

The State Musical Review of Children and Youngsters with Special Needs: Lessons from Slovenia.

K.D.L. Manaranjanie

Department of Fine Arts, University of Kelaniya

This presentation analyses an annual event named *The State Musical Review of Children and Youngsters with Special Needs "Let's Sing, Play Musical Instruments, and Dance"*, which takes place in different parts of Slovenia. In existence for two decades, since 1991, this gathering of educators and their pupils takes place in front of a jury, which evaluates performances and provides professional feedback to the educators. The author of this paper served as the only international specialist in a three-member jury in the mandate period 2010-2015. As an ethnomusicologist with research interest in music therapy and medical ethnomusicology, she provides a critical assessment of roles ethnomusicologists can play in assisting the field of special music education.

The main research question is whether such an annual musical program has potential to enhance the status of children with special needs and the quality of their lives? The analysis of the data collected in the course of a six-year long research suggests an affirmative answer to the question. Research methodology was ethnographic, including interviews, participant observation, collection and analysis of photo and video materials. The musical review's aim to bring children and youngsters with special needs to the public eye and to gain media attention on the one hand, and the performative and interactional aspects of the learning process, including the pupils, teachers, family members, and general audiences on the other, opened the space for discussions about minority stigmas and how to overcome them. This positive first-hand experience and the research findings encouraged the researcher to present it and to discuss its suitability and applicability to the Sri Lankan context.