CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES IN ORGANIZING CONCERTS FOR CHILDREN IN REGIONAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRAS: AN OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMMING AND EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES

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Abstract

This paper examined the programming and educational approaches used in organizing concerts for children and young audiences at five philharmonic institutions in the region: the North Macedonian, Sofia, Zagreb, Belgrade and Slovenian Philharmonics. The study covered the 2023/2024, 2024/2025 and 2025?2026 concert seasons, aiming to identify common features and distinctive charasteristics in the design of concert programmes for young audiences. Using descriptive and comparative methods, the research analysed publicly available concert programmes, digital archives and annual reports published by the selected institutions. Particular attention was given to concert formats, repertoire, target age groups, presentation methods and the inclusion of educational and interactive elements. The analysis showed that, despite their shared commitment to developing young concert audiences, the institutions adopted different approaches to concert programming. Differences were identified in the organization of concert activities, the adaptation of content to listeners' ages and the use of narrative, theatrical and interdisciplinary approaches. Introducing audiences to orchestral instruments, connecting music with literary and theatrical content and incorporating other educational and cultural fields, emerged as important educational practices. The findings highlighted the diversity of contemporary concert practices and the need for more systematic documentation of educational activites within philharmonic institutions.

Key words: concerts for children and young audiences; philharmonic institutions; concert pedagogy; concert programming; educational approaches; comparative analysis.

1. Introduction

Documents such as UNESCO's *Recommendation on Participation by the People at Large in Cultural Life and Their Contribution to It* (1976) and the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, firmly guarantee the right of youth to participate in cultural and artistic life. Within this framework, concerts intended for children emerge as a significant form for cultural engagement, providing firsthand musical encounters that are essential for developing new musical experiences.

The educational role of these concerts is linked to the development of *concert pedagogy*, which aims to bring the value of art to audiences in the setting where artistic activity takes place. It offers an experience-based environment outside the formal curriculum, complementing public education (Váradi, 2020). Research has also shown the importance of music and extracurricular activities for children's intellectual, emotional and social development, as well as their active participation in community life (Schellenberg, 2006; Vidulin, 2020; Guhn, Emerson & Gouzouasis, 2020).

Concerts for children and young audiences take various forms, ranging from traditional and interactive concerts to staged musical performances, workshops and interdisciplinary projects. Beyond the choice of repertoire, their design requires consideration of the audience's age and how children perceive music (Gruhn, 2018), as well as the way concerts are presented and how performers communicate with the audience (Small, 1998).

Over the past few decades, philharmonic institutions have developed a range of programming and educational approaches aimed at young audiences (Schilling-Sandvoß, 2015). From this background, the present study examines concert programmes for children and young audiences at five philharmonic institutions in the region, using comparative analysis to identify their shared characteristics and distinctive features.

2. Subject and Research Methodology

This study examines the programming and educational approaches used in organizing concerts for children and young audiences at five philharmonic institutions in the region: the Philharmonic Orchestra of North Macedonia, the Sofia Philharmonic, the Zagreb Philharmonic, the Belgrade Philharmonic and the Slovenian Philharmonic.

The research focused on concert programmes for children and young audiences across three consecutive seasons (2023/2024, 2024/2025 and 2025/2026). Particular attention was given to concert formats, repertoire selection, presentation methods and the inclusion of educational and interactive elements. Target age groups were also considered where this information was available.

The study is based on publicly available information from the institutions' official websites, digital archives, published concert programmes and annual reports. Descriptive and comparative methods were used to examine similarities and differences in their programming concepts and educational practices.

A database was compiled to record the concert activities documented in the sources, including repeated performances. The comparative analysis distinguished between individual concert performances and distinct concert titles. For consistency and readability, concert titles are presented in english throughout the paper. Where no official english title was available, the titles were translated by the author.

When interpreting the findings, consideration was given to differences in the amount of publicly available information, particularly concerning educational and interactive elements and the age groups of the intended audiences.

3. Concert Programmes for Children and Young Audiences at the Selected Philharmonic Institutions

3.1. Philharmonic Orchestra of the Republic of North Macedonia

During the period under review, covering the 2023/2024, 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 concert seasons, the Philharmonic Orchestra of the Republic of North Macedonia offered children's concert programmes featuring a variety of thematic concepts and approaches to presenting orchestral music. The programmes reflect an effort to make classical music more accessible to young audiences, by combining musical performance with storytelling, staging elements and direct communication with listeners. In presenting its educational activities, the institution also places particular emphasis on the combination of text and music as a way of introducing younger children to classical music (https://www.filharmonija.mk/едукација/).

One of the characteristic programming approaches involves combining musical performance with literary or dramatic content. Examples include *The Steadfast Tin Soldier* (2023/2024 and 2025/2026) and *Clever Pejo* (2024/2025), (both featuring music composed by Filip Ivanov), as well as Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* (2025/2026). In these programmes, the music is presented within a narrative framework, with storytelling connecting the musical passages to the unfolding events. From a programming perspective, this approach allows the orchestral

performance to take the form of a unified thematic work in which music and storytelling are closely linked.

Concerts with a stronger educational focus also feature in the institution's programming. One example is *The Brass Family* (2023/2024), which introduces young audiences to brass instruments. The programme brings together works from the classical repertoire, including excerpts from Haydn's *Trumpet Concerto* and Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, film music from *The Pink Panther*, *The Lion King* and *Toy Story*, as well as well-known Macedonian songs. It also includes opportunities for active audience participation, such as group singing, a quiz in which listeners identify familiar film themes and instrument demonstrations. In this way, the introduction to brass instruments is supported by a varied repertoire, audience participation and activities that complement the musical performance.

A similar educational approach, though with a different thematic focus, can be seen in the concert *Do You Have Rhythm?* (2024/2025), which explores rhythm as one of the fundamental elements of music. The available programme information mentions narration, demonstrations and interaction with the audience through questions and collaborative activities. The repertoire includes works by Smokvarski, Califfi, Anderson, Bernstein, Strauss and de Falla, while the stated target age group is children aged five to twelve.

The institution's programming also includes concerts featuring film music and works from the classical repertoire. *Fantasia* (2024/2025), an open-air concert, featured music from Disney films. By contrast, The *Dream of the Toys* (2024/2025) included works by Debussy, Grieg, Ponchielli, Mozart, Bizet and Elgar. According to the institution's official description, the concert tells the story of two children who dream of becoming conductors and receive help from a magician in making their dream come true. Through storytelling and humorous situations, the programme introduces the audience to musical instruments and the role of the conductor (https://www.filharmonija.mk/едукација/). The concert *Wolfie's Magic Flute* (2025/2026) features works by Mozart, accompanied by narration and a visual presentation of the story through video projection. The institution's wider programming for children also includes other themed concerts, such as *New Year's Concert for Children* and *Wild Symphony*.

Several programming characteristics emerge from the examined examples: the use of narration, the thematic combination of works from different musical genres and the inclusion of demonstrations and interactive elements. Another notable feature is the presence of music composed specifically for children's concert programmes, alongside works from the established classical and film music repertoires.

3.2. Sofia Philharmonic

An analysis of the Sofia Philharmonic's concert programmes for the 2023/2024, 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 seasons reveals a variety of themes and musical content intended for children. Alongside performances of classical and film music, the programmes include concerts devoted to specific groups of instruments, as well as programmes in which narration forms part of the musical presentation.

One of the programming approaches involves introducing musical instruments through themed concerts. Narration is documented in the available information for *Percussion Stories with Forti* (2023/2024 and 2024/2025). A similar approach can be seen in *Forti in the Brass World*, presented during the same seasons. Concerts devoted to the wind quintet and flutes also form part of this programming concept.

A more specific example is *Forti and the Magic Flutes* (2023/2024 and 2024/2025), featuring compositions and arrangements for flutes and harp, including works by Mozart, Delibes, Chaminade, Yagisawa and Rimsky-Korsakov. Additional information about the children's concert programmes describes the use of Forti, a puppet, portrayed as a curious extraterrestrial

creature exploring the world of music. Through this character, musical content is combined with staged performance and storytelling (https://www.bta.bg/bg/news/bulgaria/oficial-messages/1043832-sofiyska-filharmoniya-fortisimo-obrazovatelnite-kontserti-za-malki-i-golemi).

The concert programmes also feature musical content inspired by stories and literary themes. Examples include *Stories with the Magic Quartet*, *Christmas Stories with the Magic Quartet* and *Chivalry Stories with the Magic Quartet.* The last of these features works by Telemann, Handel, Vivaldi, Rameau, and Corelli and appears in all three seasons. Official announcements for selected programmes in the 2024/2025 season mention the participation of chamber ensembles and actors, suggesting an approach that combines musical performance with dramatic and narrative elements (https://sofiaphilharmonic.com/novini/софийската-филхармония-със-забавен-м). Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* and Dan Brown's *Wild Symphony*, both accompanied by narration, also feature in the 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 seasons. The recurrence of certain concert titles across different seasons is one of the notable characteristics of the programmes.

The examples show that the thematic organisation of concerts is not limited to introducing particular groups of instruments. Some programmes are built around a story, while others focus on a specific ensemble, musical genre, or selection of works linked by a common theme.

Considerable variety can also be seen in the choice of repertoire. Alongside classical works, the chosen seasons include concerts featuring film and video game music, such as *The Music of Danny Elfman, Music from Frozen, Epic Journeys – Music from Video Games* and *The Magical World of Ghibli*. Among the programmes drawing on the classical repertoire are *The Carnival of the Animals* by Camille Saint-Saëns, *The Four Seasons* by Antonio Vivaldi and *Dance in Music*, which features works by Brahms, Saint-Saëns, Tchaikovsky, Strauss, Piazzolla and Bizet, as well as the tango *La Cumparsita*. Other themed concerts documented in these programmes include *Little Musical Secrets*, *Musical Adventures, Fairy-Tale Princesses* and *Christmas concerts* featuring music from children's films.

The concert programmes of the Sofia Philharmonic show that musical content for children is presented in various ways, with instrumental performances, sometimes complemented by narrative and staging elements. The recurrence of certain concert titles across several seasons suggests continuity in particular programming concepts, while the diversity of the repertoire reflects a range of thematic approaches.

3.3 Belgrade Philharmonic

Unlike the institutions discussed previously, the analysis of the Belgrade Philharmonic's programming and educational approaches is based exclusively on information from its annual activity reports. As these reports cover calendar years rather than concert seasons, the programmes were examined in relation to the 2023/2024, 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 seasons, within the limits of the available documentation. Three distinct programming formats can be identified among the documented activities, each aimed at a different age group: concerts for preschool and school-age children, concerts for babies and open orchestral rehearsals for teenagers.

One notable example is the concert series *The Illustrated Orchestra*, presented during the 2023/2024 season. The programme centres on music from well-known animated films, including *The Lion King, 101 Dalmatians, Aladdin* and *Tom and Jerry*. This choice of repertoire connects orchestral music with familiar musical content from animated films. According to the 2024 annual report, more than 3,500 children attended the programme. During the same season, Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* concert series was performed again for preschool

children, featuring an actor as narrator and four violinists as soloists. Alongside listening to the music, the programme aimed to introduce children to string instruments.
Concerts for babies, intended for children up to two years of age, occupy a special place in the Belgrade Philharmonic's activities. During the 2023/2024 season, the programmes featured a selection of waltzes adapted for the youngest listeners. The 2024/2025 season included *My First Symphony*, featuring a complete performance of Ludwig van Beethoven's *Symphony No. 1*, while the 2025/2026 season featured Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's *Album for the Young*, arranged for symphony orchestra. According to the annual reports, the concert hall is adapted to provide a space where the youngest audience members can move around and play. This format differs from other children's concerts not only in the age of its audience, but also in the organisation of the concert space and the choice of repertoire.
During the 2025/2026 season, the programme *Jeanloup and Étienne: An Orchestral Clown* was also presented for preschool children. It tells the story of a clown who wants to play in an orchestra, but faces opposition from the conductor. According to the 2025 annual report, the programme combines orchestral music, theatrical performance and humorous situations, drawing on musical elements from both classical and rock music. Among the works mentioned is *Sabre Dance* by Aram Khachaturian. The programme illustrates a concert format in which the dramatic situation forms an integral part of the presentation of orchestral music.
Open orchestral rehearsals for teenagers represent another educational approach. During the 2023/2024 season, secondary school students attended rehearsals featuring piano concertos by Sergei Rachmaninoff. In the 2024/2025 season, this format included an introduction to the violin, viola, and the Baroque instrument *violoncello da spalla*, as part of a programme featuring works by Britten, Gulda and Khachaturian. Unlike concerts built around storytelling or staged performance, open rehearsals give young audiences an opportunity to become familiar with musical instruments and the process of orchestral work within the orchestra's regular musical practice.
The diversity of these activities shows that the Belgrade Philharmonic's programmes are also designed with the age of the targeted audience in mind. For the youngest listeners, the emphasis is on adapting the concert environment and repertoire. Programmes for preschool and school-age children include themed concerts and staged musical performances, while teenagers are offered direct exposure to the orchestra's work. These differences reveal several approaches to presenting classical music within a single institution.

3.4 Zagreb Philharmonic

During the concert seasons 2023/2024, 2024/2025 and 2025/2026, the Zagreb Philharmonic's educational programmes featured themed concert performances and dedicated series designed to introduce younger audiences to orchestral music. Among the programmes identified in the available documentation are MINIMINI, a concert series for children and FEELharmonija, introduced in the 2024/2025 season, with programmes aimed at young people and wider audiences. According to the institution's official presentation of the 2024/2025 season, the introduction of the new series was part of an effort to attract new audiences through free educational concerts (https://www.zgf.hr/hr/novosti/udahnimo-glazbu-nova-koncertna-sezona-2024-2025/).
As part of the MINIMINI series, the 2023/2024 season featured the concert performance *If I were Countess Dora,* dedicated to the croatian composer Dora Pejačević. According to the available programme information, the performance combines chamber orchestral music with acting, stage movement and visual elements. This concept illustrates how musical content can be presented alongside theatrical elements to introduce audiences to a figure from music history. The same production also appears in the 2025/2026 season. Another example from the

MINIMINI series is *Hedgehog's Home*, presented during the 2023/2024 season. Based on the literary work by Branko Ćopić, with music by Hrvoje Hegedušić, the programme takes the form of a staged concert performance combining orchestral music with acting, singing, set design and choreography. According to information published by the Vatroslav Lisinski Concert Hall, the performance lasts 35 minutes and involves collaboration between musicians, theatre artists, and visual artists (https://www.lisinski.hr/hr/dogadanja/minimini-ciklus-br-jezeva-kucica-br-koncertna-p-12/).

During the 2024/2025 season, the same series also included *Orchestra at last!* and *Christmas with the Winterdreads*, continuing the presentation of themed programmes for children. A significant development during the examined period was the introduction of the educational series FEELharmonija in the 2024/2025 season. Unlike MINIMINI, which is aimed at children, the new series was designed for audiences of different generations, with particular attention given to young listeners. Official programme information highlights opportunities to become familiar with the orchestra, explanations of musical content and audience participation as key elements of the series (https://www.zgf.hr/hr/novosti/udahnimo-glazbu-nova-koncertna-sezona-2024-2025/). The first concert in the series, *Maestro and Orchestra*, featured works by Johann Strauss II, Benjamin Britten and Maurice Ravel. Britten's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* occupies a particularly important place in the programme, as its musical structure allows listeners to become familiar with the different instrumental sections and their roles within the orchestra. In this case, the educational focus comes from the choice of repertoire itself, rather than relying solely on additional verbal explanations (https://www.zgf.hr/hr/najave/feelharmonija-upoznaj-orkestar-i-dozivi-puninu-zvuka/).

The same series also includes the concert *Young Debutants*, featuring young instrumental and vocal soloists. Its inclusion in the educational series reflects a broader programming concept that extends beyond introducing audiences to orchestral music to providing a platform for young performers (https://www.zgf.hr/hr/najave/drugi-koncert-ciklusa-feelharmonija-mladi-debitanti/).

The third concert, *Classics in Film*, focuses on the relationship between classical music and its use in film. The programme features works by Bach, Mussorgsky, Gershwin and Piazzolla, with a narrator also taking part in the presentation. According to the official announcement, previous concerts in the series had introduced audiences to the role of the conductor and the different instrumental sections of the orchestra, while also featuring performances by young soloists and a choir. The institution also emphasises the interactive nature of the series (https://www.zgf.hr/hr/koncertni-kalendar/feelharmonija-upoznaj-orkestar-i-dozivi-puninu-zvuka-klasika-u-filmu-besplatne-ulaznice-preuzmite-klikom-na-kupi-ulaznicu-kd-vatroslav-lisinski_2025-05-16_19-30/).

A comparison of the two concert series reveals different approaches to designing educational programmes. MINIMINI places greater emphasis on combining music with literary, biographical and theatrical elements, while FEELharmonija focuses more on introducing audiences to the orchestra, musical instruments and different forms of symphonic repertoire.

3.5. Slovenian Philharmonic

The family concert series *Družinski abonma DA!* occupies a prominent place in the Slovenian Philharmonic's programming, introducing young audiences to orchestral and choral music. The series features in all three seasons (2023/2024, 2024/2025 and 2025/2026). Its concept is based on themed concerts accompanied by spoken presentations, designed for children aged six and above and their families (https://filharmonija.si/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/03_Abonmajska_knjiz24_25splet.pdf).

In the 2024/2025 season, the existing family concert series *Družinski abonma DA!* was presented under the theme *Expanding Musical Horizons.* This title does not refer to a separate concert or a new concert series, but rather to the shared programming concept for the season.

According to the official programme brochure, the concept explores connections between music and various social phenomena, cultural contexts, emotions and contemporary musical composition (https://filharmonija.si/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/03_Abonmajska_knjiz24_25splet.pdf).

Among the programmes presented during the 2024/2025 season was the concert *Contemporary Music Is Not Scary*, developed in collaboration with the Department of Music Education at the Academy of Music in Ljubljana and composer Larisa Vrhunc. The programme aimed to introduce young audiences to contemporary music. Collaboration with a higher education institution specialising in music represents another distinctive feature of this programming approach (https://www.revijaglasna.si/novice/nova-koncertna-sezona-slovenske-filharmonije-glasba-vedno-nova/).

During the same season, Sergei Prokofiev's symphonic tale *Peter and the Wolf* was presented as the opening event of the family concert series, with a performance planned at Ljubljana Zoo. The choice of a venue outside the traditional concert hall suggests an effort to broaden the settings in which orchestral music is presented (https://www.revijaglasna.si/novice/nova-koncertna-sezona-slovenske-filharmonije-glasba-vedno-nova/).

In the 2025/2026 season, the family concert series adopted a different thematic structure, organised around the concept of a musical journey. According to the official programme brochure, the series includes concerts devoted to England, Slovenia, the Balkans, Hungary and Italy, as well as an introductory concert at Ljubljana Zoo. The programmes are built around selections of compositions and musical traditions associated with particular geographical and cultural settings (https://filharmonija.si/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/4.-Abonmajska-knjizica-Slovenske-filharmonije-25-26.pdf). One example is *Travelling Through England*, featuring works by Holst, Walton, Williams and Elgar, while *Travelling Through Hungary* includes compositions by Kodály, Bartók, Haydn and Brahms. The programme *Travelling Through Italy* features works by Monteverdi, Vivaldi, Rossini and Morricone. *Travelling Through Slovenia*, meanwhile, is based on songs from different Slovenian regions, performed with the participation of the Slovenian Philharmonic Choir. The official programme also includes a planned collaboration with the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum, involving an organised exhibition visit and a workshop. This example is particularly relevant as it demonstrates how a concert programme can be linked to museum-based educational activities, allowing the musical experience to be complemented by an introduction to cultural heritage (https://filharmonija.si/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/4.-Abonmajska-knjizica-Slovenske-filharmonije-25-26.pdf).

The presentation of the family concert series also involves a presenter who connects the musical content and the different thematic sections. In its announcement of the 2025/2026 season, the institution also introduced an educational game, *Philharmonic Memories*, designed to help audiences become familiar with musical content and reinforce what they have learned. These examples illustrate the use of additional educational tools that extend beyond the orchestral performance itself (https://www.sigic.si/predstavitev-koncertne-sezone-orkestra-in-zbora-slovenske.html).

The programmes show that the Slovenian Philharmonic's family concert series has developed through different thematic concepts. While the 2024/2025 season focused on broadening musical and cultural horizons, the 2025/2026 season approached music through geographical and cultural themes. Another notable feature is the connection between the concert programmes and other educational and cultural institutions.

4. Comparative analysis of programming and educational approaches

A comparative examination of the programmes offered by the Philharmonic Orchestra of the Republic of North Macedonia, the Sofia Philharmonic, the Zagreb Philharmonic, the Belgrade Philharmonic and the Slovenian Philharmonic during the 2023/2024, 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 seasons reveals shared efforts to make orchestral music more accessible to children and young audiences. At the same time, differences can be observed in programme organisation, repertoire selection and methods of presentation. These differences are particularly evident in the thematic design of concerts, their adaptation to the age of the intended audience and the integration of musical performance with staging, narrative, or educational elements.

Programme organisation and concert formats. During the examined period, the Philharmonic Orchestra of the Republic of North Macedonia presented individual themed concerts for children, including *The Steadfast Tin Soldier, Clever Pejo, The Dream of the Toys* and *The Brass Family*. The Sofia Philharmonic offers a variety of themed programmes, some built around recurring characters and established programming concepts, such as the concerts featuring *Forti and the Magic Quartet*. At the Zagreb Philharmonic, two distinct educational concert series can be identified, each aimed at a different audience: *MINIMINI* and *FEELharmonija*. According to its annual reports, the Belgrade Philharmonic organises concerts for children, concerts for babies and open orchestral rehearsals for teenagers. The Slovenian Philharmonic, meanwhile, has developed the family concert series *Družinski abonma DA!,* in which individual concerts are linked by a theme. These examples show that educational concert activities can be organised as a series of standalone programmes, a dedicated concert series, or several formats designed for different age groups.

Target audiences and age groups. Differences between the institutions can also be seen in how they define their target audiences. The Belgrade Philharmonic makes the clearest distinction between concert formats according to age, offering programmes for babies up to two years old, preschool and school-age children, and teenagers. At the Slovenian Philharmonic, the family concert series is intended for audiences aged six and above, with the joint attendance of children and adults forming an integral part of its organisation. The Zagreb Philharmonic distinguishes between *MINIMINI*, designed for children, and the more broadly oriented *FEELharmonija*, which is not aimed exclusively at children. The Philharmonic Orchestra of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Sofia Philharmonic also offer programmes adapted for children, although the intended age groups are not specified with the same level of detail in all available concert announcements.

Repertoire selection and thematic concepts. A common feature of the institutions is their use of musical works and themes that can be linked to stories, familiar characters, or subjects relevant to children's experiences. Prokofiev's symphonic tale *Peter and the Wolf*, for example, appears in the programmes of several institutions, reflecting the use of works with a strong narrative structure. Music from films and animated stories serves a similar purpose in programmes offered by the Sofia and Belgrade Philharmonics, as well as in selected concerts of the Philharmonic Orchestra of the Republic of North Macedonia. Through its concert *Maestro and Orchestra*, the Zagreb Philharmonic uses works by Britten, Ravel and Strauss to introduce audiences to the orchestra and musical structure. The Slovenian Philharmonic, meanwhile, develops themed programmes that connect music with astronomy, geography, cultural heritage and contemporary composition. These differences suggest that the educational value of repertoire may lie in its narrative content, the musical characteristics of individual works, or the broader context in which the music is presented.

Methods of presentation. Narration is one of the most frequently used elements in the programmes, although its function varies between institutions. At the Philharmonic Orchestra

of the Republic of North Macedonia, it is used to connect musical passages with the story and to explain their content. In certain programmes of the Sofia Philharmonic, the presentation is supported by a recurring stage character, such as Forti, who introduces musical instruments and their characteristics. The Zagreb Philharmonic adopts a staged musical approach in its MINIMINI series, combining orchestral performance with acting, choreography and set design. A similar combination of music and theatrical performance can be seen in the Belgrade Philharmonic's programme *Jeanloup and Étienne: An Orchestral Clown*. At the Slovenian Philharmonic, guided concerts are organised around specific themes, with spoken commentary linking musical works to their broader context. Narration is thus not a single, uniform model of educational presentation. It may serve an explanatory or dramatic purpose, or help establish connections between the works and the themes explored in a concert.

Educational and interactive elements. Several educational approaches can be identified in the programmes. The first involves introducing audiences to orchestral instruments and their sound characteristics, as seen in *The Brass Family*, the concerts featuring Forti and *Maestro and Orchestra*. The second approach connects music with literary narratives or staged stories, as in *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*, *Hedgehog's Home* and *Jeanloup and Étienne*. A third approach involves interdisciplinary connections, particularly evident in the Slovenian Philharmonic's programmes, where music is linked to natural sciences, cultural traditions and museum activities. The Belgrade Philharmonic's open orchestral rehearsals represent a distinct format, offering young audiences an opportunity to observe how an orchestra works. However, interactive elements are not documented to the same extent across all five institutions. Certain programmes of the Philharmonic Orchestra of the Republic of North Macedonia explicitly include questions, quizzes, singing and instrument demonstrations. At the Slovenian Philharmonic, additional educational activities include museum visits and workshops. In the case of the other institutions, some concert announcements emphasise the interactive nature of the programmes, but provide no detailed description of the activities in which audiences participate.

Continuity and repetition of programmes. Certain concert titles recur across these seasons, such as *The Steadfast Tin Soldier* at the Philharmonic Orchestra of the Republic of North Macedonia, the programmes featuring *Forti and the Magic Quartet* at the Sofia Philharmonic and *If I Were Countess Dora* at the Zagreb Philharmonic. The repetition of these programmes may indicate continuity in repertoire selection and programming concepts.

Limitations of the comparative analysis. The available documentation varies in both number and type of information provided. Some institutions publish detailed concert announcements, including repertoire lists and descriptions of presentation methods, while others provide only concert titles, brief announcements, or annual reports. The analysis of the Belgrade Philharmonic is based exclusively on its annual reports, which are organised by calendar year. This limits direct comparability with the season-based documentation available for the other institutions.

5. Conclusion

The study has shown that concert programmes for children and young audiences at these philharmonic institutions are developed through a variety of programming concepts and educational approaches. Although they share the aim of making orchestral music more accessible to young audiences, there is no single model for organising and presenting these programmes.

One of the main findings is that the educational value of concerts depends not only on repertoire selection, but also on how the music is presented, how programmes are adapted to the age of the audience and how they are connected to other artistic and educational fields. However,

thematic diversity and the use of interactive elements are not documented to the same extent across all institutions.

The study also highlights the need for more systematic documentation of educational activities, particularly regarding target audiences, methods of presentation, and forms of audience participation. More detailed information in these areas would allow for a more precise comparative analysis and further research into the role of philharmonic institutions in music education and the development of future concert audiences.

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