

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Motivation

*“There is a Musical Language, and then there is Music. Important is what we express and how we communicate through this language of musical sounds. What kind of story are we telling, and how are we telling it? In what way can we help enriching the lives of somebody out there?”<sup>1</sup>*

Most elementary schools in the Netherlands have no structural music lessons in the curriculum. So for many children that start instrumental music lessons it is their first experience to consciously experience making music. The instrumental music lesson is mainly based on reproducing: a certain image matches a fitting fingering thus producing the matching sound. When the sound is not matching the image than the teacher corrects this sound.

Many instrumental teachers complain that many pupils quickly stop the instrumental lessons. It lacks the fun and there are too many skills that need to be mastered at the same time. These days there are less and less horn pupils that start music class. This year has been proclaimed the year of the horn in which this specific problem is addressed.

Children learn in different ways: kinesthetic, aural or visual. The traditional instrumental education does not take these learning styles into consideration but is mainly focused on the visual and technical aspects. The main objective is the correction of the “mistakes” of the motoric, technique and reading skills. The learning process is not positively approached in this manner.

Neuro scientist Robert Harris (Hanze Hogeschool – Groningen) researched the ability to convert sound into movement necessary to make music and what it does to the brain. In an article in the Leeuwarder Courant he writes that if the music education would emphasize less on the written notes more people would start making music. He states that nearly all people can sing, almost everybody is musical. The written notes is an obstacle for many, which is why it is important to teach music in different ways.<sup>2</sup>

The famous tuba player Arnold Jacobs spoke about the fact that while learning to play a wind instrument the focus should be the sound. When the sound is in the mind the mind automatically produces the right actions (lip tension, breath support etc.) to realize this sound image. One voice sings in your head and the other voice sings from the instrument. Jacobs compares making music with an actor using his body to express himself. *“A musician is a storyteller of sound.”* So the instrument becomes an extension of your own body.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wekre Ree, Froydis ( May 1999) President’s Corner. The Horn Call.

<sup>2</sup> Harris, Robert (4 febr. 2017) : Iedereen is muzikaal. Leeuwarder Courant

<sup>3</sup> Frederiksen, Brian, (2012) Arnold Jacobs; Song and Wind. Illinois  
Loubriel, Luis E. (2013) Brass Singers: The Teaching of Arnold Jacobs.- Chicago

My fagot colleague Mieke van Dael did research on: How can aspects of the Kodály Philosophy and Methodology be integrated into Instrumental Education?  
She wrote:

*“If self-expression is an important part of the new learning, then I think that it is essential I develop musical expression with my pupils in order to speak a living musical language.”<sup>4</sup>*

If we want to communicate with a language of musical sounds we have to make sure that pupils can fully understand these sounds. In order to realize that the instrumental music lessons have to be structured differently. This means that different tools are necessary to design the instrumental music lesson.

This raises the question of how to do that. The traditional way of educating with the instrumental methodology is mainly focused on reproduction of notation.

Aspects as creativity, ownership, improvisation and composition are in general still underexposed in the instrumental lesson. Most classical teachers themselves are educated in the traditional way. In the world of conservatoires improvisation and creativity are often the domain of the jazz department.

According to the Hungarian composer and music pedagogue Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) we have to develop the inner hearing in order to be able to understand music and follow the path of musical literacy. We do this by singing. In order to learn to play an instrument it is not enough to just learn the technique. The music has to be understood. By singing and using relative solmization (do-re-mi-fa-sol) with hand signs and rhythm language we develop these skills.<sup>5</sup>

After a search through many horn methods it appears that only few of them are based on the B flat horn and its natural tones. This in spite that the B flat horn in the Netherlands is the most used instrument for the beginning horn player especially in wind orchestras. Many methods come from abroad and are based on the natural tones of the F horn. A beginning horn player on the B flat horn is faced with sometimes-difficult valve positions. Even the popular methods with a sing along CD are not based on natural tones but start with do-re-mi songs. Often they are just adaptations of methods for other wind instruments.

Inspired by the Kodály method I have been researching the past years the possibilities of developing a horn method for the B flat horn in which singing is a central component and where a relation is formed between the inner hearing and the playing of the horn.

It became apparent very quickly that the starting point should be from the natural tones of the B flat horn in order to be able to build a good inner sound. From the development of an inner sound follows a process to work towards musical literacy through aural learning.

In this research I have tried to map how aural teaching and developing inner hearing can be made possible for my horn pupils. After that I have expanded my research by finding the necessary steps for developing musical literacy with musical education in order to be able to put that into practice. By doing that I realized the research had become rather extensive but nevertheless I felt the need and necessity to make a start. In the end the purpose of the aural process and developing of inner hearing is to work towards musical literacy. It is a topic that

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<sup>4</sup> Van Dael, Mieke (2016) : How can aspects of the Kodály Philosophy and methodology be integrated into instrumental education?

<sup>5</sup> Chocksy, Lois (2000): The Kodály Method. Volume 1. New Jersey.

keeps me busy more and more and also a topic that keeps coming back from colleagues during workshops for teachers. Eventually as instrumentalists we all will have to play from sheet music whether we want it or not. Our surroundings and culture (orchestras, brothers, sisters that do have traditional music lessons) demand it. It would be wonderful if we can do that from a real understanding of the notation.<sup>6</sup>

## **1.2 Problem definition**

The horn is an instrument based on harmonic overtone series. Finding the logical steps on the valves of the horn is very difficult. Woodwind players have a logical system on the instrument playing diatonic scales. For the horn, with 3 valves, there is not a logical sequence playing scales. This made me realize that some changes in the methodology are necessary for the horn to make the aural approach more logical for the beginning horn player. It also did me realize how extremely important it is for the young horn player to develop a good inner hearing and make the logical steps into musical literacy.

## **1.3 Research Questions.**

We can express the following research question:

### **Research Question:**

How to make a logical methodology for the beginning horn player, from an aural approach to musical literacy?

In order to be able to answer the research question the following sub questions emerge.

### **Sub Questions:**

1. How can we develop the inner hearing in relation to the French Horn?
2. How can we combine the aural approach of horn teaching with the technical aspects of horn playing?
3. How can we develop musical literacy in instrumental education?

## **1.4 Objectives**

The objective of this research is to determine if aural teaching in the elementary horn class is feasible. Which steps are necessary to develop a method for the young horn player with an aural approach and still give enough attention to the technical aspects of horn playing? What is necessary for developing musical literacy in the instrumental lesson when we assume an organic unity.

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<sup>6</sup> De Haan, Klaske (febr 2017) Artikel Auditief lesgeven in de elementaire hoornklas. Published on the website from Nederlands Hoornisten Genootschap in response to the Masterclassweekend Muziek als Vak.

