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Erman Türkili

„First Steps of a Little / Special / Late Artist: How Can We Teach and Learn Differently?“

Abstract

Traditional instrumental pedagogy quietly assumes a reader: a child who can already decode abstract symbols, sustain attention through a structured lesson, and translate notation into coordinated movement. That single assumption excludes the three groups music has the most to offer — the very young, autistic and neurodivergent learners, and adults who come to an instrument late in life.

First Steps of a Little Artist replaces this entry requirement with a colour- and symbol-based system that maps directly onto the instrument, so that a two-year-old can perform real music within the first lesson. Conventional staff notation follows later, as a second language rather than a first barrier.

The talk follows the method through its three populations. The little artist: a decade of practice at the House of Arts and Sciences in Istanbul (founded 2015) with mixed-ability groups aged two to six. The special artist: an early childhood piano programme for autistic children supported by the Tekfen Foundation (2023), and inclusive teacher-training workshops with the Tohum Autism Foundation. The late artist: adult and elderly beginners, for whom the same redesigned entry point removes the fear of starting too late.

The argument is that accessibility in music education is achieved not by simplifying repertoire but by redesigning the point of entry — and that what is built for the excluded learner turns out to serve every learner. Drawing on classroom practice, documented learner progress, the published method and its digital extension, the presentation closes with what this implies for European cultural policy, inclusive schooling and lifelong learning.

SHORT CV

Asst. Prof. Dr. Erman Türkili is a violinist, music educator and researcher, and a member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts. He holds a DMA from Florida State University and an MM from Pittsburg State University, and teaches at Bahçeşehir University Conservatory in Istanbul, where he served as Head of Music (2020–2022) and Director of the Conservatory (2022–2024). He is the

creator of First Steps of a Little Artist, a colour- and symbol-based method that opens instrumental learning to children from the age of two, including autistic and special-education learners, and to adult beginners. He founded the House of Arts and Sciences (2015) and the Club of Arts and Sciences (2020) in Istanbul, and has lectured in Vienna, London, Paris, Cardiff, Bristol, Jersey, Kazan and Arizona.