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LEARNING TO LISTEN: A PHILOSOPHICAL GESTURE IN MUSIC EDUCATION

APRENDER A ESCUTAR: UM GESTO FILOSÓFICO NA EDUCAÇÃO MUSICAL

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Abstract: This article offers a philosophical reflection on listening as a core element of the educational experience, particularly in early childhood music education. Listening is explored not as passive auditory perception, but as an active gesture of attention, care, and openness to the other. Through dialogue between music, phenomenology, and education, it presents educational scenes that reveal the ethical and formative dimensions of listening. The article argues that to educate is, at its root, to learn to listen—and that teacher education should begin from this foundational gesture.

Keywords: attention, listening, music education, phenomenology, care.

Resumo: Este artigo oferece uma reflexão filosófica sobre a escuta como elemento central da experiência educativa, especialmente na educação musical na primeira infância. A escuta é explorada não como percepção auditiva passiva, mas como um gesto ativo de atenção, cuidado e abertura ao outro. Por meio do diálogo entre música, fenomenologia e educação, são apresentadas cenas educativas que revelam as dimensões éticas e formativas da escuta. O artigo argumenta que educar é, em sua

Resumen: Este artículo propone una reflexión filosófica sobre la escucha como núcleo de la experiencia educativa, especialmente en la educación musical en la primera infancia. La escucha se aborda no como percepción auditiva pasiva, sino como un gesto activo de atención, cuidado y apertura a la alteridad. En diálogo entre música, fenomenología y educación, se presentan escenas formativas que muestran la dimensión ética y configuradora de la escucha. Se sostiene que educar es, en su raíz, aprender a

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raiz, aprender a escutar — e que a formação de professores deveria começar a partir desse gesto fundamental.

Palavras-chave: atenção, escuta, educação musical, fenomenologia, cuidado.

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Introduction

Sometimes, a lesson does not begin with an instruction or with a musical note, but with a silence shared by everyone. In an early childhood music classroom, after a sound-based activity, bodies remain still—almost suspended—attentive. It is as if something continued to vibrate in the air. No one speaks. No one plays. Only that silence is heard, a silence that seems to say much more than any word. And yet, there is presence, attention, a being-with. This way of being together does not arise from a pedagogical directive, but from something more elemental and far more difficult to describe: they are all listening. Not in the technical or auditory sense, but in the deeper sense of a shared disposition to receive.

We begin from an intuition as simple as it is profound: to educate is, before transmitting, to learn how to listen. This statement, which may at first appear abstract, gains form and density when one observes what takes place in a music classroom with very young children. There, listening is not only a means of perceiving sound, but a way of relating—to the environment, to others, and to oneself. In this sense, listening is not the same as hearing. While hearing is a passive and physiological act, listening requires intention, attention, openness. Listening is a gesture.

This article offers a philosophical reflection on that gesture, in dialogue with musical practice and educational experience in early childhood. It does not intend to present empirical results nor to validate methodological strategies, but rather to consider music education as a privileged space for exploring listening in all its complexity: temporal, embodied, affective, ethical. "Philosophy, far from distancing itself from the concrete, can offer categories and sensitivities that help us to understand what occurs in those minimal scenes where education truly takes place"[3]. This idea allows us to understand that listening is already a form of care, a stepping outside oneself, an opening toward the other. In the same vein, Iris Murdoch writes that "attention is

[3] Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), 64.

a form of love."[4]. For both authors, listening is not a skill that can be taught but an ethical disposition to be cultivated. Gert Biesta, in turn, insists that truly meaningful education does not consist in the transmission of content, but in the possibility of being interrupted by what is unexpected—by what is other.[5]. Listening, as an educational gesture, takes place precisely on that threshold where something interrupts and transforms.

In a non-philosophical register, we may also refer to the priority structure theory as a unified response to the question concerning the essence of attention. Watzl's central argument proposes that attention is what organises current information in order to render it more useful for the organism. Rather than being a mental attitude (such as belief or desire), attention constitutes a non-propositional structure that organises other mental states. In doing so, this structure establishes a relationship of priority between different parts of the mind, with some becoming more central. The theory seeks to grasp the first-person experience of attention and to offer greater explanatory potential in fields such as neuroscience and psychology. Through this theoretical lens, Watzl unifies attention across different cases (auditory, intellectual, etc.) and links it to motivation and action, including, notably, educational action.[6]

From this perspective, the article is structured in six sections. The first explores listening as a philosophical category, distinguishing it from mere hearing and connecting it with notions of active attention and presence. The second turns to musical listening, focusing on its embodied, temporal and affective dimensions. The third presents concrete educational scenes in which listening is learnt within early childhood music education contexts. The fourth section examines the relationship between listening and care, while the fifth proposes implications for teacher education. Finally, the conclusion returns to the central thesis: that to educate is, perhaps above all, the art of learning to listen.

1. Listening as a Philosophical Gesture: From Perception to Active Attention

Listening is not simply hearing. This distinction—seemingly elementary—has decisive consequences for understanding education. Hearing is, above all, a biological function: sound reaches us, travels through the body, and triggers a signal. Listening, by contrast, requires presence, intention, an

[4] Simone Weil, *Attente de Dieu* (Paris: La Colombe, 1950), 18–19.

[5] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge, 1970), 34.

[6] S. Watzl "What attention is. The priority structure account". *Wiley interdisciplinary reviews. Cognitive science*, 14(1) (2022) e1632. 10.1002/wcs.1632.

orientation toward what is other. It does not occur automatically; it demands that the subject situate themselves in a certain disposition, that they become receptive. For this reason, listening cannot be taught as content, yet it can be opened, cultivated, prepared as a gesture.

In educational contexts, this difference becomes particularly significant. A pupil may hear the teacher's voice without truly listening; a child may reproduce musical sounds without having entered into relation with them. The same happens among adults: we speak to each other, but we do not always listen. Listening, in this sense, is not merely a sensory operation, but a way of relating. It is a way of inhabiting the world with attention.

Simone Weil proposed understanding attention as a form of naked waiting, a suspension of oneself that allows the other to be received without conditions. In her words, "pure attention is prayer."[7] This conception implies that the act of listening is not passive but intensely active—not in the sense of intervening or exercising control, but in the sense of sustaining an open space. Listening is thus a form of hospitality: one steps back, withdraws, so that the other may appear.

In this vein, Iris Murdoch argued that the deepest form of moral exercise does not lie in the application of rules, but in learning to see—and to listen—with precision. "Attention is a form of love," she wrote, directly echoing Weil.[8] For Murdoch, listening involves decentring oneself, stepping outside the ego, and refraining from projecting preconceived ideas onto the other. In education, this perspective is key: the educator does not simply shape wills, but accompanies processes of more refined, more truthful perception.

Gert Biesta, for his part, has pointed out that one of the deepest risks in contemporary education lies in its obsession with measurable and efficient outcomes. Within such a logic, the possibility for something truly new to emerge is lost. According to Biesta, to educate is to allow oneself to be interrupted, to become affected by that which cannot be fully controlled.[9] Listening, therefore, is the moment in which education opens itself to the unexpected. It is not preparation for something else; it is event.

Emmanuel Levinas reminds us that our relationship with the other is not founded on knowledge, but on radical alterity. The face of the other calls to us before we are able to classify or understand it.[10] Listening, in this context, is not about receiving a message, but about allowing oneself to be affected by a presence. It is an ethical act before it is a communicative one. In the clas-

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[7] Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 105-116.

[8] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge, 1970), 33-45.

[9] Gert Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (Boulder: Paradigm, 2013), 126-128.

[10] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini* (La Haye: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), 215-220.

sroom, this means that the educator should not merely seek comprehension, but welcome a voice which, in its singularity, cannot be reduced.

Taken together, these philosophical perspectives make it possible to rethink listening as the very core of the educational experience. It is not a technique among others, but a way of being in the world. Listening is, perhaps, the deepest gesture of both teaching and learning: what occurs when we stop speaking in order to be present. A four-year-old girl listens to a low note played on a string instrument. She says nothing. Her head gently tilts, her breathing slows, her hands remain suspended in the air. Beside her, another child marks the pulse with their fingers, even though the sound has already ceased. Neither has been instructed to do so. They are both listening. Not as a cognitive exercise, but as a way of being present, corporeally. Their bodies have been taken by the sound.

From a phenomenological perspective, this scene is not interpreted as a simple stimulus-response process. Merleau-Ponty insists that perception is not merely one function among others, but the fundamental manner in which the body opens itself to the world. The body does not have senses; the body is a perceptual subject.[11]. Within this framework, musical listening is not limited to the ear, but involves the skin, breathing, and balance. Musical sensation is a fully embodied lived experience. Kinesthesia—the internal perception of movement and muscular tension—participates intensely in the experience of sound.[12] In its attentive state, the body becomes a resonating chamber.

Early childhood music education offers a clear way of observing this corporeality of listening. It is not a matter of teaching the child to move according to a given pattern, but of recognising that the body is already involved, even before any instruction. To listen is to inhabit sound with one's whole being.

2. Musical Listening

2.1. Bodily Listening

Early childhood music education illustrates this bodily dimension of listening with particular clarity. A child does not first learn how to respond to sound; rather, their body is already responding—sometimes even before any

[11] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), 170–172.

[12] Thomas Clifton, *Music as Heard: A Study in Applied Phenomenology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 15.

verbal guidance is provided. Listening is not performed merely with the ears, but with posture, breath, and movement. To listen is to allow oneself to be touched by sound, to resonate with it.

This bodily dimension of listening can be clarified phenomenologically by recalling that, for Merleau-Ponty, perception is not a secondary "channel" through which a mind receives data, but the very way a lived body inhabits the world. Musical listening, therefore, is not exhausted by the ear: it is posture, balance, breathing, anticipation, and micro-movement. In early childhood settings, these forms of corporeal attunement are often the first "responses" that appear, before any verbal instruction can frame them.

From this angle, the educator does not "add" bodily engagement as a technique; rather, the pedagogical task is to recognize, protect, and refine an already-existing bodily resonance with sound. A sustained tone, a sudden interruption, or a collective pulse can reorganize the room's attention through the children's bodies—slowed breathing, suspended gestures, the shared stillness that follows a gong. These phenomena are educational not because they demonstrate a skill, but because they reveal a mode of presence that can be cultivated.

In this sense, listening is a bodily ethics: to be affected without invading, to respond without dominating. What is learned is not only musical discrimination, but a form of embodied coexistence—an attunement that precedes explanation.

2.2. Musical Time

Musical time is not the same as clock time. It is not homogeneous, nor can it be seamlessly measured. Musical listening teaches us another way of experiencing time: one that includes waiting, dilation, pauses that are not empty but charged with meaning.

This temporal dimension of listening finds an early philosophical articulation in Augustine's reflections on time in Book XI of the *Confessions*. For Augustine, time is not an external measure but an inner distension of the soul (*distentio animi*), experienced through memory, attention, and expectation. Listening unfolds precisely within this inner tension: what has just sounded lingers in memory, what is sounding claims attention, and what is about to sound is anticipated.

Bergson radicalizes this insight by opposing spatialized, measurable time to durée, lived duration. Musical listening, from this perspective, is one of the clearest expressions of duration: sounds are not juxtaposed like objects in space, but interpenetrate one another in a continuous flow. To listen is therefore to inhabit time, not to control it.

In educational contexts, this has significant consequences. When listening is approached as duration rather than as task, the emphasis shifts from performance to presence. The child who remains silent after a sound has ceased is not disengaged; rather, they are still listening, dwelling within the temporal resonance of what has been heard. Such moments reveal listening as an experience that exceeds instruction and resists acceleration.

The educational situations evoked throughout this article are not presented as empirical evidence, but as concrete experiential moments that allow for a phenomenological description of listening as an educational gesture.

In a session with three-year-old children[13], after the striking of a gong, a silence occurred so dense that no one dared to move. That pause was not the absence of sound, but its unfolding in time. In that moment, listening becomes an act of hospitality toward becoming.

The philosophical tradition has explored this phenomenon in depth. For Augustine of Hippo, time exists only within the soul, as the presence of the past in memory, the presence of the present in attention, and the presence of the future in expectation.[14]. In music, these three dimensions intertwine: the sound that has faded continues to resonate within us, while the anticipation of the next tone becomes a space of waiting that educates patience.

Henri Bergson distinguishes between mathematical time—segmentable, quantifiable—and lived duration as a continuous flow.[15]. Musical listening situates us within the realm of duration: an experience that cannot be hurried without compromising its meaning. This temporality is profoundly educational, as it teaches us to sustain attention without acceleration, to inhabit what unfolds without attempting to dominate it. Childhood music, when it takes time, repeats, and lingers, holds a subtle yet radical formative power.

Some contemporary composers have approached this sensitivity to time through an aesthetics of pause. John Cage, for instance, invites us to listen to silence itself as an active part of the sonic experience[16]. This transforms our relationship with the environment: what once seemed like noise becomes

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[13] The educational scene referred to here derives from the author's professional practice in early childhood music education, carried out in an early childhood educational context in Southern Europe during a recent academic period. The scene is presented as a phenomenological vignette, intended to illustrate a philosophical reflection on listening and attention. It does not form part of an empirical research design, nor does it involve the collection or analysis of data.

[14] Agustín de Hipona, *Confesiones*, XI, 20.

[15] Henri Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (Paris: PUF, 1889, 92-103.

[16] John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*segui (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1961).

music; what appeared as emptiness turns into form; what was interruption becomes continuity.

In early childhood music education, these ways of relating to time offer a model for rethinking pedagogy through mindful attention. To listen is to be present—not as a superficial directive, but as an openness to a shared temporality, where the rhythm of what unfolds has the right to develop without being interrupted by urgency.

2.3. Affect, Resonance, and Memory

Musical listening activates more than perception: it touches affect, awakens memory, and creates bonds. One child listens to a slow melody and repeats a word in a different tone; another covers their ears in response to a strong dissonance. These reactions are not explained solely by auditory physiology, but by the affective dimension involved. Music, in resonating, affects.

Thomas Clifton describes music as an "embodied temporal form," experienced from a situated sensitivity[17]. Listening is to be affected by a sonic atmosphere. This becomes particularly evident in early childhood, when the differentiation between body, emotion, and thought has not yet been divided by formal education. Children listen with their bodies, but also with their affective memory: they recognise sonorities, are soothed by certain timbres, and revive experiences.

From the perspective of music education, this dimension calls for care. Listening is not neutral: it involves the one who listens. Hence the importance of creating environments in which music can be shared without imposition, where silence is not punishment but a protected space.

2.4. Listening as Creation

Every act of listening also contains a creative dimension. It is not merely a matter of receiving a sound, but of assigning meaning to it, of constructing a relationship with it. The child who raises their hand while a note is sustained, or the one who sings an improvised response, is not simply reacting—they are creating. Listening is active, interpretive, generative.

From a philosophical standpoint, listening can be understood as an original act of interpretation, one that precedes judgment. We do not listen in order to understand; we understand by listening. In this sense, music education does not merely transmit content, but fosters ways of creating meaning. Listening is not reproduction, but invention.[18]

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[17] T. Clifton, *Music as Heard: A Study in Applied Phenomenology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 202.

[18] S. Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art* (London: Continuum, 2010), 13–15.

The classroom thus becomes a space where listening produces world: where sounds, gestures, pauses, and silences acquire meaning because they are shared, because they resonate within an attentive community. This conception transforms the educational logic: the aim is not efficiency, but presence; not to transmit something, but to generate something together.

3. Learning to Listen in Early Childhood Music Education: Educational Scenes and Gestures

Listening is not taught as just another item of curriculum content. It cannot be memorised, nor evaluated through an objective test. It is learned—or unlearned—within relationships, through the way time is inhabited, and through the forms of presence enabled in the classroom. In early childhood music education, this truth becomes particularly visible: listening emerges when space is given to it, when silence is sustained, when a gesture becomes meaningful for what it does *not* express.

A session from the *Melodías para crecer*[19] programme, in an early childhood centre, begins with a simple instruction: to listen to a long note played on a percussion bar instrument. One child looks down, another watches the adult, a girl closes her eyes. The sound continues, and when it ceases, no one speaks. The silence that follows is not absence; it is echo. Something occurs that cannot be quantified, but that can be recognised. Everyone is listening—even within the silence.

These moments are not exceptional. They are part of the natural rhythm of the sessions, provided they are allowed to exist. In an environment saturated with stimuli, rapid directives and immediate transitions, sustaining silence is an educational act. It requires courage. As Byung-Chul Han reminds us, we live in a society of hypercommunication, where constant noise prevents what is truly meaningful from emerging.[20] In this context, educating in listening is an act of resistance. It is teaching how to wait, to perceive what is subtle, to give space.

The child does not need to be told what to feel when listening to a low-pitched sound. They respond with their body, with their gesture, with their

[19] *Melodías para crecer* is an early childhood music education programme focused on listening-based practices, including sound, silence, sustained attention, and shared sonic gestures. The programme serves as a pedagogical background for the reflections developed in this article and is not presented as an object of empirical evaluation. Its mention aims solely to situate the experiential horizon from which the philosophical considerations on listening emerge.

[20] B.-C. Han, *La expulsión de lo distinto* (Barcelona: Herder, 2017).

gaze. What they do need is an environment in which their reaction is welcomed as meaningful. The adult, instead of correcting or interpreting, may simply accompany. At times, such accompaniment takes place through the repetition of the gesture, through the creation of a sequence that echoes what has been heard, or even through shared silence.

A common scene: a group of children improvise with drums. One of them maintains a steady rhythm and the others follow. Suddenly, another child introduces an unexpected pause. There is surprise—some stop, others resume. There are no instructions. What occurs is mutual listening. Rhythm, in this case, is not an imposed structure but a form of shared attention. These kinds of experiences teach more about musicality and coexistence than any theoretical explanation.

The role of the educator in such contexts is not to transmit musical knowledge as codified information, nor to lead the activity with firmness. Rather, it is to prepare the space so that listening becomes possible. This involves attending to timing, allowing margins, recognising meaningful gestures, sustaining attention without imposing it. The educator listens with the children—not from the outside, but from within the experience.

In contrast to a pedagogy oriented towards rapid, measurable results, early childhood music education based on listening proposes a different logic. It is not about teaching how to correctly play an instrument, but about opening pathways for sound to become meaningful. Listening is not a means to something else; it is an end in itself. To learn to listen is to learn to be, to wait, to share.

This orientation does not imply an absence of structure. On the contrary, it relies on a flexible structure that makes room for the emergence of spontaneous gesture. Active listening proposals—such as those developed in methodologies inspired by contemporary music education pedagogy—work with minimal materials: a sustained sound, an extended silence, a shared pulse. What matters is not the complexity of the material, but the quality of attention it generates.

In this sense, listening is also a form of creation. When a child reproduces a sound they have heard, but transforms it, extends it or reverses it, they are not merely repeating; they are composing. Active listening is always transformative. There is no literal copy, because the sound has already been incorporated, metabolised, re-signified. This creative dimension of listening exceeds any instructional model and opens an ethical horizon: to listen to the other as the possibility of creating something new together.

Finally, it is worth insisting: what is described here is neither an idealised model nor a guaranteed technique. These are real, minimal scenes that point to what is essential. The aim is not to derive generalisable conclusions, but to recognise profound educational gestures. When early childhood music

education is approached through the lens of listening, it allows us to think of education in its deepest sense: as the art of accompanying processes of emergence, resonance, and meaning.

4. Listening, Attention, and Care: Ethical and Philosophical Implications

At the heart of every truly meaningful educational relationship lies an attitude that transcends the mere transmission of content: that of care. Care is not a momentary action nor a methodological resource, but a profound ethical orientation that reshapes human bonds through sensitivity, attention, and the recognition of the other. In this context, listening emerges not simply as a skill, but as a way of being-with-the-other—an ethical disposition that involves attentiveness, respect, and openness[21].

The pedagogy of care, articulated by authors such as Nel Noddings and Carol Gilligan, has offered a powerful critique of traditional perspectives on ethics and education centred on abstract justice or universal impartiality. In contrast, their proposal situates care as a foundational principle of moral life—a central axis from which to understand our responsibilities and decisions within concrete contexts. Within this relational ethics, listening holds a fundamental place: to listen to the other is to care; it is to suspend one's own projections in order to attend, with full presence, to the voice and experience of the other[22].

Listening, therefore, is an act of recognition. It entails welcoming the other in their singularity, allowing their voice to emerge without being stifled by our expectations or premature interpretations. Such attentive and non-invasive listening is inseparable from an ethics of care within education: genuine care is only possible when there is a true willingness to respond to what the other needs, to what they express—even to what they remain silent about.

From Noddings' perspective, care is not merely an affective disposition, but a concrete educational practice that manifests itself in small daily gestures of attentiveness, in the creation of relationships based on trust and mutual responsibility. The educator who cares does not impose their knowledge, but accompanies; allows themselves to be affected; allows themselves to be called upon. This demands cultivating active and empathetic listening, which

[21] S. Watzl, The ethics of attention: An argument and a framework. In S. Archer (Ed.), *Salience* (UK: Routledge, 2023), 89-112.

[22] N. Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

stands in contrast to instrumentalised or authoritarian forms of pedagogical relationship. As Noddings points out, to care involves suspending one's own projects—even momentarily—in order to respond to the needs of the other through presence and commitment[23].

Carol Gilligan, for her part, has deepened the ethical value of voice, especially in contexts where certain experiences have been systematically silenced. Her approach questions moral models that neglect the emotional and relational dimension. From her perspective, to listen is to give space to voices historically relegated, recognising that morality is not exclusively played out in the application of principles, but in our capacity to respond to the other through situated responsibility and empathy[24].

Within this framework, music education acquires a particular ethical dimension: it is a privileged space in which to exercise sensitive attention, cultivate delicacy in interaction, and refine the perception of the other's nuances. Musical listening—attentive, sustained, respectful—can function both as a metaphor and as a concrete practice of a pedagogy of care. To listen to music, and especially to make music together, trains us in a form of attention that neither invades nor dominates, but rather attunes itself to alterity. It is a mode of listening that welcomes and gives space, that allows itself to be transformed by what it hears.

In this sense, music education can be understood as a laboratory of care: a place where ways of relating are rehearsed in which the body, rhythm, emotion, and silence are recognised as valid forms of expression. A kind of rehearsal that is not disconnected from the ethical formation of the person, but which nurtures it in its most sensitive dimension.

From this perspective, projects such as Música para Cuidar emerge as valuable pedagogical–philosophical horizons—not so much because of the content they convey, but because of the kinds of relationships they promote. They seek to recover the profound meaning of education as a relational experience, where knowledge is not separated from connection and where music can open a pathway to relearn how to listen, how to attend, and how to care.

In times marked by fragmentation, haste, and individualism, rethinking education—and particularly music education—through the ethics of care is a deeply political gesture. It involves resisting the logic of performance and control to return to what is essential: the possibility of encountering the other from shared vulnerability, mutual recognition, and a form of listening that does not interrogate in order to know, but offers itself as a hospitable space in which the other may be.

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[23] N. Noddings, *Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

[24] C. Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge – Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).

From an educational–philosophical perspective, to listen is to recognise that the other precedes our intentionality—arrives before any projection or intervention. Care-based listening does not seek to resolve, interpret, or domesticate meaning; rather, it safeguards the emergence of what is not yet, of what cannot be anticipated. This gesture calls for an educator who does not stand above experience, but who convenes and accompanies it. To educate through listening is to renounce control without abandoning responsibility.

Music, especially in its early educational forms, reactivates this ethical sensitivity. Shared pulsing, collective silence, echo, memory—each of these gestures illuminates ways of being with others grounded in attention rather than instruction. These experiences do not offer definitive answers, nor do they aim for operational efficiency. Instead, they reveal a possible mode of inhabiting education: as a space for appearance, resonance, and mutual care.

To teach without having learned to listen carries the risk of educating without presence. Not because knowledge is lacking, but because the gesture that enables that knowledge to become relationship is absent. In teacher training—particularly in early childhood education—listening should not be treated as a secondary competency or an optional quality, but as the starting point: to listen as the very condition for educating.

5. Implications for Teacher Education: Preparing the Space for Listening

In university practice with future teachers, this shift is profoundly transformative. Many approach their training with the expectation of acquiring techniques, tools, and methods of intervention. Yet something changes when they are invited to pause, to listen—not only to children, but to sounds, to silence, to their own bodies in space. In workshops that engage with sonic attention, musical improvisation, or shared breathing, a more refined pedagogical awareness emerges: that to educate is not primarily to direct, but to be present.

This does not imply renouncing knowledge or planning. Rather, it calls for rethinking the very notion of teaching through the lens of attention. Attention—as understood by Simone Weil—is not voluntary concentration, but receptive openness[25]. In teacher education, cultivating this form of attention requires concrete practices, but also a philosophical shift: from control to accompaniment, from explanation to care, from instruction to listening.

A training proposal in this direction may include active listening practices—both individual and collective—that enable future teachers to experi-

[25] S. Weil, *Attente de Dieu* (Paris: Fayard, 1966), 86–93.

ence what it means to be present without invading. In sessions where music is used as a starting point, students listen to long sustained sounds or fragments containing extended silence and then share what they have felt, without seeking objective interpretation. What emerges is not a theoretical conclusion, but a different disposition towards the classroom: the understanding that, at times, silence speaks more than instruction.

Another valuable practice is the pedagogical use of silence. In teacher training, silence is rarely addressed as an educational resource. And yet silence is not empty: it is containing. Sustaining silence with a group of very young children is not easy; it requires sensitivity, trust, and tolerance for what cannot be anticipated. Preparing teachers in this capacity involves cultivating patience, inhabiting time without haste, and embracing the pause as an educational moment.

To this we may add improvisation as a pedagogical practice—not improvisation born of a lack of preparation, but as the capacity for creative response to the unexpected. In musical work, improvisation does not seek perfection, but mutual listening, openness to the other, and the acceptance of error as part of the process. In the classroom, this attitude translates into flexibility, a willingness to adapt the proposal to the children's reactions, and the ability to listen beyond the pre-established plan.

These practices may seem peripheral to the traditional curriculum, yet they point to the very heart of education: relationship. In university experiences where such approaches are integrated, students often express their surprise in realising that to listen is to educate. Some recount how, during their school placements, they changed the way they addressed children: they stopped giving so many instructions and began waiting for responses, observing gestures, allowing space. Others recognise that, in learning to listen more attentively, they also began listening differently to peers, to teachers, and to themselves.

This shift reaches beyond music education. Music, in this case, functions as a model: a pedagogy of attention that can be applied across disciplines. Listening is not exclusive to the sonic realm; it is a form of relationship that permeates the entire educational experience. A mathematics, science, or language teacher can also teach through listening: by attending to how pupils receive, question, and hesitate; by allowing the time necessary for something to take shape; by recognising that to teach is not always to speak, but sometimes to remain silent.

Owing to its very nature, music education requires this kind of presence: one cannot make music with others without listening to them. This is why it can serve as a privileged laboratory for rethinking teacher training from a philosophical standpoint. What is learned there is not merely sound theory or instrumental technique, but an ethical disposition: to hold the space, to be

available, to open oneself to the other. This way of being may be the most difficult to teach, yet it is also the most urgent to recover.

In an educational system increasingly oriented towards rapid results, a pedagogy of attention represents a form of resistance. Training teachers who listen is training individuals capable of building meaningful relationships, recognising the singularity of the other, and teaching with the body present. It is not about adding another competency to the curriculum, but about reshaping the very foundation of what we understand by teaching.

Conclusion: Educating as the Art of Learning to Listen

Listening is not merely a means of learning; it is already a way of learning. It is an attitude, a disposition, an art. Throughout this reflection, we have sought to show that to educate is not simply to transmit knowledge, but to create the conditions for listening to become possible. To listen is to welcome, to attend, to be present. And in that gesture—deeply human and ethical—the very heart of every educational experience is at stake.

Music education, especially in early childhood, offers a privileged space in which to experience this form of education. In it, body, time, and affect intertwine in a language that requires no translation. Listening to music with others, whether in the classroom or within shared silence, is not merely an aesthetic activity: it is a way of building community, refining attention, rehearsing other ways of being together. Music does not only teach us to distinguish sounds; it teaches us to refine sensitivity, sustain waiting, and welcome difference.

This approach carries implications that extend beyond the classroom. In a world saturated with information, stimuli, and digital noise, recovering listening as a form of relationship constitutes a countercultural act. Listening, in this context, becomes resistance: against speed, pause; against dispersion, presence; against saturation, silence. Education cannot be limited to adapting itself to the logics of performance and hyperstimulation. It must reclaim spaces in which it is possible to listen again, attend again, be again.

What does it mean to listen in the age of the algorithm, when everything seems already said, already measured, already predicted? What place does silence hold in a time that fears emptiness? In the face of such questions, music offers a fertile philosophical and pedagogical horizon. For within it there is room for the unpredictable, the subtle, that which cannot be expressed in words. Music teaches us that listening is not repetition but creation; not control but accompaniment; not domination but care.

Perhaps for this reason, the scene with which we opened this text—a group of children remaining in silence after hearing a sustained note—en-

capsulates more eloquently than any argument the idea we wished to defend. No one gives an order; no one explains what has happened. And yet, all understand. In that silence, which is not emptiness but resonance, the mystery of listening reveals itself: something has occurred, something has been shared, something continues to vibrate among bodies.

To educate, then, is not merely to teach how to speak, to write, or to solve problems. It is also—and perhaps above all—to teach how to listen. For this, the educator does not need to fill the classroom with words, but to sustain the silence from which sound may emerge; to create a space where silence is not feared, where the encounter with the other is built upon respect, attention, and hospitality. To educate is, ultimately, to learn how to listen together.

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