new in active listening to classical pieces.” What are the experiences that made the teacher feel “upgraded”? The interviews revealed two significant aspects that contributed to upgrading the lessons. One is procedural and the other relates to pedagogical approach. From the procedural aspect defined goals and clear stages in the teaching/learning process gave teachers a sense of direction and purpose. A teacher explained: “When you have something organized - Step-by-step, you know what you are going to do, it gives you confidence and a better feeling – that I am more significant – I know where I’m leading my students”. The pedagogical aspect relates to the inclusion of activities that were experiential and creative. As another teacher explained:

Most significantly the children in my class had a personal connection to the music. Before [participating in the program] I taught in a frontal manner, I gave very little room for the experiential way to be manifested.

The program gave place to the child – the creative and the experiential part of the child.

This teacher recognized that teaching using the methods (Musical Mirrors, graphs and creative work) that she learned in the workshops involved her students in the music lesson and the pieces she introduced to them.

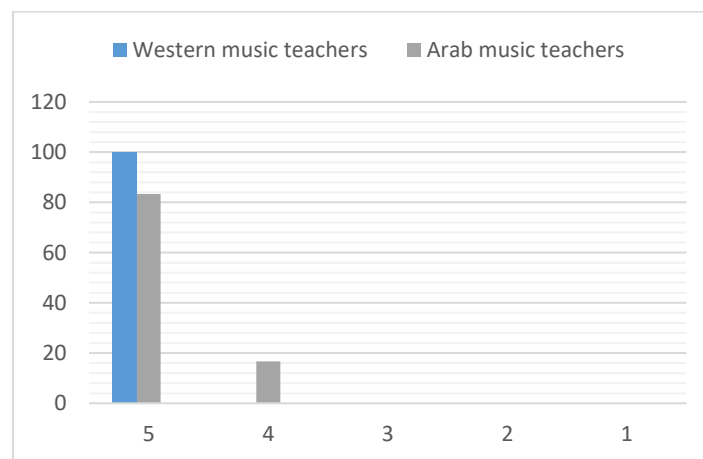
An important finding that emerged from the interviews was the inspiration the program offered for teacher's creativity. Miriam (one of the teachers) noted: "[The program...] has a lot of space for my creativity - which I really liked." She had to adapt the activities to the special needs of her students, at different ages. According to her, this was a big challenge. In addition, she adapted each activity to the changing nature of the class (in one class students might like to discuss musical concepts, while in another students are more involved in creativity). One of the exciting and surprising stories she reported was about her choice to teach "Mirrors" through the experience of a blind girl:

I liked to start a new topic in a certain class where there was a blind girl who was very musical. It raised the challenge that it would suit everyone - even for those who can't see. It [this approach] always justified itself - lessons that were successful for her I was sure would be successful for others as well. I demonstrated "Mirrors" with her. I stood behind her and made the movements through her [...] It was clear to me that I was not giving up the "Mirrors" because of her. On the contrary.

4.2. Second Phase

We will now turn to analysis of responses to questionnaires in 2022. When teachers of Western music were asked to evaluate the impact of the program "Touch the Music" on their teaching, 100% of the teachers chose the answer "it has a very significant effect on my teaching". When teachers of Arab music were asked to evaluate the impact of the use of "Musical Mirrors" on their teaching, 82.6% answered that it has a very significant effect while 17.4% felt it has a significant effect.

Figure 1.
Evaluation of impact of concerts/musical mirrors.

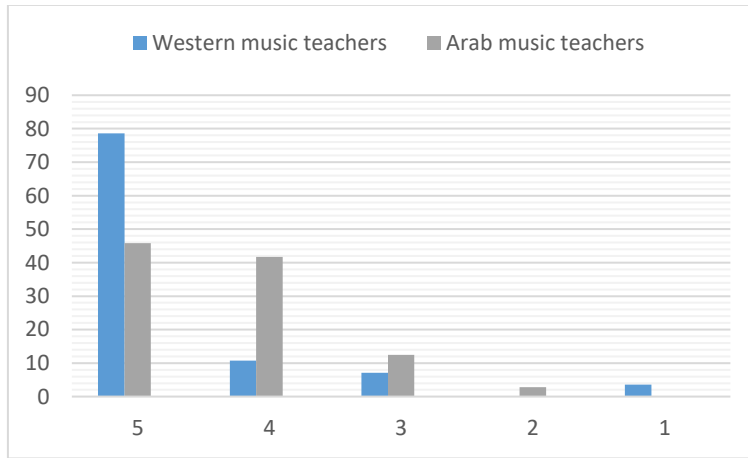


The questionnaire was designed to reveal the impact of “Musical Mirrors” on the teacher as a musician and a pedagogue. Furthermore, we looked at how she perceived the impact of “Musical Mirrors” and the “Touch the Music” program on the children.

For the following statements teachers were asked whether they strongly agree (5), agree (4), somewhat agree (3), disagree (2), or strongly disagree (1):

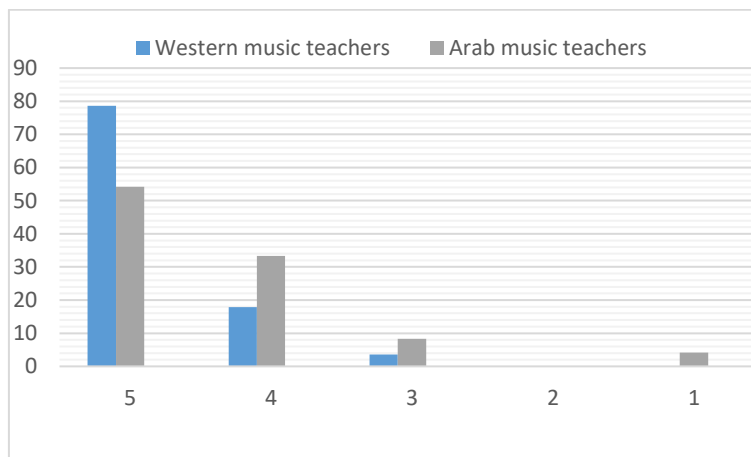
A) “Learning Musical Mirrors/ Graphs also brings me personally closer to music I did not know/ like previously.”

Figure 2.
Musical Mirrors and the teacher as a listener.



B) “I feel confident in including listening to classical music in my teaching because of the suggestion of activities presented in the workshop/ booklet of the program (teachers of Western music)” / “because of the use of Musical Mirrors “(teachers of Arab music).

Figure 3.
Feeling of confidence in teaching classical music.

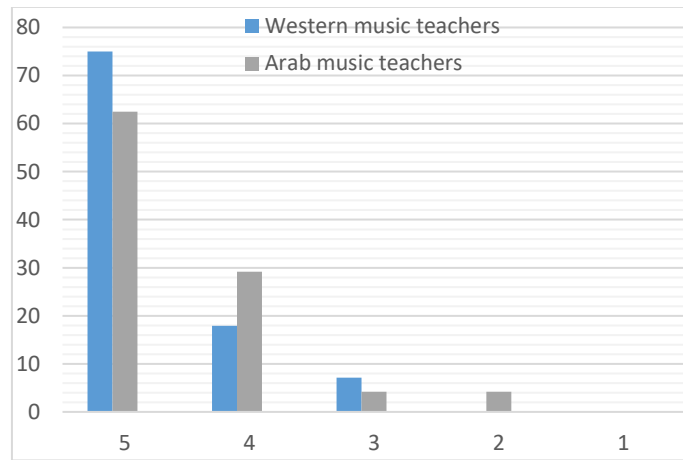


The results in the figures above attest to the willingness of music teachers to engage with complex music, which gives them confidence to encourage the children to be open to listen and respond to unfamiliar music.

In the following figure we see the teachers' sense of professional self-esteem revealed. Using "Musical Mirrors" allows them to deal with music in a significant professional manner.

C) "Teaching with Musical Mirrors makes me feel that I teach music in a meaningful and deep way"

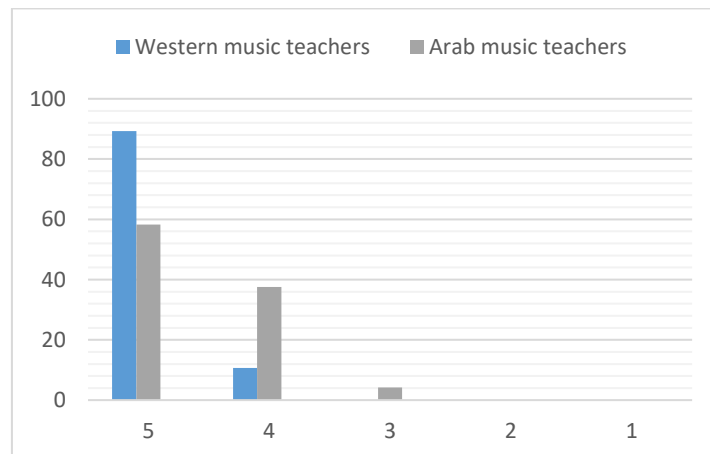
*Figure 4.
Teaching in a meaningful and deep way.*



The value of active learning is appreciated by teachers since it contributes to the positive **classroom atmosphere** and we see in the figure below that "Musical Mirrors" are ideally suited to such a goal.

D) "Musical Mirrors enable children to be active listeners".

*Figure 5.
Children as active listeners.*



Teachers interviewed in the Arab sector indicated a number of reasons for using mirrors/graphs:

1) Enjoyment, motivation “When I do a mirror it draws the children into the lessons, raises interest, and I also feel comfortable and happy in class”.

2) Concentration that contributes to conducting a class in a successful atmosphere: “I believe that this tool makes the students listen more and stimulates interaction and concentration”.

3) Cognitive and emotional tie to the music: “It is an intuitive tool that develops deep musical understanding. It is simply a way to draw both the children and the teacher closer to music”.

Teachers remarked that "Mirrors need to be delivered correctly". To this end, one of the teachers requested a site with more mirrors so that they could renew themselves. It is interesting to note that the use of this educational tool was incorporated in the lessons of both younger and experienced teachers. A veteran teacher reported: the mirror method expanded the possibilities and musical horizons in her lessons: “it changed the entire course of the lesson, and especially how I play pieces of music for the students, especially pieces of Western music that I had a hard time teaching before”.

5. DISCUSSION

The uniqueness of teaching through mirrors is the direct and deep experiential connection of the teachers and students to music. The findings revealed that in both the Jewish and the Arab sectors teaching through musical mirrors allowed pupils to connect to complex artistic music - both from Western and Arab culture. This method of teaching is valid for different cultures because it makes use of the unique movement gestures that gave rise to the musical gestures. (Cohen, 1997; 2015). Recent research by Simones (2019) supports this conclusion:

music teachers' gestures embody music and teaching, and play an important role in how effectively teachers promote enactment of music and music learning in these contexts. Such being the case, gestures should be considered from an Embodiment Theory perspective. At the heart of Embodiment Theory is the idea that knowledge is generated through the experience of an individual in her/his world which arises and evolves primarily through the sensing body in interaction with the environment. Accordingly, cognition is understood to be inseparable from corporeal existence—the ‘mind’ is therefore necessarily and essentially embodied. (p.2).

The first and second stages of the research with the teachers of Western music also pointed out the importance of a curriculum that involves active listening and creative experiences which culminate in live concert attendance. We found that teachers who participated in the "Touch the Music" concert program experienced improvement in their professional abilities to engage their pupils in in-depth listening experiences with complex music and in their students' attitude to the music lessons. What are the components that contribute to the success of the project?

5.1. The Workshops

Our findings confirm that the learning process is a social act (Vygotsky, 1978). A teacher explained: "There is a great importance in mutual learning, sharing, and creating experiences in the workshops by all the teachers who teach the program." In the workshops the atmosphere of enthusiasm affects the attitudes of the teachers who otherwise may find learning new pieces and new teaching methods difficult. In addition to sharing ideas with each other, participants become convinced that it is possible, fun, and worthwhile to teach complex music.

5.2. The Concerts

What is the role and importance of the live concert at the end of the program? This is where the need for a 'visible goal' arises in a program focused on musical listening. A visible goal defines the path - the learning process, and gives meaning to lessons" (Rusinek, 2008). Indeed, one of the teachers explained: "When there is preparation of the children for something, and they are waiting for it, it creates a fertile and fun learning atmosphere. Not only do children need a 'visible goal', so do teachers".

The concert itself is the goal towards which the learning is oriented. One of the teachers said that the concerts created a time frame and commitment to the entire curriculum, including the more challenging pieces. The very fact that the piece would be performed at the concert did not allow her to give up on herself and the children: "Before that if something did not work in a certain class, I would give up. Here I must look for and find something that will work."

This finding underscores the importance of the concert program for preserving the "classical" artistic content of music lessons. The concert is an opportunity for the teacher to exhibit the success of her work in the classroom. By observing the level of engagement of the children with the music supervisors and organizers of the program can gauge the quality of the work done in the classroom and provide teachers with feedback and appreciation.

5.3. The use of "Musical Mirrors" and Graphs

In the third part of the research investigating the response of music teachers in the Arab Sector, it could be seen that even without a concert program, teaching using the Musical Mirrors method contributed to the confidence of the teachers in regard to teaching complex artistic music.

The teachers make their own use of the materials they received in their training. Their request for more professional development and an online data base of mirrors and graphs indicates how much they value Musical Mirrors and Graphs as teaching tools. All the teachers reported that they have experienced a process of gaining deeper understanding of musical works through the mediation of "Musical Mirrors". Once the teachers are engaged with complex music, they are able to engender a similar process for the children: "the children in my class had a personal connection to the music ". Another teacher reported that "the program gave place to the child – the creative and the experiential part of the child."

6. CONCLUSIONS

In a field where innovations come and go with great frequency our research has revealed that the "Musical Mirrors" approach and the concert program are effective over time and meet a genuine need. The responses to our recent questionnaire were as positive as the responses of teachers ten years ago. Our research shows that participation in such a program

is essential for teachers as it refreshes and strengthens their sense of professionalism and their confidence in teaching complex classical works in an experiential way. It is important to constantly keep an open channel of communication between the organizers of the program and participating teachers and allow a place and time for exchanging ideas and experiences from the field.

As we saw from both the in-depth study ten years ago and the recent study, the teaching of complex music is a worthy challenge that can be met with a program that is sensitive to both children's and teachers' needs.

The teaching approaches discussed above provide means for multicultural teaching, which in countries with a diverse population is important ethically, pedagogically, and musically. Our experience and research confirms our belief that classical music can be relevant and meaningful to children's lives. In order to be so they need to encounter it in a way that is joyful, respectful both of the listener and the music taught, and rests on solid musical, cognitive and pedagogic foundations.

Future research should involve interviewing pupils to gain their perspective on these projects and to investigate whether their perception of complex music has been affected by these methods and projects.

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Teaching towards joy and involvement with western and Arab classical music

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