

PEDAGOGY

As a pedagogue, I try to remember that each and every student I meet on my way, is different. They differ not only in their degree of talent but, above all, each of them has a different genetic code, different temperament, and finally, each of these young people grew up in a different environment - the cultural aspect, upbringing and education play an extremely important role. I realize that it is a truism, but carefully observing education - and not only musical education - I often come to the conclusion that many educators treat people with different degrees of talent in the same way. It was Plato who already expressed his disapproval of this state of affairs, claiming that it is basically the biggest educational nightmare.

Differences in sensitivity, including sensitivity to beauty, obviously translate into the color of sound. It was probably more aptly described by Nikolai Berdyaev, a great Russian philosopher who stated that the kind of being determines the kind of existence. And many Russian educators say that sound is essentially an extension of the soul.

The personality, temperament of the student, the level of current education - first of all, general education, then musical - all this should be taken into account by the educator.

Why did I not raise the issue of differences in the context of talent? I believe that talent is something that cannot be graded or differentiated. A student may be more or less gifted. Relatively often a young musician who plays skilfully and does not make mistakes, is hailed a "talent".

However, I think that a student may be more or less talented - then we talk about greater or lesser musicality, technical proficiency. However, a talented student is rarely found. This is confirmed even by the most eminent educators. True talent is passion, creativity, and a unique type of expression. Moreover, I dare say - though it may be an unpopular view these days - that talent is - in fact - a kind of disorder. It is a synthesis of opposites - most accurately reflected in the title of one of the novels by Bohumil Hrabal "Tender Barbarian". Thus, talent is - in a nutshell - a unique combination of sensitivity, delicacy and fragility mixed with the strength of character, will, and a strong personality. Such an unusual potpourri of characteristics and qualities must be accomplished 'at the expense' of other spheres of life. Therefore, a good educator should understand these aspects, a certain existential modus of a talented student, his or her 'inequality'. The determinant of character and emotionality, temperament seems to be an important factor in this context. The development of a moderately-talented person - and the educators most often deal with those - usually proceeds in a far more balanced and, thus more predictable, way. In turn, the development of a talented person often resembles a sinusoid. The role of a good educator is to replace this sine wave or circle into a spiral. It was already discussed by Svetoslav Richter. However, one must be moderate, avoid interfering

deeply with the 'nature' of the student, after all talent, is a kind of a natural element. The elements can be used, their energy channelled, but you can never tame them.

Talent is also instinct and intuition. It is intuition that plays an important role at the beginning of our lives. The role of a seasoned educator is to supplement these qualities with reflection, and thus a rational element, in short - intuition should be supported by knowledge.

Working with young musicians, I first of all try to get to know their nature. Musical matters are a derivative of our humanity. Homo sapiens differs from animals in only two features: the higher feelings, and the need for transcendence. That is why I try to involve students, direct their attention to other branches of art - painting, poetry, sculpture, architecture, or psychology, philosophy, religion, I teach them to observe nature, activate their imagination. Wojciech Gerson, the master of Józef Chełmoński, would send his students to the city's outskirts and instruct them to observe nature, taught them how to render the movement of ears of corn swayed by wind in a drawing, or how to capture the movement of the skirt of a walking woman. I identify with the approach of this educator. However, I try to do it with great sensitivity, because I realize that not every student - especially one who lacks proper preparation - is able to accept so much of an intellectual burden. Music is a symbolic speech of sounds. Someone who wants to be heard must have something to say. What to play about if someone is only interested in practicing an instrument? So what do these young people practise? Well, they were told that craftsmanship is the most important thing. It should be noted, that shoemaker adapts his craft to the final, assumed shape of the footwear. Nobody has ever told them this. So what is craft suspended in a vacuum, what is energy without purpose, resistance? These young people seem to prove that music is a matter of hands, not the soul. Every educator who managed to learn the craft knows that - to quote Henry Neuhaus - WHAT determines HOW. Meanwhile, young musicians practice for hours the proverbial 'HOW' without knowing what it should serve. Too often, technical problems are identified with psychological problems or non-functional use and use of the play apparatus. Harald Taylor in his great book 'The Pianist's Talent', the author reminds us that none of the great virtuosos had additional tendons, or muscles, but only the ability to use his apparatus. Non-functional movements, tensions, are blockages. However, bad habits can be removed and even a moderately talented student can play an instrument well.