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## OPERA, OPERETTA, BALLET, ROCK OPERA AND MUSICAL IN ELECTRONIC MUSIC TEXTBOOKS FOR THE BULGARIAN GENERAL EDUCATION SCHOOL

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**Abstract:** The education of erudite and creative thinking young people is one of the tasks of the disciplines of the aesthetic cycle, among which is the discipline Music. Musical activities - perception, performance and composition of music - provide rich opportunities for provoking children's imagination, forming a creative attitude and need for creation, and building a musical culture in future users of art. In order to realize these opportunities, all the three main musical activities, appropriately distributed in the particular lessons, must be present in the music courses in the general education school. This means that tasks to include these activities in the lessons must be provided in music textbooks. In the printed editions of the textbooks of Mincheva et al. (Mincheva et al. 2018a, Mincheva et al. 2018b) is provided a balanced realization of all three musical activities, and each textbook contains the basic information that students must learn, illustrated in an appropriate way, ideas for applying the musical activities, questions, tasks, illustrations on the topic of the lesson. Separately, in an electronic carrier, the musical examples for each lesson have been provided.

The electronic textbook on music is a modern and useful, and given the new conditions and imposed by the circumstances online training - and a necessary version of the textbook, which includes:

- The entire educational content of the printed edition of the textbook;
- The works for listening and songs for performing assigned to each lesson, placed on the page on which they are to be used;

- Additional questions, tasks, suggestions for student projects, schemes, photo galleries, videos. All these additional electronic resources (also featured on the relevant page) are designed to better mastering the learning information, a deeper insight into the character of the sounding music, developing musical abilities, intelligence, creativity, emotional responsiveness of students.

In the present study are analyzed the tasks from the electronic textbooks on music for 3rd and 7th grade of the author team led by Prof. Penka Mincheva (Mincheva et al. 2018a, Mincheva et al. 2018b), which relate to opera, operetta, ballet, musical and rock opera. The analyzes are made in order to prove the effectiveness of a set of methods for teaching the musical-stage arts in terms of:

- a) Mastering the educational information, which (since the subject music is part of the disciplines of the aesthetic cycle) is part of the general culture of young people;
- b) Encouraging the imagination and creative thinking of students.

Among the tasks assigned to students are:

- After listening to the musical characteristics of Odette and Prince Siegfried - the main characters of the ballet "Swan Lake", third graders are asked to describe how they imagine Prince Siegfried and the evil magician Rothbart, how they look, what they are wearing and what music in nature should sound when each of the two characters appears. A similar task is to compare Odette and Odile, who are very similar in appearance, but there is a small difference between them. Here, third graders are required to try to imagine what could be the difference that helps to distinguish positive from negative female character. Children are offered to recall the "musical portrait" of Odette and to assess whether the music changes at the moment when the daughter of Rothbart - Odile, appears before the Prince instead of Odette.

- A task addressed to 7th graders is to describe how they imagine the stage costume of the main character in Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical "Cats", whether and how she will dance while performing her famous song "Memory", how the stage will be decorated and what lighting is appropriate at this time of the musical. In another electronic resource, seventh-graders are asked to compare images from productions of "Cats" and the rock opera "Jesus Christ - Superstar", indicating whether they find certain characteristic differences in the stage clothing of the characters from the productions of the two works, ie. to find one of the signs by which the two musical stage genres differ from each other.

**Keywords:** opera, ballet, musical, general education school, electronic music textbook

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The education of erudite and creative thinking young people is one of the tasks of the disciplines of the aesthetic cycle, among which is the discipline Music. Musical activities - perception, performance and composition of music -

provide rich opportunities for provoking children's imagination, forming a creative attitude and need for creation, and building a musical culture in future users of art. In order to realize these opportunities, all the three main musical activities, appropriately distributed in the particular lessons, must be present in the music courses in the general education school. This means that tasks to include these activities in the lessons must be provided in music textbooks. In the printed editions of the textbooks of Mincheva et al. (Mincheva et al. 2018a, Mincheva et al. 2018b) is provided a balanced realization of all three musical activities, and each textbook contains the basic information that students must learn, illustrated in an appropriate way, ideas for applying the musical activities, questions, tasks, illustrations on the topic of the lesson. Separately, in an electronic carrier, the musical examples for each lesson have been provided.

The electronic textbook on music is a modern and useful, and given the new conditions and imposed by the circumstances online teaching - and a necessary version of the textbook, which includes:

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The electronic textbook is accessible from any device that uses the Internet. This makes the manual very convenient for use both in class and for homework, as well as for individual and distance learning. A similar opinion is expressed by V. Angelova - "the electronic textbook has become a universal tool for organizing technological training in the new information environment. The multimedia tools contained in it stimulate creativity and increase the motivation of students". (Angelova, V. 2019). In the present study are analyzed the tasks from the electronic textbooks on music for 3rd and 7th grade of the author team led by Prof. Penka Mincheva (Mincheva et al. 2018a, Mincheva et al. 2018b). I will examine these electronic textbooks, since:

- In this training course for mastering by adolescents is provided everything necessary and nothing superfluous;
- The definitions and the information selected for memorizing are accurate, correctly presented and properly illustrated;
- The balance between the three main musical activities, between teaching and exercises for mastering what is taught, is successful, and the connections between the new and the already known, between music and other academic disciplines are numerous and diverse;
- Electronic textbooks contain enough creative tasks and tasks for learning the educational information.

## 2. SUBJECT, AIMS, TASKS OF THE RESEARCH

The **subject** of the present study are the tasks in the electronic textbooks on music for 3rd and 7th grade of an author's team led by Prof. Penka Mincheva (Mincheva et al. 2018a, Mincheva et al. 2018b), which relate to opera, operetta, ballet, musical and rock opera. These tasks are a small segment of what is presented in the electronic textbooks. The reason to discuss them is the ability to compare and track the continuity of tasks and their complication in more experienced students.

The **object** of research is the possibility through electronic resources to increase the interest of adolescents in musical-stage arts.

The **aim** is to prove the effectiveness of a set of methods for teaching musical-stage arts in terms of:

- a) Mastering educational information, which (since the subject Music is part of the disciplines of the aesthetic cycle) is part of the general culture of young people;
- b) Encouraging the imagination and creative thinking of students.

**Tasks** that must be fulfilled to achieve this goal are:

- Discovering the electronic resources, dedicated to the musical-stage arts from the study course developed in the electronic textbooks of Mincheva et al.;
- Analysis of the electronic resources;
- Formulation of conclusions.

## 3. TASKS ON THE TOPIC OF BALLET IN THE ELECTRONIC MUSIC TEXTBOOK FOR 3rd GRADE

I examine the touch to the vivid world samples of opera and ballet, mainly of the students from 3rd and 7th grade, because then the students get acquainted with the works in more detail, while in the other years of the course more

individual dances are selected and commented succinctly and in relation to other topics and learning objectives. Opera and ballet arts are presented to 3rd and 7th grade students through their most influential and valuable samples and in an especially exciting way. In 3rd grade, students are provided to get acquainted with the ballet "Swan Lake" by Russian composer P. I. Tchaikovsky. The plot of the ballet is faerie and this becomes a natural continuation of the successively conducted line of music literacy through fairy tales (which consists in previous lessons of the same school year) - in music lessons third graders do not go out of the world of fairy tales and thus penetrate deeper into the magical and fairy-tale world of musical art. Orientation in long-sounding musical works is impossible for third-graders. Therefore, the printed textbook provides for students initially to get acquainted with the musical characteristics of the main characters of the ballet - Odette, Prince Siegfried and then to listen to other key scenes from the ballet. At the beginning of the lesson, the third-graders are narrated that the beautiful and ethereal dances in the ballet are accompanied by a symphony orchestra, the main characters - Odette, Siegfried, Odilia and Rothbart - are described in a few words. Scenes are auditioned in which Odette and Prince Siegfried are characterized by music and dance. The children also listen to the scene with the meeting of Odette and the prince. These first impressions are used in the electronic textbook to deepen and supplement their impressions, as well as to enable the development of the imagination of young students. In order to insight maximally into the character of the music, to be attracted and, which is much more difficult - to be kept the children's attention on the musical material (musical characteristics of the main characters) and it to be remembered, the task is set in the electronic textbook for 3rd graders to describe how they imagine Prince Siegfried and the evil wizard Rothbart - what they look like, what they are wearing, and what kind of music should sound when each of the two characters appears. At this point in the printed textbook, the scenario of the ballet is briefly retold. A task similar to this - to portray the two main male characters, but this time - to compare Odette and Odile, who are so similar that even Siegfried can not distinguish them and is mistaken, but there is a small difference between them - is also placed in the electronic textbook. Here, third-graders are required to try to imagine what the difference might be (as the students were suggested that it is found in the clothes of the two heroines) to help distinguish the positive from the negative female character. Children are offered to recall the "musical portrait" of Odette and to assess whether the music is changing at the moment when the daughter of Rothbart - Odile, appeared before the Prince instead of Odette. At the end of the lesson, the scene in which "Love Triumphs" is also auditioned. As the third-graders get acquainted with the music from several different in character and emotional suggestion scenes, in the electronic textbook is set as a summarizing task to draw or at least to describe in words a scene of individual choice from the listened musical excerpts from the ballet. Children should choose a scene that excites them, describe, or, if desired, draw (the task of illustration can be set in sufficient time in class or for homework) the decors, the light that falls, the characters present in the stage, their costumes, the nature of their dance, all based on the experience of listened music that sounded in the particular scene. Tasks like this give some latitude to children's imagination, but it is directed to refer to the character of the music. In this way the children's imagination and creative thinking are stimulated, the students are taught to think creatively, and by developing the creative imagination, through the euphoria generated by the constructive activity, they not only get deeper into the nature of the sounding music, but also remember more permanently impressions from the scenario, the music, the photos from the productions of "Swan Lake", placed in the printed textbook. This, together with numerous similar tasks set in printed and electronic textbooks, contributes also to the gradual development of the general culture of young students. In support of this, I will quote the opinion of head teacher Diana Katsarova (Katsarova, D., 2019a, p. 493), who works with the electronic textbooks from the entire educational course of Mincheva and team, including the electronic textbooks for 3rd and 7th class - „In the electronic textbook (for 3rd grade - my note - Kr. F.) are featured four creative tasks related to ballet. The meaning of each of the tasks is insight into the character, the emotional content of the sounding music, encouraging students to develop their imagination, their emotional intelligence“.

#### **4. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES ON THE TOPIC OF MUSICAL STAGE GENRES IN 7TH GRADE**

##### **4.1. TASKS FOR MASTERING THE TAUGHT INFORMATION**

While in the 3rd grade the task of the author's team is to acquaint the students with the faerie and influential combination of literary basis (libretto), dance, music, scenography, costume design, lighting, which is the ballet, and because each fairy-tale is the bearer of a vivid moral message, attention is also paid to the message that the fairy-tale scenario carries, in 7th grade they start from this base - the exciting impressions and the already created interest, in order to give theoretical knowledge that will enrich the musical and general culture of adolescents, and the line of development and enrichment of their imagination and creative thinking continues through appropriate electronic resources.

In the 7th grade electronic textbook, work on opera, ballet, operetta, rock opera and musical begins with a brief revision of what has been learned about these stage genres, as, of course, the most intriguing - the creative tasks - are

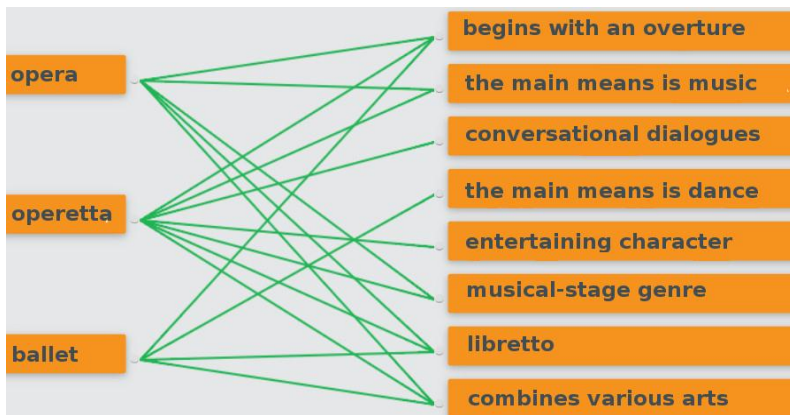
left to the end, since their successful implementation requires already acquired basic knowledge on the topic. In the revision task is proposed to be arranged singing voices into two groups - male and female. The next two electronic resources are already related to the new information taught in the lesson. In their conditions it is required to recognize the definitions of libretto and overture, and in each task five possible definitions are proposed, characterizing different elements of opera and ballet. Both tasks are somewhat misleading, as the test taker usually has the unconscious attitude of choosing the most descriptive characteristic, formulated with the most words. In both electronic resources the most detailed definition is not correct, and in the second task even the most detailed verbal characteristic is of the term that is correct for the previous task. Electronic resources of this type aim not only to more securely and permanently clarify concepts, but also to build students' confidence in their own knowledge. Especially with regard to the definition of overture, there is another misleading point - the proposed definition "instrumental music in opera and ballet" (Mincheva et al., 2018b, p. 54) may be wrongly chosen, since the overture is actually performed only by the orchestra, without soloists, choristers and ballet dancers, i.e. element of the definition is correct. In the next electronic resource, seventh-graders are required to fill in the correct words in a text in which:

- Verdi's operas are listed to indicate who is the author of the works and what is his nationality;
- An association is made with the Bulgarian composers who created operas (which is a revisioning element in the electronic resource, since a connection is made between previously taught and new information);
- The historical time in which the stage art ballet originated is also commented;
- The work of Leo Delib "Coppelia" is mentioned.

Another task is to connect the name of one of the two authors whose ballets are presented in the lesson, with his ballet. The right solution requires the name of Tchaikovsky to be connected with three titles, and that of Delibes - only with the ballet "Coppelia".

The next electronic resource is more complex and indicating all the correct answers requires students to have more thorough knowledge and resourcefulness. In this task, each of the stage genres opera, operetta and ballet must be connected with the characteristics that relate to it. At first glance, there is nothing difficult, but since the same characteristic (with three exceptions) is more often associated with more than one genre, sometimes with all three genres (for example, all three combine different arts), in practice this considerably complicates the task. Also, of the eight proposed characteristics, seven are relevant to the operetta genre, with the only exception of "dance is the main means" (Mincheva et al., 2018b, p. 56). The characteristic of "conversational dialogues" inherent in operettas can also mislead the decisive one by analogy with the recitatives in operas. Observation, resourcefulness and concentration are needed here to make students guess that opera recitatives are monologues (not dialogues), while in operettas it is customary for the characters to talk to each other without singing their replicas. The correct solution of this task looks like this (figure № 1):

*Figure № 1: Correct solution of the task of connecting a musical-stage genre with the characteristics that relate to it*



#### 4.2. CREATIVE TASKS FOR PENETRATING THE EMOTIONAL CONTENT OF THE MUSICAL WORKS

After acquiring and consolidating the necessary knowledge for the musical stage genres, it is time for the creative tasks. The new electronic resource is related to the musical "Cats" by A.L. Weber. At the beginning of the condition,

the plot of the musical is narrated briefly. After being acquainted with the main action, the seventh-graders have to download from the Internet a Bulgarian translation of the text of the song "Memory" by the main character Grisabella. Students should get familiar with the poetic text and the melody (intended for listening in the lesson and placed in the electronic textbook). Seventh graders are then offered to describe how they imagine:

- Grisabella's stage costume;
- What will her performance look like - whether and how she will dance while performing the song, what will be her movements;
- What decors would suit this song - what do they expect the scenery surrounding the heroine to be;
- How will the stage be lit while Grisabella sings.

In order to answer all these questions correctly, it is necessary, first of all, a mental artistic incarnation in the image of the character, which is complex enough. Grisabella, despite her miserable present appearance, bears certain traces of her former brilliance, by which the former beauty can be recognized. However, before the cats now she appears tormented, ugly. These features should be evident in the movements, the gait of the heroine, which the students describe. The proposal is also intriguing, taking into account the lyrics and music of the song, the description of the character and the retold libretto, students to accept the role of costume designer and stage designer. Through these elements of the task the students not only insight into the emotional content of music, but also acquire a personal impression of the contribution of specialists "behind the scenes", the attention of seventh graders is directed not only to music, dance and literature, but also to other arts involved in shaping the overall impact of stage genres. This makes the perception and understanding of the samples of these genres more complete. Regarding her work with 7th grade students on this task, head teacher Diana Katsarova shared: "The realization of the task stimulates auditory observation. By answering the questions, the students, based on the sounding music, achieve a richer awareness of its character, make a connection between music, image, color, shape and movement, revealing the impact that can be achieved by combining these elements in the spectacle" (Katsarova, 2019a, p. 16).

In the next electronic resource, seventh-graders have to compare photos from productions of the musical "Cats" with those of the rock opera "Jesus Christ - Superstar", and for this purpose search and download relevant images from the Internet. Students are asked to indicate whether they find certain differences in the stage attire of the characters from the productions of the two works to be repeated, i.e. to distinguish the two musical-stage genres from each other. As the musical is an entertainment genre, the costumes for it are more glamorous, beautiful, bright, spectacular, impressive. In the rock opera, historical authenticity is sought more - the type of costumes shows a definite connection with the clothing in the era in which the action takes place. Detecting and formulating such differences requires a certain amount of observation, awareness and the ability to ignore the insignificant (interesting, attractive in both types of costumes) in order to highlight the main thing. In this sense, such tasks are useful not only for mastering the material taught and the accumulation of musical culture, but also for the development of logical thinking.

The latest electronic resource on the topic, created to summarize and verify what has been learned, requires to connect each of the musical-stage genres operetta, rock opera, musical with its distinctive features. Except "classical" opera and ballet, newer genres must also be familiar and clearly distinguishable from any educated listener, and cultivating educated listeners is one of the aims of the musical course.

The head teacher Diana Katsarova also conducted a survey among 102 students from 7th grade of the Innovative School "St. Patriarch Evtimiy" - Plovdiv, for their opinion about the electronic textbooks. The conclusions that follow from this survey certify that electronic textbooks contribute to the understanding of the taught information, to the fuller perception of musical works, allow for a rich and diverse presentation of the new learning matter, since in the various forms of illustration used in modern teaching aids, in the perception of music are involved both hearing and sight. The created additional electronic resources, distinguishing the electronic from the printed version of the textbook, "lead to an increase in the effectiveness of music education and upbringing" (Katsarova, 2019a, p. 17).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

1. There is a definite continuity between the tasks set in 3rd and 7th grade, especially the creative tasks, as the electronic resources become significantly more complicated for the more experienced students;
2. The tasks are diverse, aimed in different ways at the assimilation of the provided educational information, at the development of the intelligence, artistic qualities and imagination of the adolescents;
3. The tasks are designed to enable learners to touch various components of the musical-stage arts;
4. The pedagogical approaches applied in the electronic textbooks are effective and contribute to mastering the learning matter;
5. The electronic textbooks and the tasks placed in them are liked by the students.

I believe that the fabulous world of the musical-stage arts, full of fun conventions that generously provide an



opportunity for manifestation of the viewer's imagination, should be known and loved by youth, including because this faerie world is excitingly beautiful, because it encourages the imagination for co-creation, and co-creation as a manifestation of fantasy and creative thinking is a necessary quality of modern man.

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