

## Student Views on Literacy in Music Education in Theatre Departments

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### ABSTRACT

In this study, it was aimed to examine student views on music education in theater departments. Case study model, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the research. The study group within the scope of the research consists of 10 undergraduate-II students of Trabzon University State Conservatory Performing Arts Department. In order to obtain the data, an interview form prepared by the researcher was created with "Google Form". Content analysis method was used to analyze the data. According to the data obtained in the study, it was determined that music courses in theater departments in Turkey are mostly "Singing" courses. It was found that the number of music courses in theater departments during undergraduate education is low. According to the opinions of theater students, it was concluded that music education is very important and necessary in their departments. In line with these results, suggestions were made to increase the duration and number of music courses in theater departments.

**Key words:** Theater Department, Music Education, Student Opinions, Literacy

### INTRODUCTION

Turkish theater education first started in 1914. It has accumulated 105 years of experience until today. During this time, the structure of the theater program has changed both quantitatively and qualitatively and has been updated and renewed in line with the needs of the theater (Sevengil, 1934). Today, theater education continues as vocational education in conservatories, performing arts and fine arts faculties. Theater education includes courses not only on acting but also on interdisciplinary studies intertwined with interdisciplinary studies. One of these courses is music.

Krebs (1994), who worked on the music curriculum at the Berlin State Acting School, made some suggestions about music education in theater education. One of them states that the sole purpose of music lessons in the first year of theater education is to develop the student's sensory skills. Another one is that the theoretical information in music education should focus on interval information, major-minor, monophony and polyphony. He also stated that students should use their bodies like a rhythm instrument. He also emphasized that students should be trained in polyphonic choirs, and that the student should know the musical terms very well since the student will need musical terms in the future when working with the chorepetitor (accompanist) (Krebs, 1994). Gürzap (1976) mentioned the importance of the training given in theater departments and emphasized the necessity of voice training.

The aim of theater education is not to train musicians or opera singers, but to improve the actor's technical skills

and interpret the play better. For this reason, more emphasis should be placed on developing sensation and rhythm skills, choral and individual singing training in music courses in theater departments.

Voice training is considered necessary in theater education in order to transfer the voice of the theater actor to the audience. According to the size of the staged theater play, the actor should be able to convey his/her voice and words clearly and cleanly (Suner, 2004).

As can be understood, music education is a must in theater education. Elements such as dance and rhythm are acquired through music lessons and musical skills. Both in musicals and theater plays, musical skills such as singing, voice-breath control, producing improvised melodies in accordance with the requirements of the play, and adapting to the rhythm of the play can be applied thanks to musical skills. And these skills can be achieved through music lessons (Alşan, 2022).

### Aim of the Research

In this context, the aim of the study was to investigate student views on music education given in theater departments. In line with this purpose, the problem statement of the research was formed as "What are the student views on music education given in theater departments?"

The research questions created in line with this objective are as follows:

- 1) What are the courses related to music education in Trabzon University State Conservatory Performing Arts

Department Theater program and theater/acting programs in other universities?

- 2) What are the opinions of Trabzon University State Conservatory Theater Department students about the music lessons they take?
- 3) What are the opinions of Trabzon University State Conservatory Theater Department students about music education?

## METHOD

### Research Model

In this study, qualitative research method was used to obtain student views on music education in theater departments. Qualitative research provides more in-depth information than quantitative research. It can answer questions that are difficult to express with traditional research methods (Frankel & Devers, 2000).

In this study, the case study model, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. Case study is used to seek answers to scientific questions. It is also known as a case study (Büyüköztürk et al., 2016). McMillan (2000) defines case study as studies that are defined and customized depending on space and time.

### Study Group

Purposive sampling method was used in this research. This sampling was preferred because the opinions of the students studying in the theater department regarding music lessons were taken and the necessity of music education in theater departments was emphasized in line with these opinions. The researcher himself decides who will be selected for purposive sampling.

The study group of the research consists of Trabzon University State Conservatory Performing Arts Department Undergraduate 2 students. The Department of Performing Arts Theater program started to provide education in the 2022-2023 academic year and there are only two classes. For this reason, the study group consists of undergraduate 2 students of the theater department. The class size is 10 and all students were interviewed. The real names of the participants were not used in the study; in the findings section of the study, the participants were expressed as "S1, S2.,".

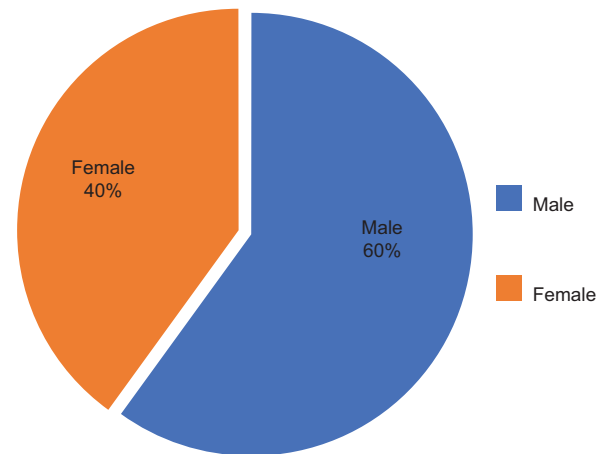
### Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 shows the gender status of the participants. Male students are more than female students. Of the 10 students, 7 were male and 3 were female.

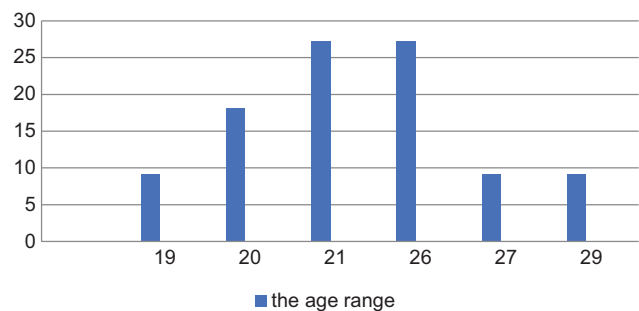
Table 2 shows the age range of the participants. According to Table 2, the age range is 19 - 29. The lowest number of students aged 19, 27 and 29 were found to be 1 person each (9.1%), while the highest number of students were aged 21 and 26. 3 students (27.3%) each are 21 and 26 years old.

Table 3 shows that 36.4% (4 people) of the participants were from Trabzon, 18.2% (2 people) were from Bursa, 9.1% (1 person each) were from Ankara, Samsun, Van and

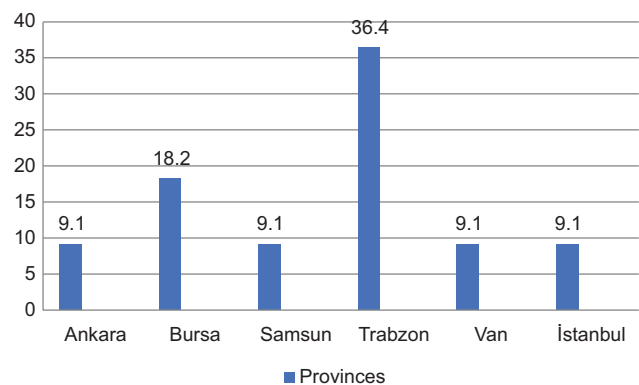
**Table 1.** Gender status of participants



**Table 2.** Age range of participants



**Table 3.** Distribution of participants by province



Istanbul. This shows that there are students coming from different regions of Turkey to study at the university.

### Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, the courses that the students take for music education in their departments and the students' opinions about music education were taken. For this purpose, an interview form was prepared to collect the relevant data. In order to ensure the content validity of the interview form created by the researcher, the opinions of three faculty members were taken and it was made ready for application. The

interview form consists of three parts. In the first part, there are questions that determine demographic characteristics. In the second part, there are 5 multiple-choice questions about whether they have had previous experience in music education. In the third part, there are 4 open-ended questions about the connection between theater and music, the necessity of music education, the adequacy of the music education they receive in their departments, and whether they have instrument lessons. These questions were prepared with “Google form” and sent to the participants.

Content analysis technique was used to analyze these data. The aim of content analysis is to reach concepts and relationships in order to explain the data collected on a topic. While data are summarized and interpreted in descriptive analysis, a deeper process is performed in content analysis. Thus, concepts and themes that cannot be recognized as a result of content analysis can be discovered (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

The comparison of music education in the curricula of theater departments in Turkey was limited to those departments whose course information packages could be accessed. All state and foundation universities were tried to be reached. For this reason, the number of theater departments that could be reached was 16.

## Findings and Interpretation

### Findings related to the first research questions

The music courses of the theater/acting departments that could be accessed from the course information packages of the universities were examined.

- Istanbul University; There are “*Solfege*” courses in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades, “*Music Business*” in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, “*Vocal Techniques*” and “*Voice Training*” courses in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Hacettepe University; Undergraduate 1 “*Solfege*” course, undergraduate 2 “*Applied Solfege and Chorus*” course, undergraduate 3 and undergraduate 4 “*Singing*” courses.
- Dokuz Eylül University; Undergraduate 1 “*Introduction to Solfege and Voice Education*” is included in the category of elective courses from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades. There are “*Voice Education I and II*” in these semesters. “*Singing I, Singing II, Singing III, Singing IV*” courses are included in the electives of undergraduate 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades.
- Beykent University; “*Singing I and Singing II*” education is given only in undergraduate 1 class. Bilkent University; There is no music course in undergraduate 1 class. It starts from the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of undergraduate. It is in the form of “*Singing I-II*”. There are no other music courses.
- Maltepe University; There are “*Singing*”, “*Song in Theater*” and “*Solfege*” courses in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. In 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, there are “*Singing and Singing Practices*” courses.
- Süleyman Demirel University; There are “*Singing*” courses only in undergraduate 1.
- Uludağ University; Undergraduate 1 has “*Solfege-I and Voice Education -I*” courses. Undergraduate 2 has “*Singing*” course, undergraduate 3 has “*Collective Singing*” course, and undergraduate 4 has “*Musical Songs*” course.
- Muğla Sıtkı Kocaman University; “*Singing-Solfege I*” course starts from undergraduate 2. It continues until the end of undergraduate 4.
- Akdeniz University; There is a “*Solfege*” course starting from Undergraduate 2. There is also an “*Instrument*” course. “*Singing*” course is given in undergraduate 3 and the instrument course is continued. Instrument lessons continue in Undergraduate 4 as well. There is also a “*Choir*” course.
- Istanbul Aydın University; “*voice education*” course is given in undergraduate 1 class. There is a “*Song-I*” course in the elective course category in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
- Ordu University, there is a “*Singing*” course only in the elective package of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the undergraduate program.
- Trabzon University; There is a “*Solfege*” course from undergraduate 1, a “*Singing*” course in undergraduate 2 and also an “*Instrument*” course. Undergraduate 3 is “*Instrument*” and “*Singing practice*” course, and only “*Instrument*” course is given in undergraduate 4.
- Selçuk University; Undergraduate 1 class has “*Ear Training and Theory*”, “*Piano-I*”, “*Singing and Correpetition*” courses. These courses continue in undergraduate 2 and undergraduate 4 courses, and “*Voice Education*” course is included in the elective course package starting from undergraduate 3. All other courses are compulsory. In addition, there are “*Opera Interpretation*” and “*Church and Oratorio*” courses in the elective course packages of Undergraduate 4.
- Kocaeli University; There is a compulsory “*Singing*” and “*Solfege*” course in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of the 1<sup>st</sup> year, “*Singing*” course in the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester, but this course is included in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> semester elective package.
- Ankara University; There are “*Song I-II*” and “*Musical Hearing-Reading I-II*” courses in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades. “*Collective Music I-II*” is included in Undergraduate 3. Undergraduate 4 has “*Theater Songs I-II*” course.

A total of 16 universities providing theater education in Turkey, including 10 state universities and 6 foundation universities, were able to access the course information packages. When we look at the accessible theater departments, it is noteworthy that the “*Singing*” course is available in all departments. Generally, there are music courses in undergraduate 1 and undergraduate 2 classes. Apart from these, it was determined that it was included in the elective course package in other classes. It is noteworthy that Selçuk University has “*Opera Interpretation*” and “*Church and Oratorio*” courses in the elective course package. It was observed that the “*Instrument*” course is available only in certain universities.

### Findings related to the second research questions

As seen in Table 4, the participants were asked whether they had received music education before. In response to this

question, 64% (7) answered “Yes” and 36% (3) answered “No”. It is noteworthy that there are more participants who have readiness in music education.

As seen in Table 5, only 3 participants (29%) stated that they did not play an instrument. The remaining 7 participants (71%) stated that they played an instrument. As can be understood from this, the proportion of participants who were connected with music and had the ability to play an instrument before they started studying in the department is higher.

In Table 6, the participants were asked whether they had music courses in their departments. All of the participants (10) stated that they had music courses.

In Table 7, the participants were asked for their opinions on whether the music courses in their departments were sufficient or not. While 9 students found the music courses in their departments sufficient, 1 student stated that they did not find them sufficient.

As seen in Table 8, the participants were asked whether they had instrument courses in their departments. 100% (10) of them stated that they had instrument courses.

**Findings related to the third research questions**

For the questions related to the third research questions, students were asked to express their opinions in writing. The answers given were coded and described. In order to provide an example, some participants’ answers were directly quoted as written in the form.

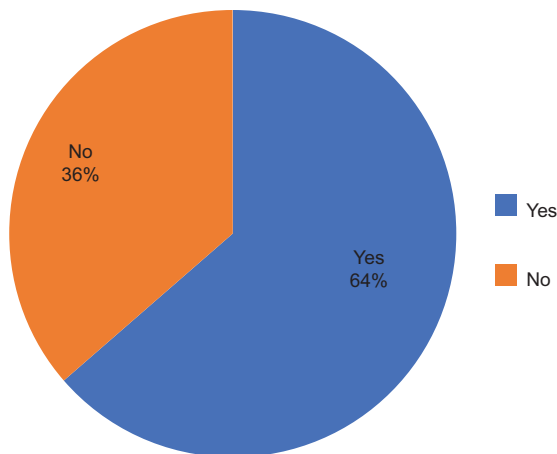
**Question 1:** “What is the connection between theater and music?”

In Table 9, it is seen that the participants expressed positive opinions, but these were defined from different perspectives. The most common of these are the answers given under the coding.

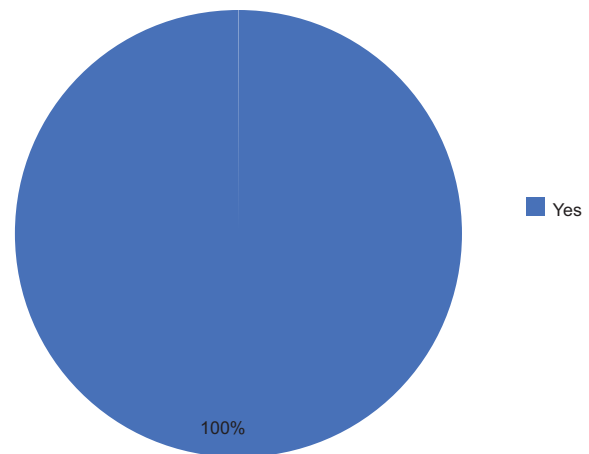
“Completion/Integrity”. Apart from this, there are opinions indicating that concepts such as stage rhythm, personal development, harmony and aesthetics are intertwined.

*Music is one of the indispensables of the theater, music consists of sound and silence, we can liken our pieces in the theater to this, and I can say that music is indispensable for the theater in order to feel that piece or emotion in a way that makes our hair stand on end. (S6, girl, 20)*

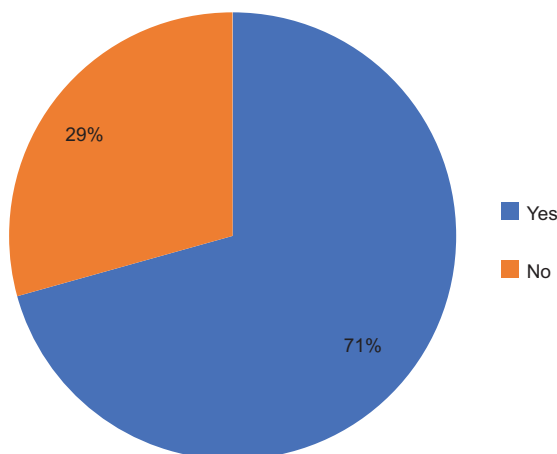
**Table 4.** Participants’ opinions on whether they had music education before



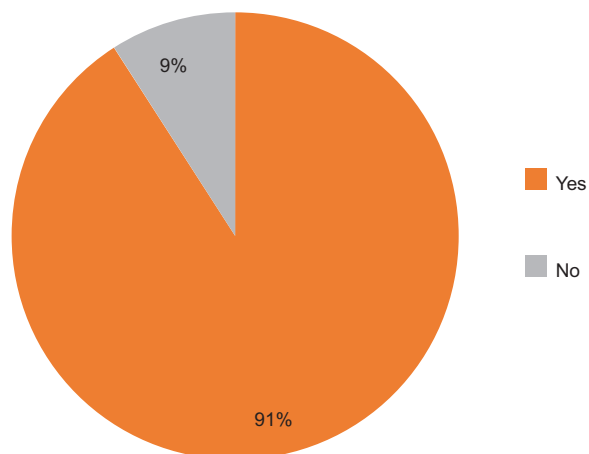
**Table 6.** Participants’ opinions on whether there are music courses in their departments



**Table 5.** Participants’ opinions on whether they have played any instrument before



**Table 7.** Participants’ opinions on whether the music courses in their departments are adequate



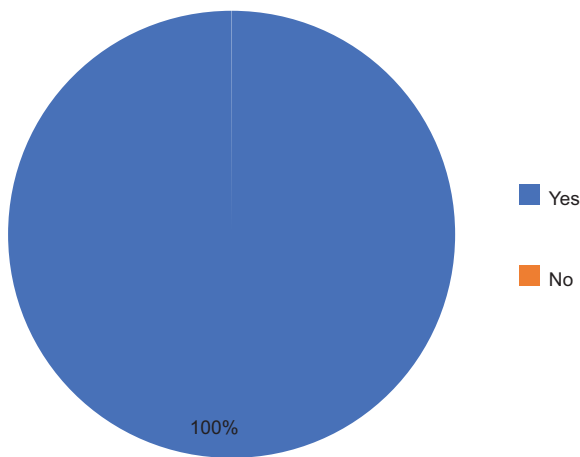
*I think it is a very strong bond in terms of personal development and I also think the same way in terms of philosophical views and perspective (S7,girl, 19)*  
*Theater and music are very interconnected, an actor should be able to do everything, and he/she should have a good voice and musical talent. The feature that keeps the two branches of art close to each other is that they both express things through language most of the time (S10, boy,20)*  
*Both are evaluated within the framework of aesthetics and aesthetics, I think they are both beautiful individually (S3, boy, 27)*

**Question 2:** “To what extent do you think music education is important in theater departments?”

As seen in Table 10, the importance of music education in theater departments was mentioned. While most of the participants stated that it is as important as theater, S4 and S10 participants stated that it is important for musical theaters. Here again, positive results were obtained and it was seen that it was explained with different approaches.

*Theater includes all kinds of arts, dance and music are some of them, rhythm is important for dance and music is important for rhythm, music is one of the most important sub-branch arts for theater and the most important one is definitely music (S5, boy, 23)*  
*An actor needs to use his/her voice as well as his/her acting skills, in this case music education provides a very good opportunity for the development of the actor, so it is very important (S6, girl, 20)*

**Table 8.** Participants’ opinions on whether there are instrumental courses in their departments



**Table 9.** Opinions on the connection between theater and music

Codes	Participants
Human and Life	S2
Harmony and aesthetics	S3
Stage rhythm	S4
Completion/Integrity	S1, S5, S8, S9, S10
Transfer of emotion	S6
Personal development	S7

*It is necessary to know music to play in musical theaters, of course, it is not only limited to musical theaters, but also in non-musical theaters, we see actors who sing or play instruments, the better the musical knowledge, the more you can bring the audience into the play (S10,boy, 20)*

**Question 3:** “Do you think the music education you receive in your department contributes? If so, what are these?”

In Table 11, the opinions of the participants on whether the music courses they took in their departments contributed or not were taken. All of the participants stated that they contributed. In addition, S2, S4, S6 and S7 mentioned its contribution to perceiving sounds and hearing the rhythm. S1, S3, S5, S8, S9 AND S10 stated that it contributed significantly to singing and playing instruments.

*Of course it does, in the future when I make a play or play any game, I can use the instrument in the game and this takes the game to a completely different place, and when I learn to use my voice in singing lessons, I will have the opportunity to play more and different games (S5, boy, 23)*  
*It contributes. The reason is that in the first year, when I didn't know anything about music, we learned subjects that form the structure of educational music such as note reading, solfege reading, rhythm and bona, which improved me for music education. (S7, girl, 19)*  
*It happens, I learn to sing and play an instrument (S3,boy 27)*

**Question 4:** “In general, how do you think music education in theater departments should be?”

Table 12 shows the opinions about the type of music education that should be in theater departments in general. “S5”

**Table 10.** Opinions on the importance of music education in theater departments

Codes	Participants
As important as theater	S1, S2, S3, S5, S6
Brain development	S4
It should only be at a basic level	S7
In terms of musicals	S4, S10

**Table 11.** Participants’ opinions on whether the music education they receive contributes or not

Codes	Participants
It is happening. Singing, playing instruments	S1, S3, S5 S8, S9, S10
It is happening. Perceiving sounds, hearing rhythm	S2, S4, S6, S7,

**Table 12.** Participants’ opinions on music education in theater departments

Codes	Participants
Singing and note knowledge	S9, S10
Solfege, singing and instrument	S1, S2, S3, S4, S7, S8, S6
Music history	S5
Musical Theater	S6

stated that they should take the music history course in addition to other courses. In general, they are of the opinion that the music education they receive is as it should be. In addition to solfege, singing and instrument lessons, participants expressed their opinions that music history and musical theater could be added.

*Instrument and singing education should definitely be there, we have it in our school, and at the same time, a course such as theater history course can be put in for us to know the history of music. (S5,boy, 23)*

*I think the performing arts department of trabzon university does this very well, I don't think the other theater departments have the right curriculum for music, I think our solfege singing instrument courses are very appropriate courses for theater students, but I think there should be a different course under the name of musical theater. (S7, girl, 19)*

*The most important thing for me is to have singing lessons. And a good knowledge of notation to be able to show their own creativity, I think the student should know enough notation to write a story with dots. (S9, girl, 21)*

*Rather than reading full notes, I would like to see how we can use our voices, what are the things to pay attention to while singing and how we can do them. (S10, boy, 20)*

## DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Music, which is an indispensable part of the theater, has many contributions to theater education, such as the actor's ability to use his voice on stage, to convey his voice even to the farthest area, to keep up with the rhythm, to adapt to the melody played. For this reason, music education is essential in theater education. Nutku (2012) stated that an actor candidate should know music, painting, philosophy, and literature.

In the light of the results obtained from this research, it has been determined that although there are not many curriculum changes in the theater departments in universities in Turkey, there is still no consistency in the music courses in the department. While some universities have music courses throughout their undergraduate education, some universities either do not have music courses at all or offer music education for only one year. For this reason, it is possible that graduating theater candidates may experience difficulties in musical plays during their acting career. Şimşek (2013), in his master's thesis titled "The relationship between the music education received by theater actors and their singing in musicals", examined the curriculum of the universities where theater actors graduated and took the opinions of these actors. According to the results obtained from the interviews, it was revealed that the actors encountered difficulties related to aural, melodic, rhythmic and vocal technique. It was seen that the number and hours of music courses in the programs were insufficient.

It was found that voice/singing training is mostly included in the curricula. It is important that these courses

be conducted by experts. Because with the development of technical skills, the actor will be able to use his/her voice more comfortably. Bolat and Baydağ (2015) stated that one of the most important elements for the theater actor is voice. Because a theater actor should leave his/her daily life and keep the level of awareness high, convey all kinds of emotions, and show a lot of diversity. For this reason, it is important that the instructor teaching this course is a voice educator.

According to the results obtained from student opinions, Trabzon University State Conservatory performing arts department students stated that music courses are sufficient and appropriate. It was determined that there are solfege, singing, and instrument courses. On the other hand, two students also stated that theoretical courses related to music should be added and the number of music courses should be less, and it was concluded that music education in theater departments should be more long-term. Oransay (1976) mentioned seven music education subjects in his study. He stated that these are; voice training, melody training, weighing training, speed training, memory training, parallel motion training, and long-term shaping training courses.

In the light of this study, music courses should be taken throughout undergraduate education in theater departments, and during this period, attention should be paid to include music education in the departments in a correct and effective way in order for the candidates who receive acting education to express themselves better on stage and to be versatile.

Within the scope of this study, theater students who do not take music lessons and students who take music lessons can be compared. It can be studied more extensively with experimental research. The number of theoretical and practical courses based on music education in theater departments can be increased and included in the elective course package. In theater departments, courses on "singing/playing together" and "musical theater" can be added.

Students who graduate from theater departments have more skills and can present themselves better in front of the audience in terms of acting. For this reason, studies or courses on musical plays can be included in theater departments.

## ETHICAL TEXT

"This article complies with the journal's writing rules, publication principles, research and publication ethics rules, and journal ethics rules. The responsibility for any violations that may arise regarding the article belongs to the author."

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