

Psychological Perspectives on Musical Experiences and Skills

Research in the Western Balkans
and Western Europe



Edited by
Blanka Bogunović,
Renee Timmers,
and Sanela Nikolić

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Dedicated to

Ksenija Radoš

*for her pioneering work in founding the
Psychology of Music in the Western Balkans*

Richard Parncutt

*for his enthusiasm in spreading the
European spirit of unity in diversity*

Contents

Acknowledgments	xi
Notes on Editors	xiii
Notes on Contributors	xv
List of Figures	xxiii
List of Tables	xxv
List of Statistical Abbreviations and Symbols	xxvii
1. Introduction: Music Psychology Research in the Western Balkans and Western Europe	1
<i>Blanka Bogunović, Renee Timmers, and Sanela Nikolić</i>	
PART I: AESTHETIC AND EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES OF MUSIC	25
2. The Role of Affective Dimensions in the Aesthetic Experience of Music	27
<i>Dragan Janković and Maja Mađarev</i>	
3. Aesthetic Experiences of Contemporary Music from the Perspectives of a Composer, a Performer, and a Musicologist	47
<i>Sanela Nikolić and Ivana Miladinović Prica</i>	
4. Aesthetic Emotions in Music: Theory, Measurements, and Cross-cultural Comparison	73
<i>Renee Timmers, Scott Bannister, and Thomas M. Lennie</i>	

PART II: MUSIC LISTENING IN CONTEXT	97
5. Sound Experience and Imagination at Early School Age: An Opportunity for Unleashing Children's Creative Potential <i>Mirsada Zećo, Marina Videnović, and Lejla Silajdžić</i>	99
6. Adolescent Musical Preferences and their Relationship with Schwartz's Basic Values <i>Ivana Stepanović Ilić, Marina Videnović, Zora Krnjaić, and Ksenija Krstić</i>	123
7. How Professional Musicians Can Better Connect to Audiences for Live Classical Music: Assessing Theory And Practice in the Light of the COVID-19 Crisis <i>John Sloboda</i>	143
PART III: MUSIC COGNITION IN PERFORMANCE AND PRACTICE	163
8. Influences of Physical and Imagined Others in Music Students' Experiences of Practice and Performance <i>Andrea Schiavio, Henrique Meissner, and Renee Timmers</i>	165
9. 4E Music Cognition in Theory and Practice <i>Andrea Schiavio and Dylan van der Schyff</i>	189
10. Memorisation of Twentieth-Century Piano Music: A Longitudinal Case Study <i>Valnea Žauhar, Dunja Crnjanski, and Igor Bajšanski</i>	211
11. Memory for Music: Research and Practice for Performers <i>Jane Ginsborg</i>	231

PART IV: PSYCHOLOGY OF MUSICIANS— FROM MOTIVATION AND PERSONALITY TO ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AND ANXIETY	253
12. Motivation and Personality as Factors of Musical Accomplishments: A Developmental and Cultural Perspective <i>Blanka Bogunović</i>	255
13. The Lived Experience of Radical Acceleration in the Biographical Narratives of Exceptionally Gifted Adult Musicians <i>Olja Jovanović, Ana Altaras Dimitrijević, Dejana Mutavdžin, and Blanka Bogunović</i>	281
14. The Personality of Music Students with Diverse Vocal and Instrumental Skills <i>Ana Butković</i>	305
15. Theoretical and Practical Challenges in Dealing with Music Performance Anxiety <i>Katarina Habe and Michele Biasutti</i>	323
16. How do European and Western Balkans Conservatoires Help Music Students with their Health and Well-being? <i>Raluca Matei and Jane Ginsborg</i>	351
17. Conclusion: Progressing the State of the Art of Music Psychology <i>Renee Timmers, Blanka Bogunović, and Sanela Nikolić</i>	371
Index	387

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1 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/030573567422001>

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List of Figures

2.1	Regression plot between observed values (ratings of aesthetic experience) versus predicted values (aesthetic experience predicted by the model)	p. 35
2.2	Regression plots between observed values (ratings of aesthetic experience) versus predicted values (aesthetic experience predicted by the model) for music experts and non-experts	p. 38
2.3	Valence, Arousal and Cognitive evaluation (VACe) model of the aesthetic experience of music	p. 40
3.1	Performer's presentation of 'finding the right feeling' for the musical piece through combining parts of Savić's original and parts of Soler's score (the names of the two composers are indicated in red colour)	p. 58
3.2	Overview of research outcomes	p. 62
4.1	Aesthetic emotions arise from the interaction between individuals, groups and musical characteristics in particular social contexts. The moment-to-moment developments and affordances of music are particularly relevant for aesthetic listening experiences	p. 86
5.1	Photograph of the workshop setting. The faces of the participants are blurred to preserve their privacy. Photo from the private collection of the first author	p. 106
5.2	Percentage of the responses at each point of the Howard continuum of imagination	p. 111
8.1	Coding scheme	p. 170
10.1	(a) Session 3 (early) and (b) Session 16 (late)	p. 218
12.1	Integrative pattern of music achievements factors in early specialist music education. Figure translated and adapted from Bogunović (2010, p. 290).	p. 264
12.2	Integrative pattern of music achievements factors at adolescent age. Figure translated and adapted from Bogunović (2010, p. 294)	p. 268
13.1	Filip's life path	p. 303

List of Tables

5.1	Content of the workshops	p. 108
5.2	Examples of the children's answers	p. 113
6.1	Musical preferences: Structure matrix	p. 129
6.2	Canonical solution for Values and Musical preferences: The structure coefficients	p. 131
6.3	Results regarding the relation between musical preferences and values	p. 132
8.1	Overview of the participants	p. 168
10.1	Description of learning periods and practice sessions	p. 216
10.2	Results of multiple regression analyses for four learning periods	p. 220
13.1	Characteristics of participants	p. 286
13.2	Overview of the two life chapters and themes	p. 288
14.1	Descriptive statistics for four instrumental groups and results of ANOVA	p. 312
14.2	Descriptive statistics for six instrumental groups and results of ANOVA	p. 313
15.1	Summary of the studies on MPA conducted in the Western Balkan region	p. 329
16.1	Theoretical assumptions and models informing course design	p. 358
16.2	Course topics	p. 361
16.3	Respondents' assessment of students' perception of various aspects of health risks behaviour	p. 363

List of Statistical Abbreviations and Symbols¹

ANOVA	analysis of variance
<i>b</i>	unstandardized beta (regression)
CFA	confirmatory factor analysis
<i>d</i>	<i>d</i> value (Cohen's <i>d</i>)
<i>D</i>	<i>D</i> value (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test)
<i>df</i>	degrees of freedom
<i>E</i>	expected value (chi-square test)
EFA	exploratory factor analysis
<i>F</i>	<i>F</i> statistics (Fisher's <i>F</i> ; Welch's <i>F</i> ; Levene's <i>F</i>)
<i>M</i>	mean
MANOVA	multivariate analysis of variance
<i>N</i>	sample size (full size)
<i>n</i>	sample size (sub-sample)
NS	non-significant
<i>p</i>	<i>p</i> value; probability of agreement (Cohen's kappa)
PCA	principal component analysis
<i>r</i>	<i>r</i> value (Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient; effect size)
<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> value (regression)
<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² value (regression)
<i>SD</i>	standard deviation
<i>SE</i>	standard error
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
<i>t</i>	<i>t</i> value (<i>t</i> -test)
<i>U</i>	<i>U</i> value (Mann Whitney U-test)

¹ Williamon, A., Ginsborg, J., Perkins, R., & Waddell, G. (2021). *Performing music research: Methods in music education, psychology, and performance science*. Oxford University Press. <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/performing-music-research-9780198714545?cc=nl&lang=en&>

<i>Var</i>	variance (sample variance)
α	alpha (probability of a Type I error; Cronbach's alpha)
β	beta (probability of a Type II error; standardized beta)
Δ	delta (change; regression)
<i>E</i>	epsilon (error; regression)
η^2	eta-squared (ANOVA)
ηp^2	partial eta-squared (ANOVA)
χ^2	chi-squared (Box's test; chi-square test; Friedman's ANOVA)
<	less than
>	greater than

5. Sound Experience and Imagination at Early School Age: An Opportunity for Unleashing Children's Creative Potential

*Mirsada Zećo, Marina Videnović, and
Lejla Silajdžić*

Introduction

This study describes a novel approach to facilitating children's musical development, creativity, and imagination with the use of vibrational percussive instruments in early music education. These musical instruments have been used in therapeutic techniques called sound bath or sound healing (Goldsby et al., 2022; Stanhope & Weinstein, 2020) and as tools for relaxation, meditation, and stress reduction (e.g., Benton, 2008; Crowe & Scovel, 1996; Lee-Harris et al., 2018; Trivedi & Saboo, 2019). We trialled the introduction of these instruments in early musical education to support children's imagination as a crucial element of creativity (Duffy, 2006; National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, 1999). The Vernon Howard continuum of imagination (Howard, 1992) was used as an instrument for validating our assumptions and analysing sound experiences triggered by listening and playing these instruments. The pedagogical aims of this approach are to arouse interest in music-related experiences and promote a long-term appreciation of sounds and music.

Music has already been proven as beneficial for various aspects of children's development, starting from prenatal musical development (Welch, 2014). Early experiences of sound are related to the construction

of subjective meanings in the pattern of sound and silence (Welch, 2006). However, loud noises, stress, and the cacophony present in contemporary society may narrow the space for developing this ability (Nadilo, 2013). Children need a supportive environment for their native musical abilities to flourish (Welch, 2014) as well as other cognitive, emotional, and social capacities for music development (Stepanović & Videnović, 2012). Research has shown that, alongside the stimulation of the family environment, early music education can facilitate musical development (Schellenberg, 2015). Moreover, there are non-musical benefits that can be derived from early music education through later development, including improvements to cognitive (Schellenberg, 2004) and socio-emotional skills (Stepanović et al., 2019; Stepanović Ilić et al., in press; see Chapter 6 in this volume) as well as to linguistic (Degé & Schwarzer, 2011; Gromko, 2005) and visuospatial abilities (Rauscher & Zupan, 2000).

While there have been some attempts to introduce the sound of vibrational instruments into education, the focus has been on vulnerable children. Peter Hess (2008) in his pedagogical work aimed to give young people with behaviour disorders equal opportunities for education and an individualised approach to support their development. During his journey to Nepal, Hess was inspired to conceptualise the use of sound as a medium for relaxation and a mechanism to release different blockages in the body, in therapeutic as well as educational settings.

Designing successful early music education for all children (not only for gifted ones) that would broaden their experiences in creative activities related to music and contribute to their early musical development is a challenging task. A sharp focus on the formal curriculum has led to limitations in creative engagement with music, which could be overcome by an informal music education that enhances new ideas and extends experiences (Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010). Some think that returning to sound and the production of sound as the beginning of music experiences could be an appropriate starting point (e.g., Schiavio et al., 2017).

In this applied interdisciplinary study, we traced the sound experiences of a group of six-year-olds during specifically created musical activities. We expected the selected vibrational instruments to be a means whereby children's imaginative processes could be enhanced.

We assimilated musical activities into the daily school schedule and researched how much and in what way holistic sound can stimulate a creative and positive social and musical environment.

Musical vibrational instruments and early education

We have argued that every child should benefit from early musical education, regardless of their talent, background, musical knowledge, or interest. It is well documented that children intuitively discover different qualities of sound, timbres, melodic and rhythmic patterns before starting their formal musical education (Blacking, 1974; Tafuri, 1995), and that these sound-oriented musical actions appear in infancy (Schiavio et al., 2017). Children are generally able to describe sounds verbally, and to anticipate and describe changes in music and differences between musical genres by the end of the preschool period (Burke, 2018; Stepanović & Videnović, 2012;). However, a child needs support to develop these skills, as well as the ability to listen attentively. Teaching music in preschool by ear, or ‘aural learning’, is an important mode of learning at various levels of music education (Bačlija Sušić et al., 2019; Zećo et al., 2023).

Children can learn musical conventions and structures through environmental exposure to music (Tafuri et al., 2003). Children spontaneously differentiate sound qualities during free imaginative play, where there are no strict rules and they are not foreseeing what they still ‘do not know’. In this way, children sensitise themselves and develop listening skills as preconditions for music education.

Vibrational musical instruments could be a powerful didactic tool in early childhood education for several reasons. The soft, resonant, and subtle sound of these instruments prompts one to listen to their qualities in a quiet manner. This is particularly important because growing up in noisy, stressful environments interferes with a child’s language development (White-Schwoch et al., 2015), increases the risk of academic failure (Kraus et al., 2014), and can reduce the quality of life (Klatte et al., 2017). Raising children’s awareness of sounds provides a basis for enjoying music (Swanwick & Tillman, 1986). It is also a way to increase children’s sensitivity to the sound coming from the environment (Zhou, 2015) and their more general phonological awareness (Dégé &

Schwarzer, 2011). We furthermore expect that exposure to different, interesting sounds will trigger the process of imagination as an inevitable part of a child's play.

The beginning of formal education can be a very stressful and demanding period for some children in the areas of communication, language acquisition, and social adjustment (Crowe & Scovel, 1996; Videnović et al., 2018). However, listening to vibrational instruments can have a relaxation effect and potentially reduce anxiety and stress (Goldsby et al., 2022; Stanhope & Weinstein, 2020). One of the advantages of these instruments is that it is relatively easy for children to produce a rich and harmonious sound that is novel to them, different from other sounds or instruments, and they can then improvise and produce their own music. Children can very quickly become involved in music-making regardless of their previous knowledge and musical affinity. Research data has shown that children often find playing vibrational instruments more attractive than any other music-related activity (Temmerman, 2000). Hence, playing such instruments in class can enhance students' motivation to engage in musical activities during early music education. Moreover, when children play in a group, they also learn to collaborate in the process of creating meaning through sound. This kind of engagement contributes to their social and collaborative skills development, which is an important objective of education in general (Baucal et al., 2023).

Imagination and improvisation to foster musical creativity

Cognitive processes of improvisation and imagination have a role even in the early years in promoting the development of musical creativity, as was shown in a school context in Croatia (Bašić, 1973) and confirmed in later music research (Koutsoupidou & Hargreaves, 2009). Improvisation implies the simultaneous making and performing of music without much previous preparation (Campbell, 2009; Young, 2002, 2008). Playing with sounds by improvising or exploring could be considered something that any child can do and that should be supported as part of music education (Hickey, 2009). It is expected that six-year-olds are able to make the first steps towards playing musical instruments and devising rhythmical patterns (Burke, 2018). Research shows that creating opportunities for

improvising significantly affects the development of musical creative thinking, by promoting musical flexibility, originality, and syntax in children's music-making (Koutsoupidou, 2008). Improvisation in a group as a medium for non-verbal dialogue can support social development and communication skills (MacDonald et al., 2002; Major & Cottle, 2010) and foster emotional expression (Duffy, 2006).

The idea that early music education needs a different approach is pretty old. Émile Jaques-Dalcroze noticed that by teaching children to play and sing, we avoid teaching them to hear and listen (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1932). He designed a well-known approach to music education that aims to support students' innate musicality by introducing rhythmic movement (often called eurhythmics), improvisation and spontaneous expression (Anderson, 2012; Jaques-Dalcroze, 1930). His idea was that music education should encourage the expression of the somatic experience of rhymes before introducing intellectual explanation. The tension in contemporary music education also lies between teaching children musical skills, techniques, and rules, while at the same time leaving space for spontaneous music-making. Playing vibrational instruments does not require a particular mastering of skills for it to be sonically rewarding. It could be a useful didactic tool for encouraging a child's creative growth through spontaneous improvisation.

Spontaneous improvisation can include various artistic areas where the child can express their story through sound and art, and the use of motor skills (Bašić, 1985), including body movements (Burnard, 1999). When children are given the opportunity to choose an instrument for improvisation, they will often select percussion instruments that allow unrestricted body-use, with no need for precise instrumental technique during playing.

A child's imagination and fantasies may support spontaneous music-making in response to sounds, which are considered crucial spontaneous aspects of musical experience (Reichling, 1997). Imagination bridges children's play and musical engagement. Imagination has also been the focus of contemporary arts education as the source of creative expression (e.g., Sungurtekin & Kartal, 2020; Wagner, 2014). Imagination emerges early in childhood development, first in pretend play and later in role play (Harris, 2000). A child's fantasy life is not something trivial or useless. It is a valuable resource for a child's cognitive and socio-emotional

development (e.g., Kushnir, 2022). Connecting music with the world of fantasy at an early age may increase the likelihood that a child will later engage in music as an extracurricular activity or hobby. Furthermore, engaging in music in their free time has a multitude of positive effects on students' development (Videnović et al., 2010). Research shows that formal music education in primary school often does not adequately support children's musical creativity and imagination (Sungurtekin, 2021). Formal educational activities are often perceived as mentally demanding, tedious, and boring, frequently provoking anxiety (Pešić et al., 2013; Radišić et al., 2015). The importance of imagination was recognised in Lev Vygotsky's theoretical writings a long time ago. He argued that education should be oriented towards developing children's imaginative abilities (Vygotsky, 1967/2004). Imagination was treated as a basis for all creative activities. Children's experience of music is in many ways different from that of adults or professional musicians (Gardner, 1982).

Howard proposed a way to trace a child's imagination in relation to music (Sungurtekin, 2021). He constructed a scale labelled 'continuum of imagination', which is rarely used, but in our opinion the only available method that considers specific qualitative differences in the child's responses to sounds. The Howard continuum of imagination has four points: 'Beginning with fantasy, imagining the non-existent, imagining what exists but is not present, having an image and imposing it on something, imagining X as Y and ending with perceiving things in general and recognising them' (summarised by Reichling, 1997, p. 43). These points do not imply a particular age or stage of development but are considered milestones in the continuum. The further the child's imagination progresses along the continuum, the greater is their ability to recognise and include concrete sonic characteristics in the imagination process. Reichling (1997) chose this scale to investigate the role of imagination in play and music and to develop a framework for music grounded in play theory. The first point is named *fantasy or imagining the non-existent*. This kind of imagination is the most similar to children's play, when substitutes for the perceivable world are created (e.g., monsters, fairy tales, heroes). At the second point—*imagining what exists but is not present*—things that are part of the imagination exist in the real world, but they are not part of the child's current situation

(Reichling, 1997). The third point describes ‘figurative imagination’—*imagining X as Y*—when a metaphoric relationship between present and imagined is created (Reichling, 1997). The final point, labelled ‘literal imagination’, includes *perceiving things in general and recognising them*. This type of imagination is thoroughly grounded in the sense-world. It includes improvisation with sound elements to construct a new musical performance combination. A child should be able to recognise and preserve sound elements like volume, intensity, harmony, and the colour of the sound.

Aims

Following on from this theoretical background, this empirical study had two related aims. The main aim was to create a series of workshops with intensive musical activities, demonstrations, and active participation, working with selected vibrational instruments in the first year of primary school. The second aim was to investigate students’ imaginative processes instigated by listening to and playing vibrational instruments. We assumed that the opportunity for spontaneous improvisation with these instruments would foster a sensitivity to sound qualities.

Method

Participants

Four groups of students attending the first year of primary school, aged 6 to 7, participated in the sound workshops. There were 15 children in each group, 34 boys and 26 girls, totalling 60 children. The workshop leader (WL) was the first author, a music teacher with experience and expertise working with young children. A technical assistant (TA) was involved in supporting the workshops. The research was carried out in a primary school in the Canton of Sarajevo in the academic year 2016/17, with extensive support and collaboration from the headmaster, school counsellors, teachers, and parents. Parents were informed about the content of the workshops and gave informed consent for their children’s participation in workshops and research.

Materials

Three types of vibrational instruments were used in all the workshops: gongs, Himalayan Singing Bowls, and Koshi Chimes. All instruments were of East Asian origin. In the workshops, we used the Planetary gong Venus, similar to the Symphonic gong (Cousto, 2015). The gong is about 66 cm high, and it produces a rich, warm bass tone, with a frequency of 221.23 Hz. Children played it while they were on their knees, with the gong placed in front of them (on the right in Figure 5.1).



Fig. 5.1 Photograph of the workshop setting. The faces of the participants are blurred to preserve their privacy. Photo from Mirsada Zećo's private collection

Himalayan Singing Bowls, or small gongs, also have a long-standing tradition (Perry, 2016). Three different bowls were used (Figure 5.1, in the middle) that are often part of sound therapies (Hess, 2008). The small bowl weighs about 600 grams and has a high sound (200–1,200 Hz). The medium bowl weighs about 900 grams and has a wide sound spectrum (100–1,000 Hz). The large sonic bowl weighs 1,500 grams and produces a deep sound (100–2,800 Hz). Therefore, each bowl emanates numerous sounds and aliquots depending on the place where it is touched. A special wooden or leather-coated stick (puja) was used to produce the sound waves by rubbing the instrument. Chimes are also used in classical music as percussion instruments (Pesek & Bratina, 2016). The

Koshi Chimes that were used have a specific sound and contain eight tones in a resonant bamboo tube (held by the children at the left of Figure 5.1).

Procedure

A series of twelve workshop sessions with different content was realised over a period of four months. The workshops were held once a week, lasting forty minutes each. Workshops were scheduled during Music Culture lessons, which is an obligatory subject in general primary school and hence all the children in the class were present. The schedule was adapted according to the children's school timetable and other curricular activities. The developmental characteristics of the age group, such as attention span and the ability to concentrate, including individual differences in abilities and knowledge, were considered when planning the workshop session activities. A technical assistant recorded videos and wrote down children's verbal responses and observations of children's behaviour in the pre-prepared protocols. After each workshop, the workshop leader and assistant collated their observations about the children's behaviours.

Guided fantasy was used to enhance the imaginative process in these workshops. A regular part of some workshops was a fantasy trip with vibrational instruments as the background sound, providing a relaxed and non-threatening environment as a solid ground for creative processes (Anderson, 1980). Children lay on the floor with their eyes closed during guided fantasy, listening to sounds and building up the fantasy stories related to them. In this way the atmosphere, pleasure, state of mind, and mood was created. The leader/researcher delivered spontaneous sound improvisations along with a story. The stories that were intended to inspire fantasy were about natural elements, such as the symbols associated with the vibrational instruments. Children were guided to travel 'through the sky' and listen to the story about a 'water drop', or else an 'imaginary doll' took them on a trip to the land of dreams and play. A brief description of the workshops' content is presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Content of the workshops

Workshop number	Activities and tasks
W1	Listening to the sound of Himalayan Singing Bowls A guided fantasy story about travelling through the sky Discussion on auditory experience and drawing the images
W2	Touching the Himalayan Singing Bowls and sensing the vibration Discussion on kinaesthetic and auditory experience
W3	Active listening to the sound of the Gong Drawing impressions using leaves and fingerprints on the paper
W4	Listening to the sound of the Koshi Chimes A guided fantasy story about the drop of water and the fire's flicker
W5	Connecting breathing with the sound of the Himalayan Singing Bowls Voice improvisation by children and enhancing awareness of breathing rhythm
W6	Breathing techniques and voice improvisation Children playing on Himalayan Singing Bowls
W7	Listening to the story 'Birds on a String' along with a gong sound and dramatisation Expressing creative ideas by drawing and touching instruments
W8	Guided fantasy with the doll along with WL's improvisation Drawing impressions with 'magic powder' (using salt and chock) Children imitating sounds of instruments
W9	Guided fantasy with the doll's travel along with WL's improvisation Children improvising on instruments
W10	Guided fantasy about Native Americans and strange beings from the wood along with WL's improvisation Children playing instruments and dancing
W11	Improvisation with the voice by children along with the sounds of instruments
W12	Making forms out of plasticine while listening to the improvisation of WL Children improvising on instruments

Children at this age cannot accurately express their sound experience solely through words (Lefevre, 2004). With that in mind, children were encouraged to reflect on their sound experience (Workshops 1–5) using different symbolic systems (drawing, movement, or dance). Children

were encouraged in the early sessions to fantasise about the sounds, but they did not play the instruments or improvise. For example, having been assigned into groups, children were asked to draw their impressions after different musical activities. Also, they were encouraged to verbally describe the colour of the instruments or to use movement to express their imagination. This method is in line with recent empirical research showing that sensory systems (e.g., touch, smell, the auditory system) interact, producing multimodal or cross-modal experiences (Eitan & Granot, 2006).

In the next set of workshops, children had the opportunity to produce or act out sounds, followed by playing the instruments, in addition to listening and guided fantasy. Namely, children were encouraged to imitate the instruments' sounds with their voices or movements like in the first set, and then they played instruments and improvised with them (Workshops 6–12). The gong's position was lowered to the children's height so they could play more easily, and it was suggested that they 'do not play too hard because the hidden heart is in the instrument's middle'.

The additional thirteenth workshop took place without instruments, and the aim of the session was evaluation; specifically, we were interested to hear children's impressions about the whole process. The workshop leader told the children the instruments had returned to their homeland. Children were invited to share their experiences about the activities or the instrument they enjoyed the most or to tell the story about the homeland of the instruments. A brief questionnaire (four multiple-choice questions and the opportunity to add additional insights) was created to assess parents' perspectives on the workshops (e.g., did the children talk about the workshops, participate in them, describe instruments, or imitate instruments at home). Also, two teachers described their impressions of the workshops and their impact on the children's behaviour.

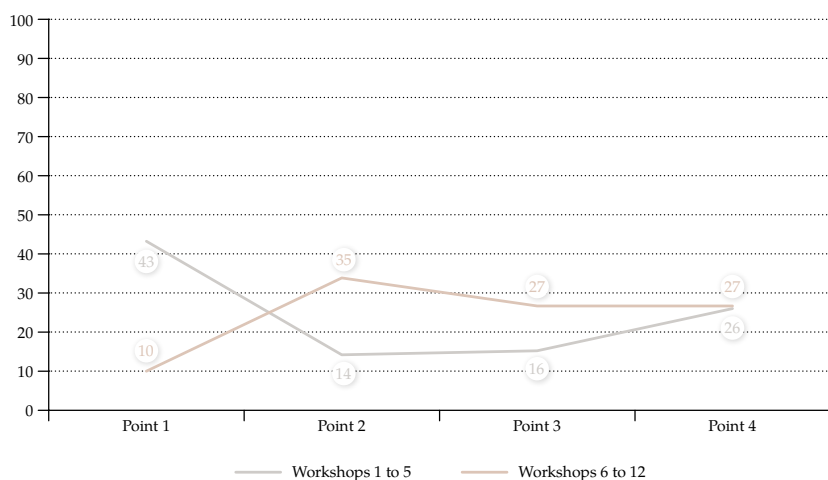
Data analysis

Qualitative analysis was conducted using the transcriptions of children's verbal reactions from the video recordings. Children's responses during the discussion phase of the workshops, their guided fantasy stories, and spontaneous comments produced during activities (Table 5.1) were included as material for analysis. We used Thematic Analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and combined deductive and inductive methods. Two authors read each child's verbal response, analysing, in particular, their relationship with Howard's four-point classification. Less than 10% of the answers remained unclassified.

Statements were coded by hand on one of the four points of the continuum. Two authors independently coded the transcripts. The statements were mixed up so that the coder could not see in which workshops they had appeared. The differences between codes (less than 10%) were discussed in detail. In case of disagreement, final codes were created collaboratively. We paid particular attention to statements that appeared in the process of the workshops related to whether the children's imagination was stimulated through guided fantasy (Workshops 1–5), and to responses after instruments were introduced and played in the workshop (Workshops 6–12).

Results

Figure 5.2 shows the percentage of responses children gave that were classified to be at a certain point of Howard's continuum across the two workshop phases. Responses to the first five workshops were considered as one phase or group, namely, fantasies induced by the WL's storytelling and playing the instruments. Workshops where the practice of playing and improvisation was introduced (6–12), constituted the second group of responses. We analysed 131 responses in total: 69 were produced during the first five workshops, and the remaining 62 were from the second group of workshops. The results showed that children's imagination reached each point of the Howard continuum of imagination.



Note. Imagining the non-existing (Point 1), Imagining what exists but is not present (Point 2), Figurative imagination (Point 3), Literal imagination (Point 4).

Fig. 5.2 Percentage of the responses at each point of the Howard continuum of imagination

The biggest difference between the two phases (groups) is in terms of Point 1 of the continuum. At the beginning, the children's imaginative processes were oriented towards the non-existing world when they were exposed to listening to improvisation and guided fantasy. They described the visions they created in their minds as: 'Clouds [that] whisper a secret or a story or take you to the dragon castle'. Sometimes they were emotionally involved: 'A ghost came to our classroom, and I was very scared.' To attribute life to inanimate objects (like clouds) is a well-known characteristic of this developmental stage (e.g., Klingensmith, 1953; Piaget, 1926). It was expected to occur during guided fantasy.

The fantasies sometimes took the form of quite a complex story. For example, a child created a fairy tale about the instruments' homeland during the last workshop:

Once upon a time there were three instruments, one was big and called a gong, and the other was small, and it was called a bowl. And then they walked until they saw the house and went inside. And the gong says, 'Is this your house or are we going round?' The small bowl says, 'We're just playing!', And the gong says, 'We're not playing after all.' Then something black came, they didn't know what it was, but it was a stick

called 'little black'. When they met that stick, they joined it and followed it. The stick took them to a dark place. When they came into the scary, big house, they met a great spirit and the spirit fulfilled their three wishes to play loud or a little quieter. When they told them what their wishes were, they went on a picnic. The story is over!

The second kind of fantasy with real-life elements was the dominant one in the second group of workshops. Children were 'travelling to Africa, Japan, Paris', or they included their relatives, parents, or friends in their imagination ('My aunt and I walked into the park'; 'I saw a stork and a chicken—a very small stork'; 'My parents were drinking tea, while I was playing').

Figurative imagination (Reihling, 1997) included metaphors to describe sounds. The percentage of these statements increased in the second group of workshops. Our results show that children construct verbal metaphors spontaneously when they try to express their sound experiences. Improvisation tasks seemed to support this process. They compared the sound of the therapeutic instrument with another sound in nature or their environment. For example, 'The sound is like the heart', or 'It is the sound of an elephant movement', or 'The sound of an insect or laser'.

At the final point of the Howard continuum of imagination, the students were able to describe sound characteristics: intensity, volume, rhythm, and harmony. They showed their sensitivity by comparing sounds; for example, 'a better sound than the gong instrument, softer sound' (Literal imagination). Students used their sound experience as a tool to describe something beyond music and the world of sound ('The sound of Earth will be like this'). They also made a connection between different sensory systems. The sound was ascribed a colour, smell, and tactile characteristics: the sound is 'cold', 'sweet', 'heavy', 'soft'. These statements occurred from the first to the last workshop. It is important to notice that the children were not selected based on their musical talent. This shows that children's ability to listen and fantasise based on sounds is better than is often assumed. Introducing vibrational instruments into their education would be one way to stimulate the further development of their imaginative capacities. Table 5.2 presents examples of children's comments from each point.

Table 5.2 Examples of the children's answers

Imagining the non-existing	Imagining what exists but is not present	Figurative imagination	Literal imagination
	It's a volcano!	The sound is like ice.	
The cloud was singing TU, TU, TU. I am an Indian and I light a fire... the fire crackles ...	The bowl has a heart beating in the wood!!!	The sound of the biggest bowl is the deepest! It has both a medium sound and a high sound.
I saw a white cloud and hung out with it.	We are the 'Flowering Tribe' and we are invisible in the forest ... we are very quiet, we listen to the wind.	The sound of a bee.	I'm light from music.
I was flying. I was dreaming high.		The sound is a stampede of elephants.	I felt a sound, a heavy sound, a deep sound.
I went to Mount Jupiter.	I went to Dubrovnik.	The sound of surprise.	

During the workshops, we took care not to leave any children behind and to include them all in the designed activities. All children had an equal opportunity to participate according to their wishes at the time. Our impression was that children accepted the activities, easily developed their imagination, and were happy to participate. The last workshop was dedicated to the children's evaluation of their experience with this type of work. They had the opportunity to talk about the workshops while drawing with watercolours. For example, a child drew a house for the instruments while saying: 'Their house is somewhere in the air since the instruments go somewhere up there when we play the notes!' They were very enthusiastic about enrolling again on the workshop.

Besides investigating the children's experiences, we also asked parents and teachers to share their impressions with us. Our results show that children shared with their parents their experiences relating to the workshops. Most parents (71%) described instruments and their sounds correctly. Only two parents (out of 42) did not talk with their children about the workshops' activities. Almost all the parents (91% present)

reported that their children gladly participated in the workshops' activities. Teachers also described the positive effects of the workshops. They reported that the children looked forward to each workshop with great impatience. They would return to the classroom full of impressions, happy and ready to talk about everything they heard, saw, and learned. As one teacher said: 'After the workshops, they would return to the classroom relaxed, rested, and full of energy for the next wave of teaching.'

Discussion

Research in music pedagogy emphasises the importance of a child's spontaneous improvisation and imagination during musical education (Clennon, 2009; Goncy & Waehler, 2006; Hickey, 2009). Music is a powerful medium for invoking these processes (Ritter & Ferguson, 2017). However, educators experience difficulties implementing and developing activities that are dedicated to these goals. Traditional teaching in the form of 'learning to sing children's songs' has not fostered enough of children's inner creative competencies (Anderson, 2012; Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010). In light of its interdisciplinary and innovative approach to early music education, this study intended to draw attention to underused possibilities relevant to facilitating children's creativity.

The study represents a unique attempt to enhance children's spontaneity, imagination, curiosity, and openness towards new ideas by implementing unconventional vibrational music instruments into music classes. Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, in his pioneer works, used classical musical instruments to foster improvisation with sounds through spontaneous movement (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1930). The sound colour and tone qualities of vibrational musical instruments differ from classical ones, producing uncommon aesthetic experiences. The results suggest that the deliberately planned workshops acted as catalysts for the children's imaginative processes, with these fantasies gradually evolving in their properties, adopting forms of figurative or literal imagination over time. The children were sometimes able to describe sound characteristics and use them to guide their imagination (Howard, 1992). Furthermore, the children expressed sensitivities to sound qualities, particularly in later workshops when playing the instruments was introduced. However, differences between the two sets of workshops do not imply that certain activities, like playing, will better foster sound

sensitivity and imagination. This study's methodology only suggests that designed workshops will eventually provoke figurative imagination and sophisticated perception of sound quality among preschool students.

The study results are in line with previous research indicating the significance of children's improvisatory music-making, which can be a tool for fostering creative processes (Koutsoupidou & Hargreaves, 2009) and cognitive development (Duffy, 2006; Pešić & Videnović, 2017). Furthermore, giving children the chance to use imagination and play freely may make them better listeners. In our research, we developed a method to scaffold improvisatory play with musical instruments. This was facilitated by emphasising imaginative ideas evoked by sounds, and modelling improvisatory play to support imagery provided by the workshop leader before inviting children to have a go. The emphasis on sounds and their qualities may have offered a safe environment for play and improvisation.

The practical implication suggests that an effort should be made to introduce listening to simple sounds before singing or instrument learning in early music education. Challenging children to express their experiences will foster their ability to pay attention to and identify sound qualities. Guided fantasy and other art forms (like drawing) can be powerful tools for enhancing the imagination. The important point is that the workshop participants were not selected based on their musical talents or prior knowledge. Indeed, we believe that musical pedagogy should start from the notion that every child could be creative in music (Goncy & Waehler, 2006; National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, 1999), rather than musical education being reserved for talented children only. However, organising education following this principle is still a challenge. We argue that this important pilot study on the introduction of vibration instruments into general education could be the way to unlock every child's creative potential.

Limitations of the study

This research design could not separate the effects of workshop activities (including, e.g., guided fantasy) from the effects of being more familiar with the sound of the instruments. It is possible that a change in the type of imagination during the workshop might be related to children becoming more familiar and relaxed in the new activity, and should not be exclusively attributed to the workshop activities. It is important to keep in mind that

no control group or elimination of confounding factors were used, which limits the inference about the effects of the pedagogical intervention. Furthermore, we did not formally assess the skill development outcomes of the workshops. Our observations do point to the inclusivity of the methods and the qualitative benefits that the children reported.

Conclusion

As a result of our research, we can state that vibrational musical instruments can play an important role in music education classes, in the early years and possibly beyond. They can be included successfully in combination with guided fantasy, drawing, dancing, and improvisation activities. The benefits are directed towards increasing children's sound sensitivity and making them better music listeners, which was facilitated by the fact that children did not have prior expectations of how these instruments sound. Moreover, it was easy for them to play the instruments and make rich sounds. In that way, every child had an equal opportunity to be a musician regardless of their abilities and previous knowledge. This represents a good start for further implementations made for developing musical skills in general education without excluding anyone.

We are aware that this practice can sometimes be a challenge to incorporate into existing research paradigms and music education. These activities require significant resources. However, this action research was essential for gaining new insights into the opportunities to make music in childhood in a new setting. Clearly, teachers are the gatekeepers and can have a powerful influence on access to music: 'From a Vygotskian sociocultural perspective, it is clear that children's development is shaped and guided by "more competent others"' (Lamont, 2017, p.180). The implementation of workshops with unconventional sound instruments and related practice in regular schools can serve as an incentive for adopting this flexible model. Such instruments have a place in enhancing the imagination, aural skills, and cognitive development. The practice of 'playing with music' opens new ways of understanding music and building up 'music in identity' (Hargreaves et al., 2012). This trial opens the possibility of applying theory and practice from the music therapy domain to the future work of music educators. It presents a challenge and a contribution for further use and exploration.

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Index

- 4E cognition 15, 121, 191, 208–209, 373, 386
- ability. *See* musical ability 100–101, 104, 107, 112, 115, 154, 183, 189, 195–196, 198–199, 226, 255, 257, 269, 276, 296, 299, 301, 325, 381
- acceleration 16, 281, 283–285, 287, 289, 292, 295–298, 301, 377
- accomplishment. *See also* achievement 15, 255–256, 266, 269–270, 272–274, 290, 375–376
- achievement 15, 122, 257–261, 268, 272, 277–278, 282–283, 339, 362, 381
- action research 116, 373, 375
- activities. *See* musical activities 1, 8–9, 19, 100, 104, 107–110, 113–116, 120, 123, 140, 196, 205, 210, 257–258, 269, 277, 289, 293–294, 296, 366
- adolescence. *See also* adolescents 16, 123–124, 126–127, 136–140, 282–283, 290, 299, 344, 347, 373, 381
- adolescents. *See also* adolescence 14, 93, 121, 123–131, 133–138, 140–141, 257, 269, 289, 373–374, 376, 381
- aesthetic experience. *See also* aesthetic aesthetic experience 13, 27–35, 37–43, 45–52, 54–58, 60, 63–68, 70, 74–75, 85, 87, 94, 372, 380–381
- of contemporary music 13, 47, 50, 52, 67
- ratings 35, 38
- aesthetic. *See also* aesthetic experience aesthetic 1, 11, 13–14, 25, 27–52, 54–58, 60–71, 73–87, 89, 91–94, 114, 120, 158, 202, 258, 267, 271, 372–373, 375–376, 380–381
- appreciation 1, 13, 45, 69, 82, 85, 375
- emotional response 79–80
- emotions 13–14, 28, 32, 48–49, 64–66, 73–80, 83–84, 86–87, 91–92, 94, 372–373, 375
- enjoyment 83–84, 376
- evaluation 32, 35–36, 41–42, 63, 75
- preference 34–35, 37–38, 44
- affective
- dimensions 27
- experience 30–44, 46, 372
- agency 154, 156–157, 165, 171, 173, 181, 209
- agreeableness 260, 262, 265, 269–271, 305–309, 311
- Altaras Dimitrijević, Ana 16
- Antović, Mihailo 11, 17
- arousal 13, 29–43, 46, 48, 51, 75, 77, 83, 85, 93, 124, 325–327, 338, 340, 343, 372
- audience experience 147, 151, 157, 159, 385
- audiences 14, 52, 76, 143–148, 152–154, 159–160, 182–183, 366, 374, 378, 380–381, 383
- Augustin, Dorothee M. 45, 69
- Baadjou, Vera 352, 368
- Bačlija Sušić, Blaženka 7, 17
- Bajšanski, Igor 15, 23
- Balkwill, Laura-Lee 73, 82–83, 88
- Baltzis, Alexandros 125–127, 134–139
- Bannister, Scott 13
- Barton, Rebecca 352, 368
- Biasutti, Michele 16, 19–20, 199–200, 206, 279, 323, 336, 338–341, 344–345, 376
- Bodroža, Bojana 271, 274–275

- Bogunović, Blanka 1, 3, 6, 10–11, 15–16, 18, 20–23, 46, 49–50, 67, 70, 208, 230, 252, 255, 262–268, 270–271, 274–276, 279, 281, 285, 301, 308, 314, 317–318, 328, 334, 343, 345, 347, 371, 375–376
- Borgo, David 197, 206
- Bratina, Tomaž 106, 120
- Brattico, Elvira 31, 38, 43–44, 47–48, 67–70, 74, 88
- Burnard, Philip 103, 117, 185, 299
- Butković, Ana 7–8, 16, 18, 261–262, 276, 305, 307–309, 315, 317–318, 328, 334, 342, 376
- career
 path 380
 professional 256, 270, 273–274
- case study 15, 67, 147, 228–230, 240–242, 245, 250, 252
- Chaffin, Roger 211–214, 223–231, 235, 240–243, 246–250
- Chemero, Anthony 192–193, 206
- Chesky, Kris 326, 347, 352, 367–368
- child 15, 101–105, 110–111, 113–116, 119–122, 153, 236, 265–266, 276, 282, 295, 299–302, 347
 development 5
- children. *See* child 9, 14, 17, 21, 99–117, 119–122, 124, 155, 161, 235, 238, 257, 260, 262, 265, 280, 295, 300, 302, 339, 373, 375
- Clarke, Eric 50, 68, 110, 165–166, 184
- classical
 concerts 144–146, 157
 music 13, 15, 23, 30, 33, 46–48, 50, 52, 64–67, 70, 106, 134, 143–146, 157, 159–160, 184, 235, 271–272, 285, 300, 316, 344, 376, 381
 musician 152, 160, 291, 328, 341, 346, 369
 music performance 159, 271, 300, 344
- cognition
 embodied. *See also* 4E cognition 192–193, 206, 209
- cognitive
 evaluation 13, 30–43, 75–76, 372
- collaboration 2, 6–8, 105, 147, 158, 184–185, 198, 227, 266, 379, 384
- collaborative
 aspect 198
 exchange 10
 learning 159, 198, 207, 210
 process 159
 work 8
- competence 19, 173, 181, 249, 257–259, 269–270, 272, 280, 385
- composer 13, 15, 18, 49, 51–55, 58, 60, 63–66, 71, 144, 153, 161, 165, 202, 213, 229, 232–233, 243
- comprehensive approach 30
- Conscientiousness 260–261, 265, 267, 269–271, 305, 307, 309, 311
- contemporary music 13, 15, 47–48, 51–53, 59, 67–70, 75, 89, 103, 127, 134, 159, 213, 227, 242, 373
- context 4, 8, 12–14, 16, 18, 28, 41, 49, 73–76, 78–84, 86–87, 97, 102, 123, 127, 129, 133–134, 137, 139, 146–147, 151, 158–159, 165–167, 175, 178, 181–182, 192, 194, 197, 199–202, 204–205, 207, 229, 232–234, 248, 259, 272–273, 275–276, 278–279, 281, 287–288, 291, 296–298, 301, 317, 338, 353, 367, 373–374, 376, 379–381, 383–384
- coping strategies 324, 327, 339, 342, 348
- course
 design 356–358
 evaluation 362–363
- COVID-19 14, 20, 143, 147, 154, 156–157, 197, 199, 205–206, 209, 215, 287
- creative potential. *See also* creativity 99, 115, 200
- creativity. *See also* creative potential 8, 14, 17, 19–20, 43, 45–46, 51, 68, 88–89, 99, 102, 104, 114, 117–122, 159, 166, 175, 177, 180, 182, 184–185, 194, 205–206, 267, 275–276, 282, 293, 320, 339, 375, 384–385
- Crnjanski, Dunja 15, 211, 214, 242, 372, 375

- cross-cultural 2, 13, 15, 20, 73, 75, 82–83, 85–88, 91–95, 123, 258–259, 272, 278, 297, 385
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly 257, 271, 274, 276–277, 324, 338, 343
- Davies, Sarah, W. 379, 385
- decolonisation 382
- Deliège, Irene 4, 19, 49, 68, 248, 279, 378, 382, 385
- Demos, Alexander P. 228–229, 247, 249–250
- development
 professional 274, 377, 384
- developmental
 perspective 9, 20, 256, 261, 272–274, 376
 psychology 139, 301
- diversity 2, 16, 47, 92, 274, 366, 378–379, 382–383, 386
- Dobrota, Snježana 7–8, 19–20, 124, 127, 133, 140
- Dobson, Melissa 144–145, 147, 154, 159
- Dolan, David 3, 147, 149–150, 159
- Duffy, Bernadette 99, 103, 115, 118
- Dukić, Helena 7, 19
- dynamics 79, 149, 175, 192–194, 197, 199–200, 204–205, 208, 244, 294, 379
- EDI. *See* Equality, Diversity and Inclusion 379–380, 382, 386
- education 5–11, 14, 16–23, 36, 43, 49, 60, 66, 71, 92, 99–104, 112, 114–122, 139, 142, 158–160, 167, 183–184, 197, 205–210, 229–230, 248–251, 255–256, 258–259, 261–264, 266–267, 270–280, 282–285, 288, 290, 293, 295–296, 299–302, 309, 314, 320–321, 324, 335–336, 339–341, 344–347, 351–354, 358, 364–370, 373–374, 376–382, 384, 386
- educational
 process xix, 273–274, 328, 335
 psychology 6, 251
- Eerola, Tuomas 31, 40, 44, 77–78, 81, 87–89, 91–93, 142
- electronic 33, 52–54, 61, 79, 94, 124–125, 127–129, 135
- emotion
 basic 29, 31, 44, 73–74, 82, 89–90
 musical 48, 69, 74, 82, 86, 89, 91–92, 95, 209, 339
 music-evoked 48, 84, 91
- emotional
 experiences 25, 30, 64, 76–78, 83, 85
 responses 27, 45, 51, 54–55, 69, 73–74, 76–77, 81, 83, 85, 89, 92–94
- empirical research methods 380
- enjoyment 70, 81, 83–84, 89–90, 148, 151–152, 185, 257–258, 278, 374, 376
- Ensemble for Different New Music 53, 68–69
- environment 10, 42, 100–101, 107, 112, 115, 158, 160, 175, 179, 190–193, 196–205, 210, 257, 259, 263, 265, 269, 272–274, 292, 296–297, 327, 377
- environmental influence 264
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. *See* EDI 386
- erformance-related musculoskeletal disorder 352, 360–361
- Ericsson, Anders, K. 212, 226, 228–230, 235, 248, 320
- ESCOM. *See* European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music 3–4, 11, 19, 21–22, 275–276, 279, 378, 382, 385
- Ethnomusicology 53, 300–302
- Europe 1–4, 12–13, 16–17, 123, 138, 158, 223, 232, 241–242, 245, 262, 317, 351–354, 356–365, 367, 371, 377, 379, 384
- European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music. *See* ESCOM 3, 19, 142, 248, 275, 279, 318, 385
- Evans, Paul 255, 257, 265, 277–278, 282–283, 295–296, 299–300
- expectancy. *See also* expectation 64–65, 69, 79, 92, 257–258, 278
- expectation. *See also* expectancy 11, 51, 59–60, 63–67, 69, 79, 86, 90, 116, 132, 208, 233–234, 247, 249–250, 252, 259,

- 265, 284, 290–291, 296, 299, 301, 314,
324–325, 327, 334, 336
- experience
lived 16, 55, 66, 281, 284
of radical acceleration 281, 284–285,
296–297
- expert
memorisation 212, 228, 375
musicians 195, 211–212, 214, 224,
226–227, 240, 316, 372, 376
- expertise 3, 35, 42, 48, 50, 52, 56, 60,
64–67, 105, 185, 189, 200, 204,
224–225, 230, 243, 249, 257, 260, 267,
269–270, 279, 282, 293, 302, 314, 320,
352, 356–357, 360, 365, 372, 378, 380
- Extraversion 260, 262, 265, 305, 307–311,
316, 318, 321
- factor analysis 30, 128–129, 141
- Fechner, Gustav Theodor 31, 40, 44–45
- FFM. *See* Five-Factor Model 256, 260,
267, 270–271
- Five-Factor Model. *See* FFM 256,
260–261, 305, 307, 309, 320
- flow 16, 19–21, 65, 176, 201, 258, 261,
276, 279, 324, 335, 337–339, 341–344,
346, 348–349, 377
- Ford, Biranda 144, 146–147, 161
- formal structure 23, 212–214, 219,
221–226, 230, 237–238, 242, 252
- Gabrielsson, Alf 73, 77, 90
- Gagné, Francoys 269, 277, 281–284, 300
- Gallagher, Shaun 185, 208
- Gardikiotis, Antonis 125–127, 134–136,
138
- Gembris, Heiner 3, 282–283, 300
- genres 7, 33, 36, 76, 84, 101, 124–128,
130–131, 133–136, 167, 260, 293, 328,
334, 346, 374, 381
- gifted adults 301
- giftedness 277, 279–281, 283, 293,
301–302
- Ginsborg, Jane 3–4, 15–16, 22, 71,
212–213, 217, 223–225, 227–229, 231,
239, 241–244, 246–249, 275, 323, 346,
351–352, 366, 369, 372, 375–376
- Gligo, Nikša 6
- Gosling, Samuel D. 124–125, 128–130,
133–134, 136, 140, 321
- Habe, Katarina 7, 11–12, 16, 19–20, 117,
262, 277, 323, 328, 334, 336, 338–339,
341, 344, 376
- Hallam, Susan 88, 91, 223, 227–229, 247,
252, 257, 277, 300, 400
- Hargreaves, David J. 102, 115–116,
118–119, 124, 126–127, 136–137,
139–140, 166, 184, 277, 299–300, 348
- health
literacy 351, 354
promotion 358, 365, 367–370, 377
- health education
for musicians 346, 369
- Henrich, Joseph 382, 385
- Hess, Peter 100, 106, 119
- Høffding, Simon 166, 181, 185
- identity 54, 116, 119, 123–124, 126,
138–139, 161, 257, 269, 271–275, 277,
288, 290, 295, 297–299, 301, 348
- imagination 14, 99, 102–105, 109–116,
118–122, 150, 173–174, 177, 180, 182,
184, 186–187, 234, 308, 316, 373, 384
- improvisation 20, 61, 80, 102–103, 105,
108, 110–112, 114–119, 122, 149–150,
152, 156, 177, 184, 197, 201, 208, 210,
249, 328, 336, 341, 344–345, 380
- inclusion 6, 144, 146, 245, 334, 373,
378–379, 384, 386
- individual differences 18, 90, 107, 138,
262, 275–276, 279, 305, 316, 319–320
- Individual Zone of Optimal Functioning.
See IZOF 325, 327
- inequality. *See also* marginalisation 16,
371
- instrument 20, 33, 89, 99, 103, 106,
109, 112, 115, 140, 165, 168, 176,
189, 200–202, 208–209, 234–235,
246–247, 250, 255, 258, 276, 278, 291,
294, 308, 310–311, 317, 319–320, 339,
362, 375–376
- instrumental groups 7, 9, 16, 260, 262,
308–317, 320

- interdisciplinarity 3, 17, 379
- Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. *See* IPA 13, 52, 287
- intersubjectivity 166–167, 173–174, 180, 183–185
- interventions 154, 283, 334–335, 337, 368
- Introversion 262, 308
- IPA. *See* Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis 52, 55–56, 62
- IZOF. *See* Individual Zone of Optimal Functioning 325, 327, 344
- Jacoby, Nori 73, 83, 91–92, 382, 385
- Janković, Dragan 13, 27, 29–32, 34, 40–42, 44, 46, 75–76, 269, 277, 372
- Jaušovec, Norbert 11, 20
- Jovanović, Olja 16, 61, 281, 375
- Juslin, Patrik N. 28, 45, 47–48, 50, 59, 69, 73–74, 77, 79–80, 83–85, 91, 348
- Kemp, Anthony 255–256, 260–261, 271, 277, 323, 345
- keyboard instrument 311, 314
- King, Elaine C. 243, 247, 249
- Kolundžija, Nada 52–53, 67, 69–70
- Konečni, Vladimir 28, 45, 48, 69, 74, 77, 91
- Koutsoupidou, Theano 102–103, 115, 119
- Kraus, Nina 101, 119, 122
- Krnjaić, Zora 14, 121–123, 126, 137, 139, 141–142, 373
- Krstić, Ksenija 14, 117, 121, 123, 136–139, 141, 373
- Kuckelkorn, Karen 307–309, 314–315, 317, 320
- Lamont, Alexandra 3, 83, 90, 116, 119, 265, 275, 277
- Langendörfer, Franziska 307, 317, 320
- Laursen, Amy 352, 368
- learning
 periods 215–216, 219–222, 224–225
- Leder, Helmut 31, 38, 40, 45, 48–50, 67, 69
- Lefevre, Michelle 108, 119
- Lennie, Thomas M. 13, 73, 78, 87, 92, 372
- lesson 107, 119–121, 179, 199, 206, 258, 260, 276, 302, 335
- Leva Bukovnik, Sintija 328, 334, 346
- life chapters 288
- linguistic barriers 371, 383
- listening to music 14, 22–23, 32–33, 42, 57, 63–64, 66, 73, 85, 88–89, 124, 231–232
- lived experience 16
- live performance 143, 149
- live-streaming 155
- lockdown 147, 155, 157, 160, 206
- longitudinal case study 15, 211, 241–242, 245
- Mađarev, Maja 13, 27, 44, 75–76, 372
- Manchester, Ralph 352, 368–369
- marginalisation. *See also* inequality 382
- Margulis, Elizabeth H. 91, 148, 160, 233, 250, 385
- Marković, Slobodan 10, 20, 23, 28, 44–46
- Martinović Bogojević, Jelena 8, 20, 22
- Matei, Raluca 16, 323, 335, 346, 351–352, 366, 369, 376
- material 33, 35, 49–50, 53–54, 57, 59, 61, 63–64, 78, 86, 106, 110, 128, 153, 168, 189–190, 192, 194, 201, 208, 212, 217, 221, 223–224, 227, 234, 240, 291, 311, 353
- McPherson, Gary E. 121–122, 139, 210, 255, 257–258, 266–267, 270, 274, 277–279, 281–284, 295, 298–302, 347, 349
- meaning 11, 13, 17, 22, 31–33, 35, 37, 39–45, 54–55, 70, 78, 81–83, 85, 90, 100, 102, 120, 161, 166, 186, 193, 196–197, 199, 202, 204, 208, 239, 244, 250, 285, 287, 293, 300–301, 327, 341, 372–373, 384
- medical problems
 of performing artists 342, 347, 368–370
- Meissner, Henrique 14, 165, 183, 185, 259, 278, 374
- memorisation. *See also* memorising strategies 212, 226–227, 372, 375
- memorising. *See also* memorisation 8, 15, 23, 211–212, 214–216, 223, 225,

- 229–230, 236–239, 244–246, 248, 251, 335, 365, 377
- memory
- autobiographical 231–232
 - content-addressable 231, 234–235, 240, 245
 - declarative 211
 - lapses 246–247
 - prospective 231–234
 - recall 325, 338
 - retrospective 231
- Menninghaus, Winfried 74–76, 87, 92, 94–95
- meta-analysis 43, 92, 159, 319–320, 343
- Meyer, Leonard B. 51, 59, 64–65, 70, 88, 129, 233, 250
- MHEI. *See* music higher education institutions 5, 258–259, 262, 288, 374, 384
- Mihajlovski, Zoran 9, 20, 262, 278, 307–308, 310, 314–315, 317, 320
- Mikszta, Peter 226, 230, 240, 252, 259, 270, 278
- Miladinović Prica, Ivana 13, 47, 52–53, 70, 75, 372
- Milanković, Vera 10, 20–21
- Milojković, Milan 53, 67, 70
- mind 28, 31–33, 35–36, 40–43, 71, 86, 91, 107–108, 115, 118, 124, 126, 136–137, 149, 159–161, 166, 169, 175, 185, 193, 197, 204–210, 229, 237, 248–250, 279, 285, 290, 347, 349, 375
- Miranda, Dave 124–126, 133, 139, 323, 347
- Mirović, Tijana 10, 21, 274, 276, 328, 334, 347
- Mishra, Jennifer 236, 239, 250
- motivation
- intrinsic 257–258, 263, 265–267, 269–270, 272
- MPA. *See* music performance anxiety 16, 323–329, 334–340, 343, 346, 351, 377
- multiple memory systems 211
- music 1–23, 25, 27–30, 32–71, 73–95, 97, 99–107, 112–151, 153–161, 163, 165–168, 171–177, 181, 183–186, 189–190, 192–199, 201–215, 217, 219, 221–243, 245–252, 255–285, 288–302, 305–311, 314–321, 323–328, 334–349, 351–359, 363–386, 400
- musical ability. *See* ability 22, 257, 261, 267
- musical activities. *See* activities 100–102, 105, 109, 165, 189, 195, 198, 203, 257, 267
- musicality 84, 103, 190, 202, 204, 207, 260, 278
- music higher education institutions. *See* MHEI 5, 16, 258, 288, 351, 374
- musician
- adult 16, 258, 261, 281, 284, 377
 - chamber 214
 - experienced 213, 223, 225–226
 - expert 195, 211–212, 214, 224, 226–227, 240, 316, 372, 376
 - young 5, 16, 53, 261–262, 267, 269–270, 272–274, 279, 289, 336–337, 339–340, 344, 346
- musicianship 267, 271, 273, 323, 339
- musicking 161, 172–173, 175, 177–178, 180–183, 186, 198, 204–206, 209, 385
- music-making 102–103, 115, 165, 167, 171, 177, 181, 185, 192, 195, 317
- musicologist 13, 47, 51–53, 55, 58, 60, 63–66
- musicology 6, 11, 53, 247, 250, 275, 300–302, 310, 356
- music performance anxiety. *See* MPA 16, 18, 166, 185, 323–324, 335, 341–349, 351, 368–369, 377
- Mutavdžin, Dejana 10, 16, 18, 21, 199, 208, 281, 376
- narrative approach 285
- Nešić, Vladimir 11, 21
- neuroaesthetics 43, 68, 78, 88
- Neuroticism 260, 269, 271, 305–308, 311, 323, 334, 347
- new music 36, 53, 68–69, 148, 153, 159
- Nikolić, Sanela 1, 3, 11, 13, 18, 22–23, 47, 50, 70, 75, 230, 252, 343, 345, 371–372

- non-musicians 9, 49, 51, 195, 271, 307, 365
- occupation 306, 316
- O'Neill, Susan 147, 160, 255, 258, 270, 274, 278–279
- openness 114, 127, 135–136, 174, 260–262, 267, 269, 271, 277, 305–311, 314–318
- PAM-IE 3, 8, 11, 18, 21–23, 70, 230, 252, 345. *See* Psychology and Music: Interdisciplinary Encounters
- Parncutt, Richard 3–4, 21, 275, 279, 349
- participants 13–14, 30, 33–36, 38–39, 41–42, 49, 51–52, 54–57, 59–60, 62, 64–67, 73, 77–78, 84, 105–106, 115, 128, 136, 148, 151, 153, 167–168, 172, 174, 176–177, 179–182, 198–199, 202, 224, 227, 240, 259, 263, 285–298, 310–311, 317, 334, 353, 383
- participation 3, 10, 33, 105, 143–144, 146, 153–154, 157, 159–160, 171, 185–186, 197, 240, 248, 261, 321, 372, 383
- PCs. *See* performance cues 211–212, 219, 221–222, 224, 241–245
- pedagogy 5–6, 9–10, 18–19, 21, 114–115, 183–184, 206, 231–232, 236, 250, 275–276, 289, 308, 310, 328, 356, 364
- perception 1, 7, 15, 19, 27, 41, 45, 48, 51, 63, 67–68, 82, 88–95, 115, 118, 121, 140, 142, 161, 184, 189–191, 194–197, 202–204, 206–209, 228, 233, 247–250, 252, 258–259, 261, 317–318, 321, 357, 363, 385
- Perdomo-Guevara, Elsa 166, 185
- perfectionism 18, 259, 290, 300, 324, 334, 342–343, 345–347
- performance-related musculoskeletal disorder 351
- performance. *See also* performing
 - anxiety. *See also* music performance
 - anxiety 12, 16, 18, 166, 178, 182, 185, 323–326, 335–337, 340–349, 351, 357, 360–361, 365, 368–369, 375, 377
 - cues. *See* PCs 211, 228–229, 241, 246–249
 - live 143, 149
 - optimal 325, 343
 - related musculoskeletal disorder. *See* PRMD 351, 361
 - skills 8, 12, 270
- performer 6–8, 13, 47, 51–52, 54, 57–59, 61, 63, 66, 144–145, 149–150, 152–156, 166, 181, 185, 197, 200–202, 214, 225, 227, 231, 234–235, 238, 242, 245–247, 281–282, 293–296, 315, 327, 336, 338, 345, 370, 372, 374–375, 377–378
- performing. *See also* performance
 - artists 342, 347, 368–370
 - music 71, 172, 175, 186, 201, 211
- Perry, Frank 106, 120
- personality
 - attributes 9, 265, 272–273, 377
 - differences 9, 16, 260, 276, 306–310, 314–318, 320, 376
 - dimensions 270–271, 275, 318, 376
 - measures 307, 309, 315, 318
 - traits 7, 16, 18–19, 139, 256, 260, 264–265, 267, 269–272, 274–275, 279, 305–311, 314, 316, 318–321, 323, 327
- Pesek, Albinca 11, 21, 106, 120
- Petrović, Milena 10, 20–21, 275, 347
- physiological measures 83, 337
- pianist
 - professional 213–214, 222–227, 242
- piano
 - performance 214, 228, 247, 249
 - student 213–214, 223–224, 227, 241, 248
- piece of music 23, 37, 41, 49, 52, 58, 65, 211, 213, 226–227, 230, 240, 252
- Pitts, Stephanie E. 47, 70, 159, 185, 278, 374, 385–386
- practice
 - amount of 15, 214, 219, 221, 227
 - deliberate 229, 235, 245, 248, 375
 - diary 215, 221–222
 - features 242–244
 - instrumental 336
 - mental 237–238, 240, 246–247, 249–250
 - process 214, 216, 225

- sessions 215–217, 221, 227, 237, 241–243
- strategies 257, 360–361
- practising music 174, 186, 238
- preferences 7, 14, 18–20, 60, 78, 84–85, 93, 121, 123–140, 142, 208, 239, 260, 299, 373–374, 381
- pre-performance
 - excitement 16, 324, 338, 377
 - routines 360–361, 366
- prevention 19, 335–337, 356, 361, 364, 367–368, 370
- prodigies 16, 236, 282, 295, 297–298, 300–302, 380
- profession 118, 143, 267, 273, 282, 288, 291–293, 306, 315–316, 338, 376, 378, 380–381
- psychological 3, 6, 8–12, 14–17, 19, 21–22, 27, 43–44, 46–47, 67, 71, 73, 88–94, 120, 124, 138, 189, 200, 228–229, 255–257, 262–263, 265, 267, 270–272, 274, 277, 279–280, 300, 319–321, 323, 325, 327, 334–343, 346, 348–349, 351, 358, 364, 366, 370, 375–376, 378–379, 381–382, 384
- psychologist 5–6, 8–10, 12, 14, 69, 128, 227, 231, 237, 273, 299, 336, 341, 353, 357, 359, 364–365, 377, 379, 381
- psychology
 - and music 1, 5, 7, 9, 371
 - developmental 139, 301
 - music 3–8, 10–12, 15, 21, 32, 88, 91, 95, 228, 247, 252, 262, 306, 371, 379, 382–383
 - of music 1–12, 17–18, 22, 28, 44, 59, 68–71, 88, 90, 93–95, 117–119, 121, 138–141, 159, 184, 210, 229–230, 248–249, 251–252, 275–279, 299, 301, 318–319, 321, 341–343, 345–346, 348–349, 368, 371, 378–379, 381–384
 - of musicians 15, 253
- Psychology and Music - Interdisciplinary Encounters. *See* PAM-IE 21–22
- qualitative
 - research 14, 16, 68, 71, 117, 295, 299
 - studies 284, 334
- Rabinowitch, Tal-Chen 166, 185
- Radoš, Ksenija 5, 9–11, 22, 263, 267, 276, 279
- Regional Development Initiative 3
- Regional Network Psychology and Music. *See* RNPam 3, 11, 22
- regions 1–2, 12–13, 128, 196, 234, 364–366, 376–378, 380, 382–383
- rehearsal 151–153, 176, 181, 185, 229, 241, 243–246, 248–249, 251, 336, 341
- Reić Ercegovac, Ina 7, 19–20, 124–125, 127, 133, 136, 140
- relaxation 29–30, 48, 51, 79, 99–100, 102, 119, 335–336, 366
- Rentfrow, Peter J. 95, 124–125, 128–130, 133–134, 136, 140, 277
- repetition 148, 213–215, 217, 219, 222, 225, 234, 238
- research
 - practices 378–379, 384
 - psychological 47, 88, 379, 382
 - studies 12, 16, 261, 272, 278, 324, 328, 334, 344, 363, 377
- resilience 305, 320, 324, 338, 356, 364, 377
- responses 3, 13, 27, 30, 36–39, 41, 44–45, 50–51, 54–55, 59, 64–67, 69, 71, 73–83, 85–86, 88–89, 92–94, 103–104, 107, 110–111, 122, 144, 148–151, 154–155, 158, 168–169, 175–176, 180–181, 183, 194, 239, 248, 326–327, 354–355, 357–360, 362, 366, 374
- responsibility 175–177, 181–182, 293, 295, 354, 362–363, 365
- risk taking 150, 152, 177
- RNPam. *See* Regional Network Psychology and Music 3–4, 11, 22
- Rojko, Pavel 6, 8, 22
- Rosandić, Helena 328, 334, 343
- Rotar Pance, Branka 8, 20, 261, 279
- Rubin-Rabson, Grace 237, 251
- Saarikallio, Suvi 84, 93, 124, 140, 142
- sample of music students 16, 309, 314
- Sandgren, Maria 307–309, 317, 321

- Satne, Glenda 166, 185
- Savić, Miroslav Miša 52–54, 58, 61–63, 67, 69–70
- Schellenberg, Glenn 100, 120–121, 256, 260, 265–267, 269, 271, 276, 280
- Scherer, Klaus 28, 31, 41, 44, 46, 48, 71, 76, 89, 94–95
- Schiavio, Andrea 3, 14–15, 100–101, 121, 165–166, 181, 185, 189, 194, 198, 201, 203, 206, 209, 373–375, 386
- Schilbach, Leonhard 166, 173, 186
- Schwartz, Shalom H. 14, 123, 126, 128, 130, 132, 135, 137, 141
- segmentation 23, 49, 213–214, 219, 221–222, 224, 226, 230, 242, 252
- self 11, 21–22, 42, 66, 74, 76–78, 81, 84, 95, 122, 132, 138–139, 145, 165, 170–174, 177–183, 185, 193, 199, 203, 207–208, 210, 229–230, 252, 257–258, 260–261, 270–272, 278–279, 296, 301, 307, 317, 321, 323, 325–328, 339–340, 342–343, 345–349, 362–363, 376
- Serbian Psychological Society 3, 9–10
- serial cuing. *See also* performance cues 231, 234–235, 238
- Short Test of Musical Preferences. *See* STOMP 124
- Silajdžić, Lejla 14, 99, 373
- skills 1, 8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 20, 66, 100–103, 116, 122, 184, 196, 198, 200, 209, 234–235, 239, 246, 263, 270, 281–283, 292–294, 296, 302, 305, 309–310, 314, 316, 336, 338–340, 348, 352, 354, 360–361, 365–366, 368, 373, 376–378, 380
- Sloboda, John 3–5, 14, 19, 22, 28, 45, 49, 71, 79, 94, 143–144, 146–147, 149–150, 152, 154, 159–161, 246–247, 249, 279, 348, 373, 378, 381, 385
- Small, Christopher 146, 161, 167, 186
- social context 14, 86, 165, 175, 272, 317
- social psychology 11, 45–46, 138, 140–141, 300, 318–319, 321, 342
- socio-cultural context 16, 127, 273, 374
- sound
 experience 99–100, 108, 112
 qualities 62, 101, 105, 114–115
 specialist music education 262–264, 266, 377, 380–381
 stage fright. *See also* music performance anxiety 324, 338, 348–349
- Stefanija, Leon 12, 22, 84, 94
- Stepanović Ilić, Ivana 14, 100, 117, 121–123, 126, 134, 137, 140–142, 373, 381
- stimuli 28, 30, 33–34, 36, 41–42, 44, 51, 189, 316, 327
- STOMP. *See* Short Test of Musical Preferences 124, 128, 140
- structure 15–17, 20, 22–23, 29–30, 42–43, 46, 48–51, 60–61, 63–69, 94, 101, 123–125, 127, 129, 131, 140–141, 153, 191–192, 194, 201, 211–214, 219, 221–226, 228, 230, 234, 237–238, 240, 242, 247, 252, 280, 284, 319–320, 343, 348, 373
- students 3, 10, 12, 16, 20–21, 33, 35, 52, 102–105, 112, 115, 120, 128, 139–141, 148, 150, 165, 167–168, 183, 187, 196–200, 210, 213, 224–227, 230, 240, 248, 250, 257–260, 262–263, 265–267, 270–271, 275, 278–280, 283–284, 289, 294, 296, 299–300, 302, 305, 307–311, 314–315, 317, 328, 335–336, 339–345, 347–349, 351–352, 354, 356–359, 362–369, 377–378, 399
- Subotnik, Rena F. 267, 269–270, 279–283, 293, 297, 300, 302
- success 53, 257–259, 267, 271, 274–277, 279–280, 282–283, 285, 296, 300, 326–327, 377, 385
- talent
 development 269–270, 281–285, 296, 298, 300
 development process 282–285, 298
- taste 57, 123, 125–127, 130, 133–137, 139, 161, 200, 208, 374
- teacher 5, 7–8, 105, 109, 113–114, 116–117, 121, 167, 173, 183, 187, 196–200, 205–207, 209–210, 227, 231, 245, 258–260, 262–266, 272–276, 289, 324, 334–337, 339–341, 347–348, 354, 357, 359–360, 363–364, 366, 378

- teaching 20, 33, 101, 103, 114, 117, 119–120, 185, 199, 205–206, 225, 227, 229, 237, 257, 259, 278–279, 285, 295, 335, 349, 357, 359, 385
- Tekman, Hasan G. 125–127, 133–136, 142
- thematic analyses 110
- theorists 6, 8, 41, 194, 308, 379
- therapy 6–7, 18–19, 81, 116, 118–119, 122, 337, 342–344, 349, 357, 359, 363–364, 369
- Thompson, Evan 119, 122, 193, 210
- Thompson, William Forde 73, 81–83, 88, 91, 93, 95, 140–141
- Timmers, Renee 1, 3–4, 13–14, 21, 68, 73, 78–80, 88, 90, 95, 119, 121, 165, 184–185, 189, 208–209, 248, 278, 371–372, 374, 386
- Toelle, Jutta 147, 152, 161
- Torrance, Tracy A. 307–308, 316–317, 321
- trait anxiety 323, 326–327, 334, 345, 348
- University of Arts in Belgrade 3, 6, 9–10, 18, 21–23, 68, 70, 199, 230, 252, 285, 343, 345, 355
- Vaag, Jonas 306, 308–310, 314–315, 317, 321
- VACe model. *See* Valence, Arousal and Cognitive evaluation model 41, 43
- valence 13, 29–44, 75, 83, 372
- Valence, Arousal and Cognitive evaluation model. *See also* VACe model 40, 43, 372
- values 14, 29, 35, 38, 64, 81–82, 87, 121, 123, 126–128, 130–132, 134–142, 258–259, 269–270, 273, 285, 299, 311, 373–374, 376, 381
- van der Schyff, Dylan 15, 121, 185, 189, 194, 201, 209–210, 373, 375, 386
- verbal responses 36–39, 107
- vibrational instruments 100–103, 105–107, 112
- Videnović, Marina 14, 99–102, 104, 115, 117, 120–123, 134, 136–137, 141–142, 373
- Vidulin, Sabina 8, 18, 20, 22–23, 275, 279
- Vilč, Brigita 7, 23
- WB. *See* Western Balkans 5, 256, 269, 272–274, 351–365, 367
- Western Balkans. *See* WB 1–5, 11–17, 223, 232, 241, 245, 256, 261–262, 284, 295, 317, 324, 328, 334, 351, 371, 373, 377–384
- Western Europe 1–2, 12–13, 16–17, 123, 223, 232, 241–242, 245, 317, 371, 379, 384
- Williamon, Aaron 54–56, 71, 181, 184, 209, 213, 224–225, 228, 230, 246–247, 252, 341, 344, 352, 368
- Winner, Ellen 255, 280–281, 283, 293, 302, 320
- workshops 105–116, 153, 339, 359, 369, 373
- Zander, Mark 352, 370
- Žauhar, Valnea 8, 15, 18, 22–23, 211, 213–214, 219, 223–225, 230, 241–242, 252, 372, 375
- Zećo, Mirsada 14, 99, 101, 106, 122, 373
- Zentner, Marcel 28, 46, 48, 71, 74, 76, 95

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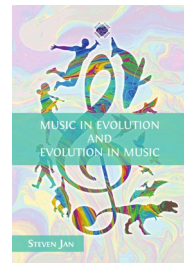
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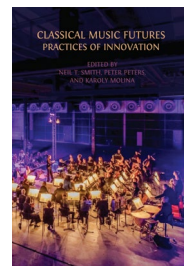


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Practices of Innovation

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Psychological Perspectives on Musical Experiences and Skills Research in the Western Balkans and Western Europe

Edited by Blanka Bogunović, Renee Timmers, and Sanela Nikolić

This book shows that a comprehensive understanding of music appreciation and performance is possible only by integrating perspectives from different geographical regions and musical cultures. The discussion is wide ranging but broadly accessible, and should be of interest to readers from all corners of music psychology.

Dr Laura Bishop, RITMO Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Rhythm, Time and Motion, Norway

Psychology of Music is a flourishing area of research in the Western Balkans. However, much of its findings and insights have remained relatively unknown outside the region. *Psychological Perspectives on Musical Experiences and Skills* features recent research from the Western Balkans, foregrounding its specific topics, methods, and influences, and bringing it into productive conversation with complementary research from Western Europe and further afield.

The essays in this collection investigate the psychology of listening and performance and their relevance to music practice. Employing a range of research methodologies, they address divergent themes, from a cross-cultural understanding of aesthetic experiences and innovations to attract new audiences, to developmental perspectives on musical growth and the challenges of mastering performance skills. Authors reflect independently and collaboratively on how these psychological processes are shaped by the different traditions and geopolitical conditions inside and outside the Western Balkans. The result is a volume that emphasizes how musical experiences and practices happen not in isolation but in socio-cultural environments that contribute to their definition. This work will appeal to musicians, music educators, students, researchers, and psychologists with an interest in the psychology of music and exemplify ways forward in decolonizing academia.

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