

Elementary School Pupils' Music Preferences for Classical Music*

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Abstract

The paper explores music preferences of elementary school pupils for classical music and the influence of familiarity with music on their music preferences. As a part of the research, a questionnaire, and a sound questionnaire as its integral part, was administered to 238 pupils attending the second, the fifth and the eighth grade of elementary school.

The results confirm that younger pupils, compared to the older ones, show greater preferences for classical music. In addition, the influence of gender on the preferences for classical music was also confirmed, while attendance of extracurricular music lessons was not proven to be a significant predictor of the pupils' preferences for classical music. It was also noted that familiarity with music is a significant factor influencing pupils' music preferences. The results confirm that pupils show the lowest music preferences for the 20th-century music, which has significant implications for music-pedagogical theory and practice.

Key words: *classical music; elementary school; music preferences.*

Introduction

One of the goals of music education in elementary school is to establish and to adopt criteria for critical and aesthetic assessment of music (The curriculum for primary schools, 2006, p. 66). This goal is largely realized through listening to music and is linked to the cultural-aesthetic principle, according to which music lessons enable pupils to be competent users of music culture. Apart from the cultural-aesthetic principle, the conception of music lessons is based on the psychological principle, which means that pupils love music and want to be actively involved in it.

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In lower grades of elementary school, pupils sing, listen to music, play, improvise, and dance. The music education program is open, which means that the teacher is free to choose the mode of active music making, while listening to music and introducing music is obligatory part. In the fourth, fifth and sixth grades of elementary school, music classes include singing, listening to music, performing music, music games and free, improvised rhythmisation, dance and playing.

When we talk about listening to music as a music teaching activity, we talk about “listening to music which has certain artistic pretensions, listening to music which is performed with the intent to get to know and experience music as an art, and that such music, which is artistically experienced, can generate certain artistic effects which establish and develop artistic musical tastes. From this definition, it is clear that the content of such listening can only be a music work of art performed live or with the help of a device for music reproduction” (Rojko, 1996, p. 139).

Listening to music also affects the formation of musical preferences and musical taste of pupils. While music preferences represent short-term appreciation of the likes, musical tastes refer to relatively steady, long-term behaviour and evaluation, and to the more permanent dispositions that represent the totality of the individuals' preference (Mirković-Radoš, 1996). There are a number of factors that influence the formation of music preferences, and the most commonly investigated factors are related to the characteristics of music and the characteristics of listeners (Dobrota & Reić Ercegovac, 2016).

Of all the musical-expressive components associated with the musical preferences of the listener, the greatest number of researchers investigate the role of tempo (Dobrota & Reić Ercegovac, 2015), dynamics (Burnsed, 2001), tonality (Crowder, 1984), performing media (LeBlanc & Cote, 1983), musical style (Wiggins, 2001) and familiarity of music (Carper, 2001). Research on the relationship of music preferences and music styles mostly confirms that younger pupils, compared to the older pupils, show higher preferences for different and unknown musical styles and show generally higher preferences for all styles (Fung et al., 1999/2000). Furthermore, Hargreaves and North (1999) note that the preferences for pop/rock music are decreasing with age, unlike the preference for classical music that grows with age. Concerning the influence of familiarity with music on music preferences, the research results generally confirm that repeated exposure to music increases its familiarity, resulting in better understanding of music and increased musical preferences (Carper, 2001. Peery & Peery, 1986. Shehan, 1979).

The most commonly explored characteristics of listeners influencing music preferences are socioeconomic status, age, gender, personality traits and music education (Dobrota & Reić Ercegovac, 2016). Concerning the influence of age on musical preferences, LeBlanc (1991) points out that younger children are more open to different music and that such openness declined by entering adolescence.

With regard to gender, Hargreaves et al. (1995) note that women, compared to men, prefer a greater number of different musical styles and have more positive attitudes toward music. Regarding the influence of music education and musical abilities on

music preferences, research results suggest that individuals with higher levels of music education and more developed musical skills prefer more complex music than individuals with lower levels of music education and less developed music abilities (Gregory, 1994; Moore & Johnson, 2001; North & Hargreaves, 1995; Palmquist, 1988).

The aim of research and research problems

The aim of this research was to examine musical preferences of the pupils attending the second, fifth and eighth grade of elementary school towards classical music and the influence of the familiarity of musical fragments on the pupils' musical preferences.

To achieve our aim, we attempted to address the following issues:

1. Examine the influence of age on classical music preferences.
2. Examine the influence of gender on classical music preferences.
3. Examine the influence of extracurricular music lessons on classical music preferences.
4. Examine the influence of the familiarity with music on classical music preferences.

Based on the defined aim of the research and research problems, we attempted to address the following hypotheses:

H1: Younger pupils, compared to the older pupils, show greater preferences for classical music.

H2: Female pupils, compared to male pupils, show greater preferences for classical music.

H3: Pupils who attend extracurricular music lessons, compared to those pupils who do not attend such lessons, show greater preferences for classical music.

H4: Pupils prefer music fragments that are familiar to them, compared to unfamiliar music fragments.

Method

Participants

The research was conducted in Pula on a sample of 238 pupils of the second-grade (N=69), fifth-grade (N=86) and eighth-grade (N=83) (Table 1).

Table 1
Structure of the sample (N = 238)

GENDER	N	GRADE	N
M	122	2	32
		5	47
		8	43
F	116	2	37
		5	39
		8	40
Total		238	

Instruments and procedure

Musical preferences were examined using a personal computer, speakers, and the music CD which contained 15 musical fragments of classical music (Table 2), each lasting about

1 minute. The musical examples belonged to different musical style periods (Baroque, Pre-Classical and Classical period, Romanticism, Impressionism, and the 20th-century music), and each style was presented by three musical fragments. Since the distribution of musical fragment preferences differs significantly from the normal distribution (K-S $d = .094$; $p < 0.05$), further analyses will use non-parametric statistics.

Table 2

Psychometric characteristics of the questionnaire of classical music preferences

	<i>Baroque</i>
	1. Jean-Philippe Rameau: <i>La poule</i>
	2. Johann Sebastian Bach: <i>The Brandenburg Concerto, no.2, Allegro</i>
	3. Antonio Vivaldi: <i>The four seasons, Spring, op. 8 RV 269, 1. Allegro</i>
	<i>Pre-Classical and Classical period</i>
	4. Luigi Boccherini: <i>Minuet, Op. 11, No. 5 (G 275)</i>
	5. Ludwig van Beethoven: <i>Sonata Pathétique, op. 13 No. 8, 1st. Movement</i>
	6. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: <i>Eine Kleine Nachtmusik (String Serenade No. 13, G-major) K 525</i>
	<i>Romanticism</i>
	7. Felix Mendelssohn: <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream, Wedding March, op. 61</i>
	8. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: <i>The piano concerto No.1 in b minor, Op.23</i>
	9. Frederic Chopin: <i>Nocturne op. 9 No. 2</i>
	<i>Impressionism</i>
	10. Gabriel Faure: <i>Pavane, op. 50</i>
	11. Claude Debussy: <i>Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune, L 86</i>
	12. Maurice Ravel: <i>Bolero</i>
	<i>The 20th-century music</i>
	13. Krzysztof Penderecki: <i>Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima</i>
	14. George Gershwin: <i>Rhapsody in blue</i>
	15. Pierre Boulez: <i>Structures I</i>
Cronbach α	0.88
M (sd)	54.79 (11.59)
range	15-75
Mean inter-item correlation	0.36
K-S d	0.09 . $p < 0.05$

For the purpose of this research, a questionnaire of two parts was prepared. The first part contained questions related to the sociodemographic characteristics of the pupils (gender, age, attending extracurricular music lessons); the second part of the questionnaire was the questionnaire of classical music preferences, which consisted of

an odd number of classical music fragments recorded on a CD and an assessment scale with five degrees (1=strongly dislike; 5=strongly like). Participants were also asked to assess their familiarity with each musical fragment by circling yes or no next to each assessment scale.

The testing was conducted collectively in the school classrooms, according to a pre-arranged schedule. The purpose of conducting the research was briefly explained, the anonymity was guaranteed and the participants were asked to honestly and accurately answer the questions.

Results and discussion

Table 3 shows the average degree of preferences for the music fragments. The pupils showed the greatest preferences for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* (String Serenade No. 13, G-major) K 525, and the lowest for Krzysztof Penderecki's *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima* and Pierre Boulez's *Structures I*.

Table 3

Average degree of preferences for music fragments

	Music fragments	M	min.	max.	SD
1.	Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: The piano concerto No.1 in b minor, Op.23	3.76	1	5	1.11
2.	Ludwig van Beethoven: <i>Sonata Pathétique, op. 13 No. 8, 1st. Movement</i>	2.95	1	5	1.39
3.	Krzysztof Penderecki: <i>Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima</i>	2.64	1	5	1.60
4.	Johann Sebastian Bach: <i>The Brandenburg Concerto, no.2, Allegro</i>	4.00	1	5	1.15
5.	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: <i>Eine Kleine Nachtmusik</i> (String Serenade No. 13, G-major) K 525	4.62	1	5	0.78
6.	Claude Debussy: <i>Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune, L 86</i>	3.08	1	5	1.38
7.	Frederic Chopin: <i>Nocturne, op. 9 br. 2</i>	3.86	1	5	1.29
8.	Antonio Vivaldi: <i>The four seasons, Spring, op. 8 RV 269, 1. Allegro</i>	4.40	1	5	0.98
9.	George Gershwin: <i>Rhapsody in blue</i>	3.41	1	5	1.33
10.	Felix Mendelssohn: <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream, Wedding March, op. 61</i>	4.27	1	5	1.04
11.	Luigi Boccherini: <i>Minuet, Op. 11, No. 5 (G 275)</i>	3.82	1	5	1.18
12.	Jean-Philippe Rameau: <i>La poule</i>	3.64	1	5	1.34
13.	Gabriel Faure: <i>Pavane, op. 50</i>	3.75	1	5	1.22
14.	Pierre Boulez: <i>Structures I</i>	2.64	1	5	1.50
15.	Maurice Ravel: <i>Bolero</i>	3.95	1	5	1.19

Friedman's ANOVA analysis (273.07; df = 4.00; p = .000) was used to determine if pupils differed in the preferences for individual musical style periods, indicating significant

differences in pupils' preferences. The pupils showed greater preferences for Baroque, Romanticism, Pre-Classical and Classical period and Impressionism. On the other hand, they showed the lowest preferences for the 20th-century music (Figure 1).

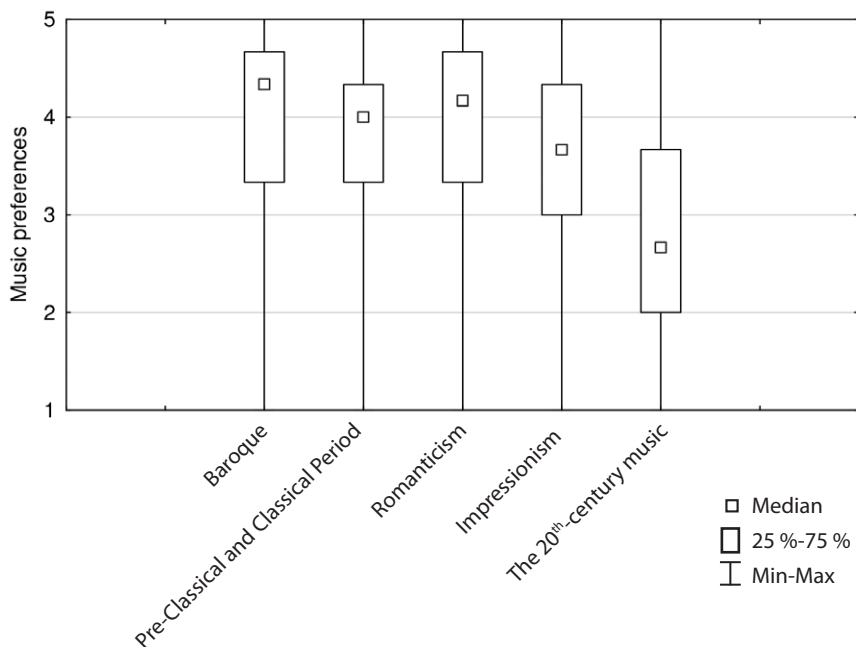


Figure 1. Differences in pupils' music preferences with regard to musical style periods

H1: Younger pupils, compared to the older pupils, show greater preferences for classical music.

In order to investigate the influence of age on classical music preferences, the Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted, whose results indicate that 2nd grade pupils show the greatest having greater preference for classical music, followed by the 5th grade pupils, while the 8th grade pupils show the lowest preferences for classical music (Table 4, Figure 2). So the first hypothesis was confirmed.

The obtained results confirm the thesis of the openness and flexibility of younger pupils towards music in general and also for classical music (Dobrota & Reić Ercegovac, 2016; Hargreaves, 1982; LeBlanc, 1991), which is of the utmost importance for theory and practice of music pedagogy.

Table 4
Differences in the preferences for classical music with regard to age

Grade	C	H (2, N=238)	p
2.	4.13	66.37	0.00
5.	3.72		
8.	3.16		

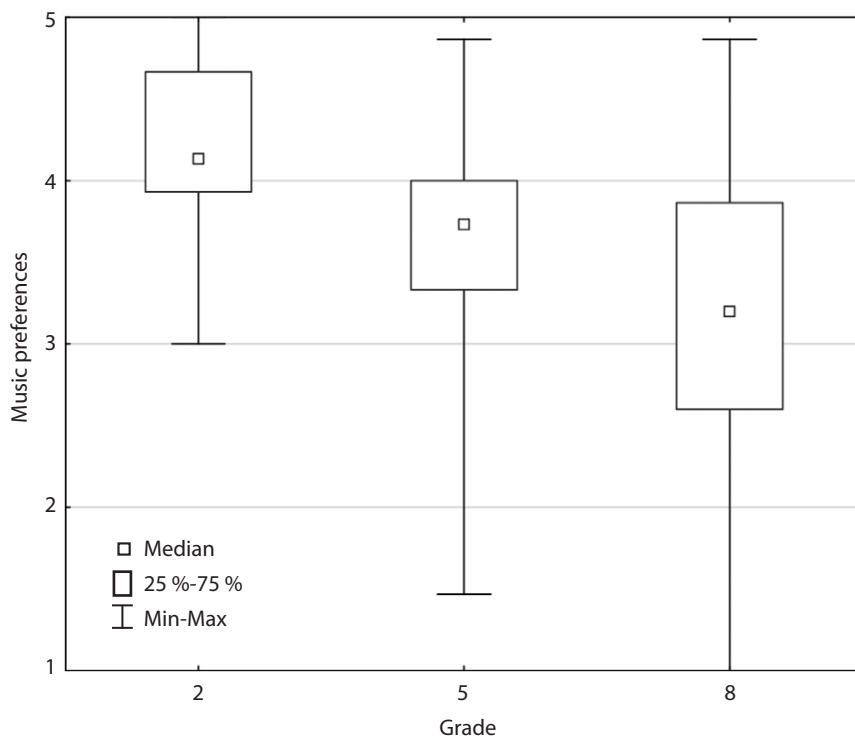


Figure 2. Differences in the preferences for classical music with regard to age

H2: Female pupils, compared to male pupils, show greater preferences for classical music.

In order to examine the influence of gender on pupils' preferences for classical music, the Mann-Whitney U-test was calculated (Table 5, Figure 3). The results confirm that male and female pupils have different preferences for classical music, with female pupils preference for classical music (Figure 2). Therefore, the second hypothesis is confirmed.

The results of the research largely confirm that female pupils have more positive attitudes towards music and prefer more diverse musical styles, which can be explained by higher quality music education of female pupils (Hargreaves et al., 1995; Harrison & O'Neill, 2003; LeBlanc et al., 1999). However, as regards the use of music technology, Comber et al. (1993) note that male pupils have more positive attitudes than female pupils.

Table 5
Differences in the preferences for classical music with regard to gender

Gender	C	U	z	p
M	3,59			
F	3,85	5678.00	2.63	0.00

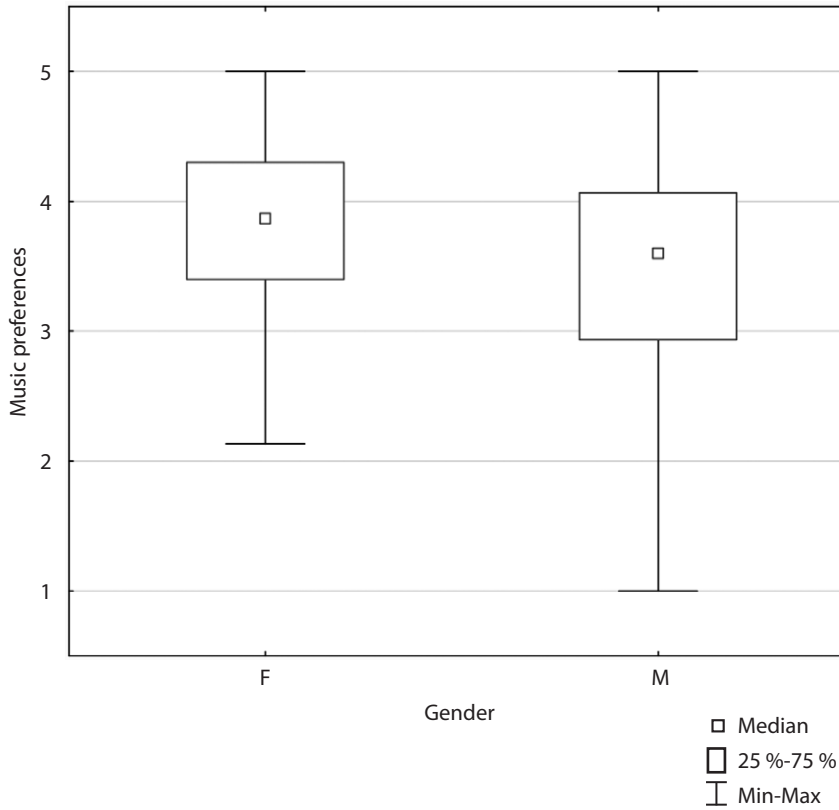


Figure 3. Differences in the preferences for classical music with regard to gender

H3: Pupils who attend extracurricular music lessons, compared to those pupils who do not attend such lessons, show greater preferences for classical music.

In order to investigate the influence of attending extracurricular music lessons on classical music preferences, Mann-Whitney U test (Table 6) was calculated. The results show that attending such lessons does not affect the pupils' preferences for classical music (Figure 4), so the hypothesis was rejected.

Table 6

Differences in the preferences for classical music with regard to attending extracurricular music lessons

Attending extracurricular music lessons	C	U	z	p
no	3.66			
yes	3.85	5317.00	-1.16	0.24

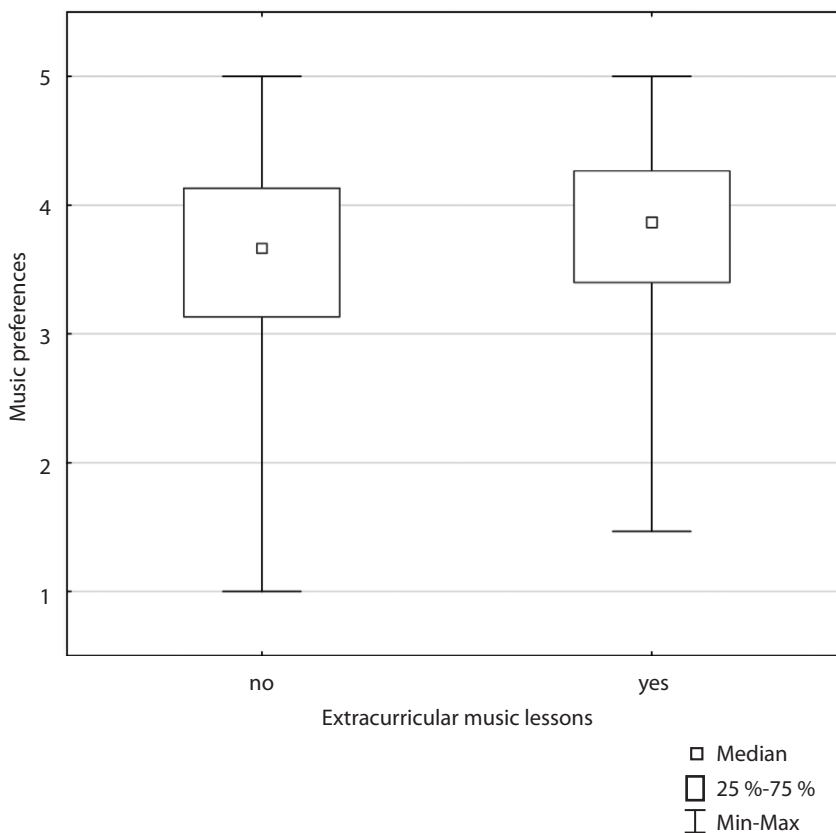


Figure 4. Differences in the preferences for classical music with regard to attending extracurricular music lessons

H4: Pupils prefer music fragments that are familiar to them, compared to unfamiliar music fragments.

In order to determine whether familiarity with music influences the pupils' preferences for classical music, the correlations between familiarity and music preferences are calculated (Table 7). There were such correlations for fourteen musical examples, confirming the last hypothesis.

The results of numerous researches (Carper, 2001; Getz, 1966; Peery & Peery, 1986) confirm the correlation of music preferences with familiarity with music, since repeated exposure to music increases its understanding and thus increases the listeners' music preferences.

Table 7
Correlation between familiarity with music and music preferences

	Music fragment	Unfamiliar (f)	Familiar (f)	Correlation between preference and familiarity
1.	Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: The piano concerto No.1 in b minor, Op.23	145	93	-0.15*
2.	Ludwig van Beethoven: <i>Sonata Pathétique, op. 13 No. 8, 1st. Movement</i>	203	35	-0.34*
3.	Krzysztof Penderecki: <i>Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima</i>	193	45	-0.38*
4.	Johann Sebastian Bach: <i>The Brandenburg Concerto, no.2, Allegro</i>	144	94	-0.21*
5.	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: <i>Eine Kleine Nachtmusik (String Serenade No. 13, G-major) K 525</i>	12	226	-0.08
6.	Claude Debussy: <i>Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune, L 86</i>	209	29	-0.30*
7.	Frederic Chopin: <i>Nocturne, op. 9 br. 2</i>	83	155	-0.37*
8.	Antonio Vivaldi: <i>The four seasons, Spring, op. 8 RV 269, 1. Allegro</i>	16	222	-0.28*
9.	George Gershwin: <i>Rhapsody in blue</i>	129	109	-0.42*
10.	Felix Mendelssohn: <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream, Wedding March, op. 61</i>	22	216	-0.21*
11.	Luigi Boccherini: <i>Minuet, Op. 11, No. 5 (G 275)</i>	108	130	-0.23*
12.	Jean-Philippe Rameau: <i>La poule</i>	189	49	-0.28*
13.	Gabriel Faure: <i>Pavane, op. 50</i>	162	76	-0.34*
14.	Pierre Boulez: <i>Structures I</i>	185	53	-0.41*
15.	Maurice Ravel: <i>Bolero</i>	124	114	-0.21*

*p<0,05

Conclusion

The results of this study confirm that younger pupils, in this case 2nd grade pupils, compared to the 5th grade pupils and 8th grade pupils, show higher preferences for classical music. So the hypothesis of the flexibility of younger pupils to perceive music of different styles is confirmed.

Furthermore, the influence of gender on classical music preferences was also confirmed, and female pupils have shown greater preferences for classical music in general. Attending extracurricular music lessons did not prove to be a significant predictor of pupils' preferences for classical music, which can be attributed to a small number of pupils attending such a lesson. On the other hand, familiarity with music has proven to be a significant factor affecting pupils' musical preferences, which indicates the importance of active, repeated listening to music during music lessons.

The results of the research have confirmed that all pupils, regardless of age, gender and level of extracurricular music lessons, show the lowest preferences for the 20th-century music. This fact can be a significant guideline for music teachers in approaching such music, bringing it closer to pupils and enabling them to find beauty and musical inspiration in it.

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Glazbene sklonosti prema klasičnoj glazbi učenika osnovne škole

Sažetak

U ovom radu istražuju se glazbene sklonosti učenika osnovne škole prema klasičnoj glazbi i utjecaj poznavanja glazbe na njihove glazbene sklonosti. U sklopu istraživanja, upitnik i glazbeni upitnik primijenjeni su na 238 učenika drugog, petog i osmog razreda osnovne škole.

Rezultati su potvrdili da mlađi učenici pokazuju veće sklonosti prema klasičnoj glazbi od starijih. Osim toga, utvrđen je i utjecaj spola na sklonosti prema klasičnoj glazbi, a pohađanje izvannastavnih glazbenih aktivnosti nije se pokazalo kao značajan prediktor učeničkih sklonosti prema klasičnoj glazbi. Rezultati upućuju na to da učenici pokazuju najmanje sklonosti prema glazbi 20. stoljeća, što ima značajne posljedice za glazbeno-pedagošku teoriju i praksu.

Ključne riječi: *glazbene sklonosti; klasična glazba; osnovna škola.*