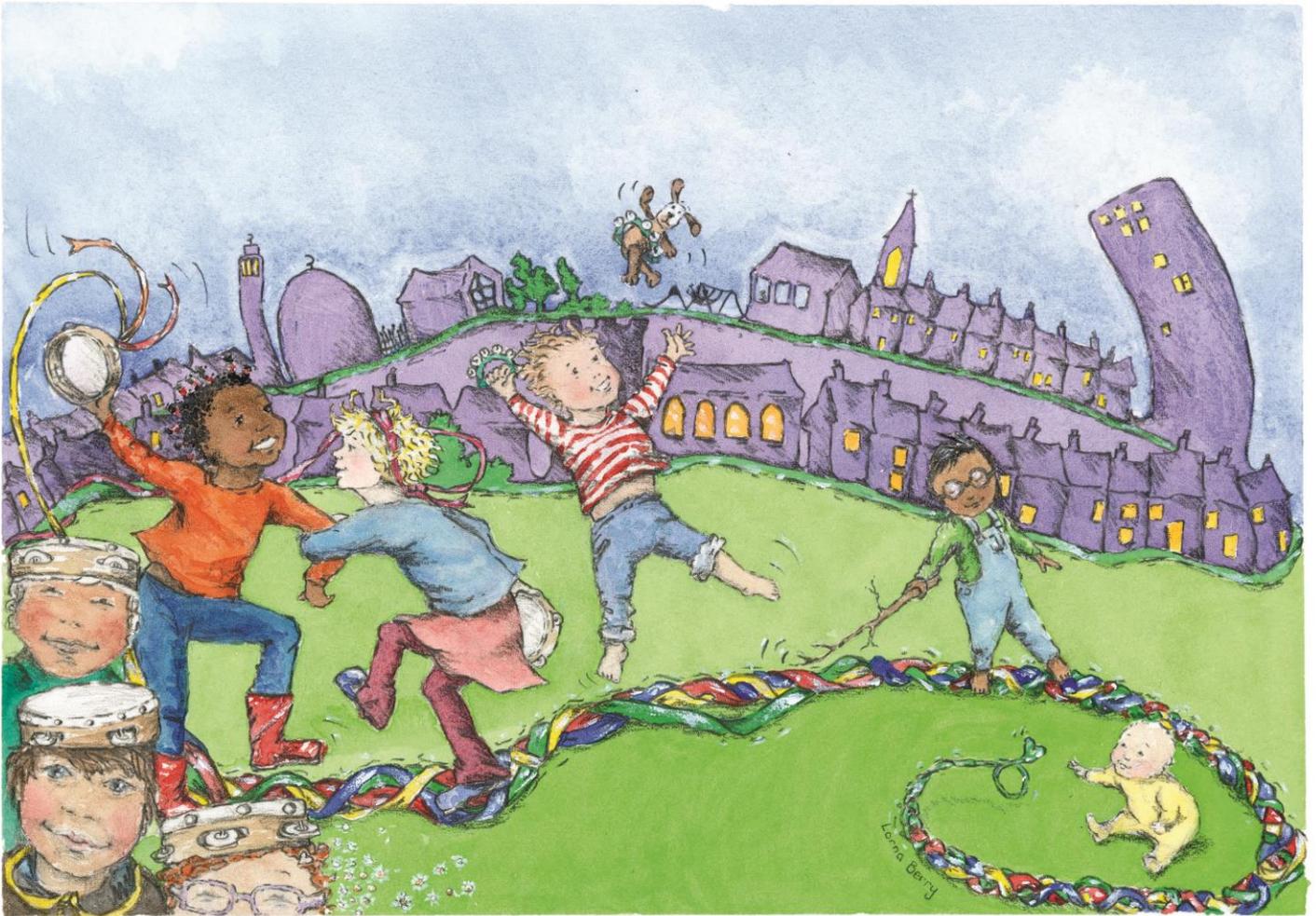


# MERYC2017



Proceedings of the 8th Conference of the European Network  
of Music Educators and Researchers of Young Children  
20th – 24th June 2017, Cambridge, UK



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European Network of Music Educators and  
Researchers of Young Children

20<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> June 2017  
Cambridge, UK

Edited by Jessica Pitt and Alison Street

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## Foreword

We proudly present the Proceedings for the eighth Conference of the European Network for Music Educators and Researchers of Young Children (EuNet MERYC). The MERYC network aims to create a platform where both researchers and practitioners can meet, share expertise & experiences, enthusiasm and insights on music education for young children. This proceedings book shows the diversity of early childhood music research and practice. A diversity with regard to heritage of methods and approaches, philosophies and theoretical ideas, but also languages and cultures that form the basis that inspires enthusiastic music educators and driven researchers to take new initiatives. As a novelty, EuNet MERYC has opened its doors to non-European educators and researchers. Alongside European early childhood music research and practices you will be able to read abstracts of colleagues from the USA and Australia in this abstract book.

The MERYC Board is delighted to have participants representing a variety of twenty-two countries, including Australia, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States of America. One of the aims of EuNet MERYC is to promote the participation of European countries from all corners of the continent, including the Baltic countries.

All submitted abstracts have been blind reviewed by two reviewers of the composed European Review Panel of experts in music education, psychology of music, and other topics offered by the conference. The Review Panel represents many European countries and expertise. We are grateful to the Panel for their time and attention in reviewing the submissions.

The eighth MERYC Conference is hosted by Homerton College, the Faculty of Education of Cambridge University. The second organising partner is MERYC-England, an independent incorporated charitable organization for Music Educators and Researchers of Young Children. MERYC-England aims to pursue inquiry into early childhood music education through research and critical reflection on practice, to promote and articulate high quality inclusive practice and musicianship in practice, to foster collaboration between educators and researchers in Music Education practice with young children that is mutually supportive between researchers and practitioners, and to conduct music education and research that recognises the cultural and social diversity of early childhood and childrearing practices in families in the UK.

The board of EuNet MERYC thanks Homerton College and MERYC England for the enormous amount of work that has been done to organize the 8<sup>th</sup> MERYC Conference and to compile the current proceedings book.

**Michel Hogenes**

The Hague, April 2017

## ***Keynote presentations***

# Space is the Place: Improvisation as site for children's creative development

**Raymond MacDonald**

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## Abstract

We are all improvisers. In recent years there has been a significant growth in psychological interest in improvisation, not just as a feature of jazz, but as an accessible, unique, spontaneous, social and creative process that can facilitate collaboration between many musical genres and across disciplines. More specifically, there is growing evidence to suggest that improvisation is a universally accessible form of collaborative creativity that can be utilised as a way of introducing children to music making. This presentation will explore the importance of improvisation for children. It aims to highlight how improvisation can be utilised as a contemporary approach to children's creative engagement that can facilitate the development of musicality and creativity across a range of contexts. This paper sets out a framework, based on psychological findings, for understanding improvisation as a universal capability and an essentially social behaviour, with important implications for children's education, contemporary artistic practice, pedagogy, therapy and the psychology of social behaviour.

A number of research projects that investigate the fundamental features of improvisation will be outlined. Musicians' critiques of their own improvisations are discussed and key links with children's music making and music education are made. The paper draws together recent advances to frame improvising as an innovative and vibrant way of engaging children musically, and from a cross disciplinary perspective.

A model is presented for the process of choice that individuals undertake when improvising, with examples provided to illustrate how the model functions. The presentation also outlines a comprehensive set of options children, or any improviser, may take over the course of a musical collaboration to allow a group to generate music. This way of conceptualising improvisation has utility across all forms of music and across different art forms. It also offers a less daunting challenge to the novice improviser, and a potential way round a 'block' for creative practitioners. The implications are discussed in relation to broader social and cultural change.

## Key words

Improvisation, collaborative creativity, musical identities



Raymond is Professor of Music Psychology and Improvisation at Edinburgh University and lectures and runs workshops internationally, written book chapters and co-edited five texts. He is also a saxophonist and composer has released over 60 CDs and toured and broadcast worldwide.

His ongoing research focuses on issues relating to improvisation, musical communication, music health and wellbeing, music education and musical identities. He studies the processes and outcomes of music participation and music listening and has a particular interest in collaborative creativity. His work is informed by a view of improvisation as a social, collaborative and uniquely creative process that provides opportunities to develop new ways of working musically.

He published over 70 peer reviewed papers and has co-edited five texts, *Musical Identities* (2002) and *Musical Communication* (2005), *Musical Imaginations* (2012) and *Music Health & Wellbeing* (2012), *The Handbook of Musical Identities* (2017) and was editor of the journal *Psychology of Music* between 2006 and 2012. He is an associate editor for *The International Journal of Music Education*, *Jazz Research Journal*, *Research Studies in Music Education*, *Musicae Scientiae* and *The Journal of Music Therapy*.

Link to Raymond's webpage at University of Edinburgh <http://www.eca.ed.ac.uk/reid-school-of-music/raymond-macdonald>

# The role of singing in young children's musical lives and development

**Graham F Welch**

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## Abstract

One of the characteristics of the human condition is our use and interpretation of sound to communicate and understand the world around us. Central to our sound making lives is the voice, both for speech and song. Singing is a universal human behaviour and is subject to developmental processes that are enriched, nurtured or discouraged and hindered by experience and context. Vocal utterances begin at birth and quickly become shaped by internal physical and emotional states, as well as by external sources, especially significant others, such as carers and siblings. Mothers, in particular, are our initial singing mentors, and the research evidence suggests that rich exposure to pre-school singing in the home and maternal community is likely to have a significant positive impact on subsequent musical and other-than-musical development (such as language, numeracy, pro-social skills and aspects of executive function). The keynote presentation will rehearse recent research evidence concerning the important place of singing in young children's musical lives and development, drawing on longitudinal as well as experimental and case study data from the UK and elsewhere. Longitudinal evidence is drawn from new analyses of cohort study data in the UK and Australia, alongside data from current research with young children in mainstream and SEND settings. Implications will be drawn for practitioners, researchers and policy makers (local, regional and national) of the key role that singing can and should have in the lives of all our children.



**Professor Graham Welch** PhD holds the UCL Institute of Education (formerly University of London) Established Chair of Music Education since 2001. He is a Past President of the International Society for Music Education (ISME) (2008-2014) and elected Chair of the internationally based Society for Education, Music and Psychology Research (SEMPRE). He holds Visiting Professorships at universities in the UK and overseas, and is a former member of the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Review College for Music (2007-2015). Publications number approximately three hundred and fifty and embrace musical development and music education, teacher education, the psychology of music, singing and voice science, and music in special education and disability. Publications are primarily in English, but also appear in Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Swedish, Greek, Japanese and Chinese. New publications in 2017 will include an updated Oxford Handbook of Music Education (five volumes) and the Oxford Handbook of Singing. He has been Chair of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation National Working Group on music education in England (<http://www.paulhamlyn.org.uk>) from 2015-2016.

# Creating possibilities for (re-)viewing 'spaces' and 'creativities' as practitioner-researchers in early childhood settings

**Pamela Burnard**

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## Abstract

Today, as the boundaries between local and global communities disappear and flow of information between them becomes instantaneous, the social, educational and community spaces in which we find ourselves, as early years artists, educators and researchers, have become increasingly culturally diverse. Early childhood music educators are finding new ways to express and embrace the cultural diversity they see inside and outside the classroom. Early childhood music education researchers are developing a specialized discourse to allow individuals within the profession, with its own code of practice, its own discourse, and its own theoretical perspectives, to communicate effectively about all matters associated with research. In practice, early years music practitioners are thinking deeply and carefully about the ways in which musics of other cultures enter into a dialogue with their own. The gap between practice and research can, however, be closed. Active engagement with children's worlds and their music making, as practitioner-researchers, has the potential to promote a more profound understanding of children's creative endeavors and for uniquely viewing (and co-creating) 'spaces' and 'creativities' in dialogic communicative practice. It is timely that we critically examine our own practice as early years professionals in order to deconstruct our taken-for-granted practices. How is the child situated? From whose/which perspective do we frame our own practice (self-reflections) and interactions (with children's communities of music practice) in early childhood settings? What is the significance of dialogic communicative practice in musical (play) spaces? What are the spaces of possibility and learning implications for (re-)positioning and (re-)viewing ourselves as practitioner-researchers?



Pamela Burnard is Professor of Arts, Creativities and Education at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge ([www.educ.cam.ac.uk/people/staff/Burnard/](http://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/people/staff/Burnard/)). She co-convenes the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Special Interest Group, *Creativities in Education* ([www.bera.ac.uk/group/creativities-in-education](http://www.bera.ac.uk/group/creativities-in-education)), and the biennial international conference, *Building Interdisciplinary Bridges Across Cultures and Creativities* ([www.BIBACC.org](http://www.BIBACC.org)). She is a practising musician, educator, workshop practitioner, academic and international authority on creativities research. She has published widely with 12 books and over 100 articles on creative teaching and learning and the expanded conceptualization and plural expression of creativities across sectors and settings, including young children's musical creativity in early childhood settings.

# ***Spoken Sessions***

## ***Part I***

### ***Practice Papers***

# **'Imagine If..' creativity through music, dance and gardening**

## **Peter Baynes**

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## **Abstract**

"Imagine If...", commissioned by the City of Edinburgh Council, aimed to produce resource materials for teachers and other nursery workers in early years settings to encourage creativity through music and movement. We worked in two contrasting nurseries in the winter of 2015-16: one private, where the children often spend a large part of their day, and one in a state school, where they attend each morning. The Scottish Curriculum for Excellence requires schools to develop creativity from the outset of every child's school career. Music is another integral requirement. "Imagine If..." set out to send a strong message that music need not be a scary proposition for non-specialist teachers. We made a working definition of creativity which bridged the gap between the government's drive for a creative workforce and the wholly child-centred approach appropriate to the nursery. The important points were:

Creativity can make new connections, find new ways of doing things, solve problems.

Creativity helps people make positive life choices, enhances wellbeing.

A fundamental condition for creativity is curiosity and a desire to express oneself. We incorporated gardening as a parallel strand. The private nursery had an allotment and the children were already familiar with what could be grown there. In the school the children planted seeds and observed them growing on the windowsill. The children learned that the seeds needed the right conditions to grow. Likewise, we were careful to provide good conditions during the music sessions. There was practically no such thing as a mistake from their perspective, simply trying things out and expressing their feelings in a supportive environment.

We explored established teaching techniques, such as learning by rote, finding ways to maximise their creative potential. We used aspects of musical structure to elicit responses and to indicate appropriate times for those responses. The resulting resources included a short film, a recording of the repertoire we developed and CPD sessions.

## **Keywords**

Creativity, nurture, repertoire

## **Setting the scene**

Call and response is a familiar and much used musical device. It is also a very common device to sing a welcoming song at the beginning of an early years session.

Solo: *Hello.*  
Chorus: *Hello.*  
Solo: *Hello, hello.*  
Chorus: *Hello, hello.*  
Solo: *Nice to see you here.*  
Chorus: *Nice to see you here.*  
Solo: *Today is Thursday.*  
Chorus: *Today is Thursday.*  
Solo: *The weather is fine.*  
Chorus: *The weather is fine.*  
Solo: *I wish you a happy morning.*  
Chorus: *I wish you a happy morning.* (Baynes, 2015)

This song is an example of the simplest kind of call and response: the play leader sings a line and the chorus of children sing it back. Its main feature is that the soloist has to change the words according to the day of the week and the weather. A confident leader may go further and introduce other topical subjects, even new phrases of melody. The song is never the same twice. Children enjoy this and understand immediately that in this session, making things up is allowed. We are bringing creativity into the environment.

### **Project background and aims**

'Imagine If..' was a project that was carried out in two contrasting nurseries in Edinburgh in December 2015 and January 2016. It was commissioned by the City of Edinburgh Council and its remit was to explore the nurturing of creativity through music and to find ways of enabling and encouraging teachers to carry out this kind of work. One of the nurseries was part of a state primary school, which the children attended either in the mornings or in the afternoons. The other was a private nursery where some of the children spent most of their day, eating there, sleeping there and almost making it a second home. In addition to the music we added two further elements. Firstly movement, or dance, which is virtually inseparable from music, particularly with young children. Secondly, we added gardening activities.

### **Establishing fertile conditions**

Gardening may seem a random insertion, but there are strong parallels between gardening and music education that we wanted to draw attention to. Gardeners provide the best possible conditions for their crops and those crops then grow at their own pace. Gardeners cannot get results by shouting at flowers or pulling at carrots to make them grow quicker. You may be able to force a crop, but will it be as vigorous or taste as good when it gets to the plate? Children also need nurture and often need time to come round to music making. If that impulse does not come from within, like a germinating seed, it may never be genuine.

Unfortunately, the notion that musicality can be instilled from outside is commonplace in many classrooms. Too often one can see teachers or assistants, observing that a child is not joining in with clapping and will for example, take hold of the child by the arms to make them clap. This is disempowering and can be highly damaging. In our project the children were allowed to make things up; it was also equally as acceptable if they chose not to do so. An added benefit of including gardening was that it provided activities we could sing about. It also offered an oblique perspective on a different kind of creativity.

## **Defining creativity**

What is creativity? Definitions will vary according to context. An engineer, a gardener and a poet will all have different understandings of the word. For our purposes we needed a sound working definition to help determine our goals. We identified the following significant aspects:

- Curiosity: Creativity stems from a curiosity about the surrounding world and who we are.
- Resourcefulness: Creativity seeks out and solves problems. It enables critical analysis and flexibility of thought. It can encompass, learn from and overcome mistakes.
- Innovation: Creativity also does things. It finds new ways of doing things and it discovers new things to do.

The Scottish government introduced its "Curriculum for Excellence" in 2010. This initiative was hailed as aspirational when it was launched, but teachers' organisations indicated that teachers would need extra professional development in order to achieve it. The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) sets out a wide range of experiences and outcomes along with a timetable for their achievement. Music and creativity are both on the list for the early stage.

Edinburgh City Council is the body responsible for delivering education in its area and is faced with an acute shortage of resources. Funding the number of specialists it used to is no longer possible and it now requires the teachers already on its payroll to achieve more. Given that we live in a culture which broadly assumes that both music and creativity are rare gifts that are bestowed on the few, it is unsurprising that many teachers feel daunted by the prospect of teaching them. Part of our task therefore is to assert and demonstrate that you do not necessarily need special skills to teach music and that we all have the potential to be creative. This came to the fore and was one of the central tenets of the continued professional development sessions we delivered during 2016.

## ***Nurturing the child or producing a workforce?***

Creativity and music clearly support the Curriculum for Excellence aim of developing confident individuals, but the government undoubtedly also has its eye on producing what it calls 'effective contributors'.

Creativity is high on the list of attributes needed in the economy of the future.

In 2016 the World Economic Forum produced the following tables of the top ten skills required in the work force. The first table is for 2015:

1. Complex Problem Solving
2. Coordinating with Others
3. People Management
4. Critical Thinking
5. Negotiation
6. Quality Control
7. Service Orientation
8. Judgement and Decision Making
9. Active Listening
10. Creativity

Creativity comes last in this list. But in the projection for 2020 it rises to third place:

1. Complex Problem Solving
2. Critical Thinking
3. Creativity
4. People Management
5. Coordinating with Others
6. Emotional Intelligence
7. Judgement and Decision Making
8. Service Orientation
9. Negotiation
10. Cognitive Flexibility (2)

The World Economic Forum does not define creativity here but it is worthy to note that, according to our working definition, creativity also encompasses items one, two and ten in the list for 2020, making it the top skill.

## ***Creating a desire to join in***

While our welcoming call and response song requires a degree of creativity from the play leader, the role of the children is subordinate and repetitive. With the song 'Roll a Ball' and its accompanying activity we sought an individual response from each child. The game is played seated on the floor in a circle and each child takes a turn.

*Roll a ball,  
Roll a ball,  
Roll a ball to Ibrahim.  
Ibrahim has got the ball,  
Roll it back to me.* (Street & Bance, 2006)

The ball is a strong and dynamic focal point and centres the attention of the whole group on the child. It is up to each child in that moment to choose what happens next. Creativity relies on having something to say or do, but it is also important that a child feels there is an audience out there to which it matters. The group is here making a request and awaiting a response from the child, who is usually happy to make that response and roll the ball back so that the song can continue. This game elicits individual participation and strengthens the message that not only are the sessions spaces where making things up is OK, but also that the children have important contributions to make and that these are appreciated and respected. It is essential that if a child is asked to be creative, the creative space should also be supportive and safe.

### **Musical structures that allow space**

Structure is important in planning the sessions to make them creative, supportive and safe. Musical structure itself is also a useful tool in fostering creativity. In the case of the last song, the structure gives a clear indication of what to do and when to do it. Every child understood that they should roll the ball back to the play leader and the song indicates exactly when to do so.

Another example of this is the traditional song 'Oats and Beans and Barley Grow'. We adapted the tune slightly, making extra beats for stamping of feet, clapping and turning around. Although we made no attempt to teach anything about musical structure, the children recognised it instinctively and needed no prompting; it was enough to present that particular musical structure to them and demonstrate the actions a single time.

With the song 'Jean Petit qui Danse' the structure and words clearly invite dancing, featuring different parts of the body: the fingers, the legs or the head. The structure however leaves the children free to do the dance in the way they wish, leading to plenty of creative and expressive dance moves.

### **Taking a solo**

Jazz musicians are highly aware of structure and draw upon it when improvising. The structure of the piece as a whole also gives a strong frame to an improvised solo, helping to reveal its sense. We used structure in this way to incorporate the playing of an instrument. In the song 'Suzie Has the Drum' the group stands in a circle with a floor tom in the middle. Each child takes a drum solo, handing the sticks to the next child in turn.

*Suzie has the drum.  
It's your turn to play for us today,  
What do you want to say?  
What are you going to play?*

*[Drum solo for 12 bars, counted by the rest of the group.]*  
*Thank you, Suzie.*  
*Suzie can play the drum. (P. Baynes)*

In the short timescale of our sessions in the nurseries we only had time to introduce this song once to each group. Despite the novelty of the song and the excitement of playing a large drum, most children understood what to do, enjoyed the game and even managed to take turns. Even though their technique was very basic we witnessed some heartfelt performances.

### ***Fundamental music skills***

Although some of the children's drumming demonstrated that technique is far from the only ingredient of musicality, we spent time on the beginnings of the long process of developing musical technique, or skills, as these indisputably help musical expression.

We concentrated on the fundamentals of

- Rhythm, including the concept of fast and slow.
- Melody, including the concept of high and low pitch.
- Listening.
- Timbre, both as a listening activity and when singing and playing.
- Dynamics.

### ***Peer learning***

Some of this work involves concepts which are difficult to grasp and all of the above facets of music present challenges. We noticed that during these activities, though it was important to present the material clearly and simply, most of the teaching was done by the children themselves. One or two children would leap to an understanding before the others and would perform the task, upon which the rest of the group would begin to follow their example. Peer learning is a powerful factor and a bonus which comes from making music as a social activity. It is a free gift to anyone officially responsible for the teaching and we gave it maximum space.

### ***The relevance of old fashioned methods and their subversion***

Many teachers feel challenged by the prospect of teaching music or having to sing, we therefore examined ways of using familiar teaching techniques to enhance their creative potential. We looked particularly at the use of repetition and learning by rote. The latter is sometimes considered to be the antithesis of creativity, dulling the senses and stifling curiosity, yet many musicians around the globe spend much of their working lives learning by rote and through repetition. The very word means rehearsal in several languages.

These learning techniques have their place and we did not shy away from using them. In order to try and make them more interactive and

to break the sense of passivity and subordination we would sometimes give the lead to a child to see what they would do. The song 'Copy Me' provides a simple example:

*Copy me, copy me,  
You can do it too.  
Copy me, copy me,  
Then I'll copy you.*

And handing over to a child:

*Copy Liam, copy Liam,  
We can do it too.  
Copy Liam, copy Liam,  
Then we'll copy you. [Moving to another child]  
(Traditional)*

Children spend much of their learning career subject to others' agendas. Having the power to decide what everyone else will do for a change can be both motivating and stimulating to creativity.

### **Summing up**

Music education is a lifelong process and 'Imagine If..' delivered only a few practical sessions. It is therefore premature to draw much in the way of conclusions, but much experiential learning took place and it is possible to make some meaningful points in summing up.

- We placed great importance on establishing favourable conditions; an environment where creativity is encouraged, supported and safe.
- We developed activities for the children as a group and individually, to help them feel that their contribution was valued.
- We supported the children whether they chose to express themselves or whether they chose not to.
- We used musical structure to indicate what to do and when to do it and to provide a context for play, dance, musical improvisation and learning.
- We explored playful ways of transmitting basic musical skills.
- We made music in a social context.
- We harnessed the power of peer learning, learning by rote and learning by repetition, allowing the children to take control for themselves where possible.

The local council received a short documentary film, made by Lorna Simpson, a recording of the songs we used and a booklet outlining the many educational benefits of the activities, with musical notation and detailed instructions on how to carry out the games. These were given to all schools in the city with early years departments. We also delivered some lively and rewarding CPD sessions to teachers and other early years professionals across Edinburgh.

The teachers in the state school nursery engaged enthusiastically with the project from the beginning and contributed their own ideas. They

adapted the 'Roll a Ball' game to become 'Slide the Ice', using a big block of ice which formed outside one night. They continued to use the material outside the sessions and after the project had finished. In the private nursery, the focus of the staff is caring rather than educative. They have good facilities and provide many beneficial activities but they are not required to deliver educational goals. Any lasting impact there is, is consequently, uncertain.

The children in both nurseries were enthusiastic and engaged well with the games. They avidly and quickly took the new material and made it their own.

But all children are different. Some quickly came to the forefront and became leaders, some remained quieter, some reacted with enthusiasm but could also be disruptive. But no child in either nursery refused to engage at all. Those individuals who were reticent still joined in with the group games and everyone took a turn at playing the drum. It is not possible to know what is going on when a child is quiet; parents often report that a child who has been quiet at the nursery has been very vocal at home, singing all the songs they learned earlier. There can be many reasons for not joining in, including linguistic difficulty and different cultural background.

Nurseries are fertile places for creativity because there are children in them. Whether anything creative actually comes about depends on the adults in charge. As in a garden, if favourable conditions exist, positive things will follow. Every living thing wants to move, to grow, to express itself. In the nursery and elsewhere, music, dance and play are strong agents for making that happen.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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The staff and children at the nurseries who hosted 'Imagine If...'

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# Tri-borough Music Hub, Tri-Music Together

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## Abstract

Tri-Music Together is a two year workforce development project taking place across three local authorities in London, England. The project was initiated by the Tri-borough Music Hub (TBMH), London. Music Hubs in England are currently not granted government funding to support EY music activity. The project, funded by the Charity Youth Music, is therefore exploring how Music Hubs can have a strategic role in supporting music in the EY.

The TBMH created a consortium of partners with an interest in developing music provision for children aged birth to five. There are fourteen members of the consortium, the members include state funded EY services, not for profit arts organisations, charities and performance venues. All types of EY settings are involved. The participants involved are musicians who work for the members of the consortium and practitioners from the EY sector.

The aim of the project is to develop the skills and understanding of all those who work with children aged birth to five from settings within the specified geographical area. The focus of the CPD for the EY practitioners is on developing a general understanding of music and music in the early years. The focus of the CPD for the members of the consortium and the musicians who work for them is on developing an understanding of child development and the current EY framework (EYFS). The initial stage of the project involves a mapping exercise to identify the specific CPD needs of the EY practitioners and musicians involved.

The project will encompass a range of sessions for musicians and EY practitioners that involve collaborative learning and sharing, individual work and group work. Sessions will take place with children in settings including reflection time for the musicians and EY practitioners to allow them to discuss and learn from one another.

The project is striving to improve the quality of music practice and increase skills, knowledge and understanding of music in the EY. A goal of the consortium is for the strategies used within the project to be shared with other Music Hubs across the country to raise the profile and understanding of EY music to a higher level.

## Keywords

Music and education, Teacher training

## Theoretical background and content

Tri-Music Together is a two-year Early Years (EY) music project taking place within three boroughs in West London, England; The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and the City of Westminster. In 2012, the three London boroughs combined to create the Tri-borough to offer specific areas of service delivery. The aim of Tri-Music Together is to improve the music provision for children from birth to 5 years old across EY settings in the Tri-borough.

In England there is a National Plan for Music Education (NPME) which was created by the Department for Education in 2011 (Department for Education, 2011). This plan was created as a result of a review of music

education in England that was carried out during 2010. The NPME sets out a central vision for schools, arts and education organisations to drive excellence in music education.

A central aspect to the NPME was the creation of new Music Education Hubs (MEH's) to take forward the work of local authority music services from September 2012. MEH's are groups of organisations such as local authorities, schools, other hubs, art organisations, community or voluntary organisations, working together to create joined-up music education provision and fulfil the objectives of the hub as set out in the NPME. MEH's are coordinated by the hub lead organisation, which takes on responsibility for the funding and governance of the hub. The total amount of hub funding from the Department for Education in 2016/17 is £75 million. Although the NPME acknowledges that 'music teaching starts in the Early Years' (Department for Education, 2011, p.9) the hub funding from the Department for Education is for children within the National Curriculum, i.e. children aged five and above. National policy does not include music making in the EY.

The Tri-borough Music Hub (TBMH) is the lead organisation that oversees the delivery of music education in the Tri-borough. As a passionate advocate of music in the EY, the Tri-borough Music Hub leader was keen to explore how the TBMH could provide music education in the EY across the Tri-borough. The Hub leader invited partners of the TBMH to meet and discuss music in the EY, and to consider how the MEH could provide EY music education for children from birth to age five due to the lack of central funding. The initial meeting was an agenda-less meeting to gauge interest amongst the partners. Throughout 2015, further meetings pursued and the Tri-borough Early Years Music Consortium (TBEYMC) was created. The TBEYMC had a vision to develop EY music provision across the Tri-borough.

### **Characteristics of participants**

The partners within the TBEYMC provide music making in the EY in a range of ways with some providing more than others. The partners were keen to not only support EY practitioners across the area, they were also keen to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding of the music practitioners who work with them to enable their organisations to offer effective EY music making.

The TBEYMC consists of 14 partner organisations, they are:

- The Royal Albert Hall, an internationally renowned concert hall
- Wigmore Hall, a leading international recital venue
- The Royal College of Music, a music conservatoire
- Tri-borough Music Hub, the lead organisation that oversees the delivery of music education across the Tri-borough
- The Voices Foundation, a national music education charity

- Chickenshed Kensington & Chelsea, an inclusive theatre company
- Creative Futures, an arts organisation that delivers programmes to improve outcomes for children and young people
- Inspire-Works, an organisation that delivers world-music and dance workshops
- Musichouse for Children, a music school that provides instrumental and vocal lessons
- Sound Connections, an organisation that develops, supports individuals and organisations to deliver high quality music-making with children and young people
- The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Children's Centres
- The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham Children's Centres. (Children centres are places, where local families with young children can go and enjoy facilities and receive support that they need).
- Westminster City Council Children's Centres
- Tri-borough School Standards, Children's Services, EY Lead Adviser

A strength of the TBEYMC, led by the TBMH, is that 14 organisations are working collectively as one large body of EY focused partners. It is the shared vision of the consortium that has led to the creation of the Tri-Music Together project. The consortium, applied to the national charity Youth Music for £200,000 of funding to enable their vision to be a reality. In the summer of 2016 the TBEYMC were granted £100,000 to deliver the two year EY music project and subsequently I was appointed Strategic Lead.

The requirements of the Youth Music grant stipulate that the project must primarily focus within the most deprived wards across the Tri-borough. Twelve wards within the Tri-borough were identified as the most deprived in the area. They were identified using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). This index is calculated by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and measures in a local area the proportion of children under the age of 16 that live in low income households. The local areas for which the index is calculated are described as super output areas.

### **Aims of the project**

The focus of the Tri-Music Together project is on workforce development. The project aims to develop a sustainable network of outstanding EY music practice between EY settings and the TBEYMC to support children's creative and musical entitlement through workforce development, targeted activity, and evaluation. The ethos of the project is to engender a learning community between all of the practitioners involved, this includes partners of the TBEYMC, EY practitioners in settings, and music practitioners working with the partner organisations. The goal is for everyone involved to learn from

each other at each step of the way in order to develop effective practice with children from birth to five years old. Reflective practice is at the core of the project with the aim that the project will support practitioners to learn collaboratively.

The project is for:

- Those working in maintained schools and nurseries;
- Those working in children's centres;
- Those working in private, voluntary and independent settings;
- The music practitioners that work with the TBEYMC partners organisations.

The project is primarily focusing on the 12 most deprived wards that have been identified but it is also offering opportunities for EY practitioners across all areas of the Tri-borough.

### **Method & pedagogical approach**

The initial stages of the project involved a mapping exercise to obtain a clear picture of:

- The current music provision in EY settings;
- The EY practitioners knowledge and understanding of music and EY music making;
- The TBEYMC music practitioner's knowledge and understanding of child development and EY music making.

This information was gathered via an electronic questionnaire that EY practitioners and music practitioners were invited to complete. Following this initial stage, the project created a range of training sessions to respond to the needs identified from the mapping exercise. Throughout the two years the project will deliver a whole host of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) sessions for EY practitioners, teachers & music practitioners. The CPD sessions include:

- Bespoke modelling sessions taking place in settings within the 12 identified wards. These sessions involve music practitioners working with children and EY practitioners, followed by reflection time between the music practitioners and EY practitioners.
- Centralised off site sessions:
  - Specific training for EY practitioners to develop knowledge and understanding of music and EY music making
  - Specific training for TBEYMC music practitioners to develop knowledge and understanding of child development and EY music making
  - Sessions for TBEYMC music practitioners and EY practitioners coming together to discuss, share and develop practice.

A unique and innovative aspect of the project is that it is providing bespoke CPD sessions to address the specific needs of the EY practitioners and the needs of the music practitioners. Opportunities to access training such as this are rare. Musicians who are interested in working in EY have little opportunity to access courses to enable them to understand children and child development. There is currently an MA in EY Education available at the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC), Birmingham, England, which offers a music module. Other than this there are short courses available which tend to focus on a particular aspect of musical approaches such as Kodály and Dalcroze.

The MA was the only available qualification for music practitioners wishing to work in EY. This year, 2017 marks a change in this as a newly developed course has been initiated by MERYC-England; the Certificate for Music Educators (CME): Early Childhood (Level 4). This new course offers a distance-learning, flexible, part-time qualification in early childhood music. The CME is a recognised National Qualification validated by Trinity College London and is being delivered in partnership with CREC, Birmingham, England. This course has been designed to develop high quality teachers to work in early childhood music and will begin in the autumn term of 2017.

Similarly, EY practitioners and teachers do not receive training on children's musical development within their child development tuition. Music in the EY CPD opportunities are rare, courses can be accessed via companies that provide this, or occasionally local authorities will commission an EY specialist to deliver a one off training session for EY practitioners. Throughout the two year project the CPD sessions that the project is offering consist of:

- Two hour workshops
- One-day courses
- Three-day courses
- One-day insetting modelling & training sessions
- Sharing & networking sessions
- Tri-Music Together Facebook group to offer support and enable discussion.

The project is also developing free online resources, including guidance for EY practitioners and music practitioners to develop and support music in EY settings.

### **Future Aspirations**

Partners of the TBEYMC along with other music organisations and people across the country are lobbying for EY to be included in the NPME. Tri-music Together is being looked at by Youth Music as a beacon project for MEH's. It is our vision that when EY is included in the NPME, the strategies that we have explored throughout the Tri-Music

Together project can be shared and implemented by the other 120 MEH's across England.

We plan to disseminate the strategies we have put in place and outcomes of the project by:

- Writing articles for key publications in England, such as Nursery World magazine, Teach EY magazine, Times Education Supplement;
- Sharing our learning at national conferences such as Music Mark for MEH's, and the British Early Childhood Education Research Association (BECERA) Conference;
- Working in partnership with the British Association of Early Childhood Education to produce free guidance on understanding children's musical development and how to develop music provision in EY settings.

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## **'together in this space'**

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## **Abstract**

Touching on both educational and therapeutic aspects, this presentation will describe a music project in an urban Infant school in south-east, UK, with a 'nurture' group (small group of twelve children with a wide variety of special needs). Sessions take place within an evocative and intimate holding space within the room, which is created by a painted 'pop up' panoramic scene.

The project 'Pantomimus' was led in close collaboration over ten weeks between the teacher and the music specialist (from Early Years department, Berkshire Music Hub/ Music Services). It included both a weekly group session in a bigger space, adult led and supported by staff, in parallel with a time of child led, spontaneous music making within the classroom. Both sessions were using the described pop up.

Aims were

- to increase the quality of engagement and focus through musical interactions
- to give the children an outlet to experience music making through movement and exploring instruments
- to observe the potential musical associations and links between the music making in the bigger group and the free spontaneous music making in the classroom, both within the pop up panoramic scenes.
- to model effective musical communication and interaction to the staff

Through film clips and descriptions two collaborating professionals will share outcomes and reflections, focusing on two children and their significant responses.

The approach of the music specialist is informed by both Dalcroze Eurhythmics (music through movement) and Music therapy.

The teacher has 30 years' experience in Early Years and has a keen interest in music and singing as a learning tool.

The school is based in a diverse and deprived area of the city. The need for additional support has been identified, although none of the children have yet received an official diagnosis of any kind. Children who are part of this challenging group may have global and language delay, behavioural and emotional problems and some may be on the autistic spectrum or with attachment disorders. The aim of the nurture group is to build children's resilience and confidence to enable them to join the mainstream classes in the future. Staff support parents and encourage close collaboration.

## **Keywords**

Music, movement, education, therapy, *panoramic scene*

# **Ensuring music does not go “in one eye and out the other”: Effective practice in musical play with very young deaf children and their families**

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## **Abstract**

The idiom “It went in one ear and out the other” expresses that we did not pay full attention to, or did not understand what we were listening to. In British Sign Language a similar meaning is conveyed by signing “in one eye and out the other”. Recognising that conventional approaches to music education amongst very young deaf children and their families put music making at risk of “going in one eye and out the other”, this practice paper reflects on musical repertoire and techniques which were co-developed in a two-year action research project working alongside very young children in the local Deaf community. It further reflects on approaches that did not work, questions power relationships between use of conventional music pedagogies amongst groups with sensory impairments and challenges assumptions about music education.

Music interventions in the United Kingdom are, in general, positively regarded (Hallam 2015) but some of the local Deaf Community initially rejected the intervention of “well-meaning”, hearing music leaders. Certain key elements emerged in our practice: careful framing of the music leaders’ intentions before the project as well as before and during music sessions, carefully chosen musical instruments, the use of non-audio support materials to enrich the context of active music making, a commitment to signing, plus evidence of being well-informed rather than well-meaning. An emphasis on facilitating child-led musical play was welcomed by children and carers. Ultimately, deaf and hearing carers demonstrated enjoyment of music making by actively supporting their deaf child’s musical play and “by proxy” through their deaf child’s music-making.

## **Keywords**

Musical play, early years, early childhood music, deaf, hearing, signing

## **Introduction**

This practice paper describes some of the successful and unsuccessful approaches applied in a two-year long action research project called “Playing Around Sound”. Funded by Youth Music through The Music Works and located in five locations in Gloucestershire, England, two music leaders engaged young deaf children in playful musical activities. One music leader facilitated the majority of the music-making and one music leader (the author) observed and documented the musical play. Over the course of the project between 2014 and 2016, 73 music sessions were concurrently or consecutively held in five locations in order to reach a total of 37 deaf children (aged 0-8years) and 12 hearing siblings. Activities were already running at four of these locations: A Deaf Children’s Club facilitated by volunteers, where we included musical play as one of the play offers along with craft-making

and playing with toys; a session run by the Advisory Teachers in a school for children with Special Educational Needs; a respite group for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and a group set up by a parent in partnership with the local Deaf Association for children with communication difficulties. In addition we initiated a regular musical play session at the Deaf Association's premises.

We were determined to listen to the "voice" of the young deaf children that we worked with. The current early childhood theoretical practice that best typified our approach would be that of Reggio Emilia (Malaguzzi 1998) on account of our reliance on observation. Additional tools of analysis used to determine engagement with active music-making included quantifying the songs acquired by the groups; assessing duration of eye contact; recording types of British Sign Language or Makaton signs used, and talking to parents, carers and professionals involved in the care and education of young deaf children.

We started our musical play sessions with a particular sort of open-mindedness, perhaps a Keatsian "negative capability" (Bate 2012), where we had to acknowledge that we were "in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts". Despite this knowing open-mindedness, we quickly found that we had made the significant assumption that music was welcome.

### **Xenia - Communities meeting**

Music making with very young children is generally accepted to be beneficial and important (Hallam, 2015; Trehub, 2006) and use of music in affect regulation in early childhood is acknowledged (Goethem, & Sloboda, 2011; Ilari, 2004). Listening to music has cognitive benefits (Catterall & Rauscher, 2008) and transfer effects are recognised (Kirschner & Tomasello, 2010) and Forrester (2010, cited in Pitt 2014), although have been challenged (Sala & Gobet, 2017). Music plays a significant role in music therapy (Nordoff & Robbins, 2011) and, in order to develop one's approach as a music practitioner, research into deaf children's auditory capacity (Nakata, Trehub, Mitani & Kanda, 2006; van Besouw, Grasmeyer, Hamilton & Bauman, 2011), and their singing (Yennari, 2009) is readily accessible. We assumed that, when one offers an informed music intervention to a community, the intervention will be welcomed by all.

A hint towards the cultural sensitivities that need to be acknowledged when working with very young deaf children is the use of lower case "d" in the word "deaf" to indicate the general public's understanding of hearing loss but upper case "D" in "Deaf" to denote "a cultural group of people united by distinct traditions and strengths arising from the use of sign language as a communication form" (Smith, Bale &

White, 2005). Just as Young and Street (2009) and Gluschankof (2005) examined the effect of cultural differences on musical behaviours, one must acknowledge the possibility of a cultural divide between the Deaf and hearing community and resulting musical differences. The CEO of the Deaf Association that we were to work with outlined her concerns:

*".. our profoundly deaf volunteer leader ...has very bad memories of having music forced on her as a deaf child by well-meaning hearing adults: she has grown up to feel very protective of deaf children now under her wing so that they do not have the same experience. Understandably the hearing volunteers of the group, including one who has become deaf in middle age, feel quite differently and are extremely enthusiastic about welcoming you. But as CEO of this Deaf charity, it is my responsibility – and I care in any case – to ensure L's views are respected at least as much as the other volunteer leaders."*

My fellow music leader and I were hearing and well-meaning. We spent time reflecting further on the source of our authority, questioning what made us experts in music with deaf children. The music leader who was to facilitate the musical play had a level 3 qualification in British Sign Language and the music leader who was to do the observation had a Masters in Early Years Music with a special interest in child initiated musical play. We had an emerging awareness of Deaf culture through events at the local Deaf Association, films, YouTube videos by young deaf people and books written about the experience of acquiring a cochlear implant. We had members of our family who were deafened later in life and used hearing aids. Music for deaf children with cochlear implants is quite well documented (Yucel, Sennaroglu & Belgin, 2009; NCDS 2014) and research into music with young deaf people found that music can be deeply fulfilling as in Fulford, Ginsborg & Goldbart (2011) and Chen-Haftek & Schraer-Joiner (2010).

In spite of our theoretical expertise, we were members of the hearing community, so we explained our approach to L, the concerned Deaf volunteer, in writing but also expressed our willingness to enter into a dialogue about our approach. We also told her and the other volunteers that a typical two-hour morning might include:

- Hello song, including the children's names
- Musical Freeplay - a range of musical instruments, mostly large and pentatonic, to be played and felt and sat on. We will encourage vocalisations in the context of play and use Sign-Supported English and movement with sounds
- Group song session, only for those that wish to join in, using a singing repertoire which focusses on limited-pitch songs

L tentatively welcomed us in on our first morning and, before children arrived, we talked about L's experiences through an interpreter and showed her what we would do. L tried the large, sit-on log drum:

*Diary entry 4/10/14. Wow. L tried the (sit-on, double-ended log) drum. Look of utter surprise on her face. "It tickles my nose! Oh!" She taps softly, smiling.*

Our gradual acceptance by L and the Deaf community for this research project was thus rooted in *xenia* – a "guest friendship" - where our Deaf hosts showed generosity and hospitality and we reciprocated by learning about the community and sharing our wonderful musical instruments.

### **Being wrong and making it right**

In the early stages of developing the music programme, we planned to target young recipients of cochlear implants (CIs). The logic of this approach was that the parents or carers had, in essence, made a decision that their deaf child would be part of the hearing world. The age range that we worked with was birth to eight years and many of these deaf children wore hearing aids because implantation was not an option, or the child was not a suitable candidate. Therefore we immediately took the decision to accommodate all deaf children, not just those with CIs. In our music groups deaf children mingled with their hearing siblings; some children wore no hearing aids or wore one; some children were hearing children of deaf adults and all were experiencing a non-mainstream early childhood.

As groups progressed I kept a diary of each session. Duties were generally apportioned so that the music leader with level 3 British Sign Language played musically with the children whilst I observed. I gained a "Deaf Name" through my observations which was a mime of looking serious and writing in a notebook. I wrote about what I saw and heard and monitored which musical instruments attracted the children. After each session I discussed with the main music leader what we felt had happened and what we should do next. Occasionally I counted what behaviours I observed within a self-defined boundary or observed and wrote simultaneous notes.

### **"Counting" eye contact.**

Eye contact and gaze studies have been useful in evaluating human interactions (Senju Johnson, 2008; Rutter & Durkin, 1987). I wondered if a young deaf girl's eye contact during musical play would indicate how she was gathering information about the play.

Over 60-second intervals I observed and recorded every occasion C, (girl, bilateral cochlear implants, age 5) glanced at CJ (music leader)

who was sitting opposite her in an indoor wooden boat structure. The recording started 1032am (Table 1).

Record of where C was looking	
0 – 1 minute	7 glances by C to CJ as CJ sings an improvised song about being in a boat. CJ uses C's name in the lyrics. Boy arrives and sits in boat next to C.
1-2 minutes	4 glances to CJ then 1 to distance (opposite, away from CJ) then 1 sustained look to CJ (coincided with CJ touching C's arm and talking animatedly to C and boy). C lipreading? Then C turns away from CJ and boy. Boy leaves.
2-3 minutes	CJ and C only. CJ asks if C wants to do something else – no – stay here. During this 1:1 session over 60 seconds was : 4 glances to CJ then 3 second duration look to CJ then 2 one-second looks then 3 glances
3-4 minutes	6 glances whilst rocking to and fro. 1 glance with vocalisation by C. 1 glance. Vocalisation by C (indistinct) as joined by J (girl, familiar to C). 3 glances to CJ during Row Row song.

Table 1. Recording of where C looked during musical play

Unfortunately C's eye contact, diverted by the busy room or the momentary absence of her carer, did not reveal useful insights.

### **Counting the signs (Makaton or British Sign Language) used in musical play**

I wanted to find out if there was a core repertoire of a few signs that would be useful to know when engaging a young deaf child in musical play. Over three separate sessions with different children on different days I counted the gestured signs used by the qualified BSL music leader when playing with a child with toys (bus, car, train, box), and separately when playing with a child with a musical instrument. I chose one-minute duration intervals when the child and the music leader were fully engaged with each other. (Table. 2)

Sign used	play	Fell over	again	horse	tricky	surprise	nice	thanks	happy	funny	change	carefully	colours	quick	hiding	strong	broken	box	fantastic
Toy Play	1	1	1	1									1			1	1	1	
Music Play			1	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	1				1

Table 2. Number of signs used in three separate musical play interactions

Although this quantitative analysis was from an extremely small sample and often play with toys was occasionally indistinguishable from musical play, I became aware that signs during toy play tended to recount what had just happened. For example, the words “fell over” were signed in block play after the blocks tumbled. Most remarkable was the use of signed adjectives to describe the feeling being felt “in the moment” during musical play (tricky, nice) or a signed adverb to describe the quality of the movement that was occurring (carefully). Reflection on these findings led to informal discussions with deaf parents (via an interpreter), the practitioners at the Children’s Deaf Club and Early Years Practitioners locally around the role of sign language in musical play to help a verbal or preverbal children appropriate signs which they could then use day-to-day to communicate how they were feeling.

### Which musical instruments to use?

Oliver (2014) at the Music Focus Group, Southampton University had researched music for adult cochlear implantees and an outcome of the research was to create music that suffered the least amount of degradation by the implant’s electronics. Such music used instruments which produced sounds with few harmonics and a limited pitch range. Trehub (2003) also pointed out the “challenge” of music for implanted children who have been deaf from birth because of the cochlear implant’s (and hearing aid’s) poor pitch resolution. For *Playing Around Sound*, we analysed the harmonics of many of the musical instruments in our oeuvre using the frequency analyser within Adobe Audition, identifying those with a simple harmonic structure. Resonant instruments like a bell had complex harmonics which “clashed” when two notes were sounding together.

In theory, bell-like sounds should sound appalling to a cochlear implantee. In practice the two most popular musical instruments amongst young cochlear implantees and hearing aid wearers, apart from the sit-on log drum (see Figure 1), were the metal Hapi Drum and a metallophone called The Wing. We formed our own theory that the musical instruments that “moved a lot of air” which could be felt

through the body, were the most engaging musical instruments for very young deaf children. We also learned that the best judge of what sounded good was the child and we made sure that we offered a wide range of musical instruments for the children to try.

## Setting the Scene

A musical environment for a child must be physically safe, which was one reason why we joined in with existing, proven groups. We also tried to offer quiet areas for experimentation like a child-sized, tipi-style tent, a soft mat to sit on to play with instruments, a space to move about as a group, and we gained control of lighting where we could.

Figure 1. Photographs from Playing Around Sound



The scene is set. Background: A gathering drum and ocean drum. Foreground: giant scrunchie, finger puppets and a small bag containing Boading balls



The sit-on log drum



Pinging lycra - a favourite activity



Ceilidh-Jo in front of the cyclorama



Lewis on the Imbarimba



Ceilidh-Jo signs "old" in "Old Mac Donald".

We commissioned a local artist to paint a seven metre-long cyclorama on light canvas depicting sea, mountain, forest and a castle. This was held up by coppiced hazel sticks secured in log bases. The cyclorama was inspired by Margareta Burrell's "Pantomimus" (2016) portable background to her music and movement sessions. We found that our cyclorama focused children's attention in a small group and its images provided ideas for songs and stories. It also perfectly framed public, family-friendly sessions that we held in a local town for the children we had been working with alongside local families. These performances allowed us to share widely what the Deaf Community had taught us.

## Discussion

When the children were engaged in musical play - or musicking (Small, 2006)- with interested partners, where the goal was engagement rather than performance, the children vocalised, volunteered ideas or guided the direction of the session. A Speech Therapist watched us sing for a moment with a small group of children including J (aged three, deaf with bilateral CIs). The therapist had just come out of a therapy session with J having ticked “no response” for every measure yet she had just witnessed, in one music singing session, every single measure she had been looking for.

My fellow music leader and I found that running such a musical play session was a deeply immersive activity. To focus on safeguarding, musical progression, communication of progression with parents, observation and playing on musical instruments with children whilst being very much “in the moment” was intense work. Reflection between me and my colleague was essential for our own supervision, to discuss any element of the session that had affected us and to check with each other that we were “doing the right thing”. We found in these discussion sessions that we had often lost track of time during the music session. A good session coincided with us feeling that “flow” had occurred (Csikszentmihalyi, 1970; Custodero, 2011).

We found that many Deaf adults had suffered a poor experience of music education in their youth. Had we had simply taken music education from an adult hearing world and applied it to young deaf children in an unthinking “top down” way without any critical thought or reflection - in other words in a “line of descent” (Davies, 2014, p7), citing Bergson (1998) - we would have been actively rejected by Deaf parents. Engaging children in musical play allowed us to see a “line of ascent”, a “bottom up” way of empowering young children to participate fully in progressing their music making skills. Freire (1970) reminds us that *“no pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors”*. We learned about the musical play of deaf children through observation and listening. Whilst there is a certain irony or even ethical jolt to rely on “listening” when working with deaf children, we learned a justification for this approach from the deaf children themselves. The children heard and listened using many methods including their eyes and hands and bodies and they focussed tremendous effort into understanding and interacting. Listening, moving and understanding appeared to be a complicatedly intertwined part of their evolving and becoming.

Reinforcing her position that nothing “makes itself” and we are all interacting within “complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems”, Donna Haraway (2016, p58) uses the term sympoiesis which means “making-with”. Playing Around sound enabled a risky,

committed venture in which two communities, the Deaf and the hearing, “made-music-with” each other. The medium for that venture was musical play, specifically the engaged musical play of very young deaf children, where music went in through the eyes and the body and, hopefully, stayed.

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## **Music expressing the unspoken - Family music groups for asylum seekers**

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### **Abstract**

In this project eleven early childhood music educators organized family music group sessions for asylum seekers in Helsinki. This project was built on the knowledge of collaborative music making enhancing well-being and creating a sense of community that has been shown in many research findings (see e.g. Cliff & Hancox, 2010; Fraser, Bungay & Munn-Giddings, 2014; Hallam, 2014). In this project we developed shared musical journeys, collaborative music making experiences and musical dialogue to create safe musical spaces and encounters in collaboration with staff in the reception centre.

The project consisted of ten family music sessions in the autumn 2016. The participants were families with young children applying for asylum in Finland. The aim of this project was to enhance the sense of community in and through group music activities. It also aimed to develop pedagogical approaches in an early childhood music education context without a shared language, culture or prior experiences of taking part in family music groups. The music sessions were participatory using various elements of music practice: singing, dancing and playing instruments as well as body percussion. The focus was on the group interaction, learner-centred approaches and on non-verbal communication. The themes of the sessions arose from Finnish nature and everyday-life.

In this presentation we will share the key findings concerning pedagogical approaches and actions within this project. We will explore pedagogical notions of creating the safe atmosphere and sense of community in music learning processes without spoken language. We will also share our experiences of developing the means to communicate within the group as well as of teaching Finnish words in music activities. This presentation gives an example of working without a shared language which offers the participants the chance to think together and share experiences about early childhood music education practice. Our experiences as music educators in these family group music sessions and the role of the leader/teacher in this kind of early childhood music education context are also opened up for discussion. We hope also to nurture discussion about the wider implications of music education and music experiences to enhance well-being and safety in society.

# The language of music: play with music to grow together

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## Abstract

Musical practice with children aged 0-6 years old and their parents is an activity full of educational possibilities, not only purely musical. In addition to the promotion, activation and awakening of innate musical skills both in children and adults, the possibility of providing additional tools and strategies to the parent, for the education of his/her child should not be underestimated. The music thus becomes an educational tool: it can be the means by which the parent-child dyad mutually grows and develops. Although in the musical activity with 0-3-year-old children the parent actively participates in the sound proposals together with his/her child, thus agreeing to get involved, playing, experimenting and having fun in practice, it is rare to find a musical path for children from 3-6 years old which provides the involvement of adults. With this work I would like to highlight, in the interest of growth and common musical acculturation, how important the parent's involvement is in the musical activity with children 3-6 years old. During the school year 2016/17, “Oltrepò Mantovano” music school of Quistello (Mantova, IT) has structured an educational course which provides — together with weekly introductory music meetings with children 3-6 years old — a parallel path with the parents of children attending the course. The objectives of this project have been to awaken entertainment in the adult, by eliminating the embarrassment and fear of not being musical enough; to make him/her aware of music games in the family and provide him/her with tools to process, develop and customize spontaneous family musical productions, thus increasing a “music complicity” with the child.

This specific parallel path with parents has finally culminated in a moment of final sharing with the child: parents and children united in the musical game. That was a moment of great wealth for both; enrichment in interpersonal relationship skills, knowledge and adjustment of emotions and in the sense of self-esteem and trust in others, motivation and curiosity to learn. Children and parents, doing music together for growing together.

## Keywords

Education, children, parents, music education

## Theoretical background and content

Can music represent a means of mutual growth for the parent-child dyad? How to promote musical play between children of 3-6 years old and their parents, aiming towards autonomy and personal growth of both parties? Is it possible to say that music is an educational tool? Is it possible to accompany the parent, as well as the child, in the acquisition of greater skills and confidence in their own expressive-sound capabilities? These are the questions that inspired my work on the field, which involved parents of three to six-year-old children attending the introductory music course at the Oltrepò Mantovano music school of Quistello (Mantova). Until this year musical activities concerning the parents only included the age group of 0-3. However,

with the transition of the activity to the three to six- year-olds, the canonical activity continued without adults. Talking with the parents had made come to light their clear desire to be able to live and share with their children some of the progresses and achievements in the musical literacy course. So, on a trial basis, a course was initiated addressed only to parents, structured in 1-hour meetings, held fortnightly, in the month of November 2016. During the meetings adults had the opportunity to acquire basic musical knowledge at a theoretical level. The proposed activities were not designed with the aim to make the parent live the same experiences as the child, but to increase or build parents' own musical background. The play represented the main intervention strategy. Playing, for the child but also for the adult, is the way to know and live meaningful experiences. Playing has an intrinsic motivation in it. Through the game you have the opportunity to learn behavior patterns, to train fantasy and imagination, and to learn how to handle different emotional states (frustration, anxiety, anger, fear, excitement ...). Not least, play is an important means of sharing rules to live in the social context in an active and conscious way. Many psychologists have spoken about the importance of play for the child. Winnicott(1986), a member of the psychoanalytic school, considered play as a key transitional area, an intermediate dimension between the outer world and the inner world, in which children would learn to control their fears and develop imagination and autonomy. Piaget (1937-1945) connected the development of playwith cognitive development, stating that play is the primary tool for the study of the child's cognitive process. He recognized three basic types of play developed by the child according to the development phase in which s/he is: games of exercise (sensorimotor stage), symbolic (pre-operative stage) and with rules (operative-concrete strage). Vygotsky (1896 - 1934) recognized in play the answer that the child, struggling with his/her own needs, processes in order to satisfy them, even if only in the world of his/her imagination.

For the author, play plays the important task of liberating the objects of their binding power: through play objects do not "suggest" which child's behavior has to be activated, but acquire new meanings. "... In the game the thought is separated from objects and the action arises from ideas rather than from things: a piece of wood begins to be a doll and a stick becomes a horse."(Vygotsky, 1933:12). Through play, therefore, the child acquires skills in the acquisition of meanings and language development.

Bruner (1976), a US psychologist, considered the game with regard to adaptation and human problem solving strategies. According to Bruner, playing primarily represented a chance to learn in a controlled situation, in which the risks of violation of social norms were minimal.

Hence the prevailing feature of the game is to achieve increased dexterity and always new combinations of behaviors at the time of social interaction (Cambi, 2005).

To conclude this quick overview of the play's conception from major evolutionary psychologists it is mandatory to examine the contribution of Stern (1934 - 2012), American psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. He claimed that the search for relationship with the mother is a primary need for the child, like the satisfaction of hunger and thirst. This research guides the child from the very first moments of life: even when he's a few months old, a baby does not passively receive the attention of parents, but s/he is actively involved. The first games between a child and a parent have an inherent order, defined by Stern (as cited in Garvey, 1997: 32) in interaction.

"The means by which parents can encourage and maintain an optimal level of attention and excitement in a newborn - whose obvious pleasure signals further encourage their efforts - consist of sounds, facial expressions and movements, often accompanied by a some physical contact. A parent can modify them at speed, intensity, aim and combination, producing ever-changing and different feelings."

Play activates cognitive processes in various ways, also in relation to the age of those involved. Any type of game, from the free one to the more structured, requires understanding, recognition and the sharing of sense and rules among the participants (Baumgartner, 2009). The awareness of these characteristics linked to the recreational moment have been the basis of the musical offer: thanks to play it was possible to develop and exercise the memorization and recall; it was possible to accompany the child and the adult in a reasoning; it was possible to enhance creativity and imagination.

Of course, not all children and not all adults show the same involvement in the same playful proposal. What can be captivating and challenging for some can be on the contrary boring and uninteresting to others; the personal characteristics of the child and the adult, the situation at hand or the type of proposal are the cause of these heterogeneous answers. What does motivate a child to play music together with his/her parent? Surely, it is the task of the musical educator to structure an environment and proposals attracting the attention of the dyad.

It is important that the game provides moments of surprise and discovery that stimulate curiosity, properly alternating with moments of "fun routine", to allow the child to be aware and to guarantee a free and spontaneous participation. Especially, it is essential that the difficulty level of the game is suitable to the psycho- physical maturity

reached by the child. In this brief excursus on play lies the secret of musical practice: If the emotional side and the expressive voices and sounds are added to the elements described above, one can understand the importance in education of making music together.

### **Age and characteristics of participants**

The project I want to talk about has seen and still sees involved the parents of three to six-year-old children attending the course in introductory music at the Oltrepò Mantovano Music School of Quistello (Mantova). As regards the teaching activities carried out with the children within the school of music, two distinct groups based on age were created: a first group composed of 3/4-year-old children and a second group composed of 5/6-year-old children. In addition to regular meetings with children, a fortnightly basis in meetings of one hour each - with parents only - were organized during the 2016/2017 school year. The adult group was composed of eight parents (not all members agreed to the proposal). The decision to offer a specific music activity to parents was born from the desire expressed by them to live and share with their children some progress and achievements acquired in musical literacy courses. The primary purpose of this workshop with parents has been to allow the adult to live a moment of musical game with his/her child: to this purpose, the proposed music extra-meetings have proved to be useful. In those moments kids together their parents were able to share and experience through song, movement, and the use of percussion instruments.

### **Aims of the project**

The project had these objectives: (for the adult)

- Develop the ability to listen
- Use the voice in its different expressive possibilities
- Memorize songs, simple choreography and rhythms
- Stimulate musical creativity and personal reflection
- Build and develop a stock of basic musical theoretical knowledge
- Increase the parent-child emotional bond through the music game
- Promote socialization

(for the child)

- Share musical experiences with parents
- Develop the ability to listen and to share with the parent
- Increase the parent-child emotional bond through the music game
- Promote socialization

From an educational point of view, the main musical methodologies used were:

- Orff (use tools, comprehensive involvement of the person, indivisible unity of music-movement-word)
- Dalcroze (rhythm, solfeggio, improvisation)
- Kodaly (chironomy and do mobile)

The mix among the main theorized points of each methodology has represented the teaching strategy used during the meetings.

### **The activities**

The proposed activities, before starting by reading a musical score or a written text part, were based on imitation, as a means of learning and active reworking. Through the creation of fantastic contexts that served as storage of the various activities, it was possible to give sense to musical ideas: in this way the parent was encouraged to find a reason and a justification for his/her sound, vocal or instrumental action/production.

The proposed activities featured integration: chant joined to the movement, very often sustained by instrumental production. This allowed the parent to realize firsthand that during the musical act there is the need to be highly concentrated; you can get great satisfaction when you invent independently rhythmic and melodic patterns or simple movements. In addition, we realized that even simple musical elements, if combined together, can become extremely complex: simple rhythms combined with body movements and the use of instruments became real songs. Parents were required to memorize songs, rhythmic vocal games, simple rhythms and small choreographic patterns. This allowed them to develop and acquire confidence in their gestures and made possible gradually the personal elaboration and following on spontaneous invention.

Assigning each time a specific task to each one of them (a rhythm part, a reiterative melody, a sequence of body percussion) it was possible to structure rich, complex and varied music. As previously mentioned, the musical meetings were organized for parents only: we did not make them live the same activities offered to their children. On the contrary, it was structured a real educational path designed for adults: this choice was dictated by the will to develop/enrich the theoretical basic musical knowledge of the adult to make him/her able to live a sound relationship with his/her child, in full awareness and autonomy.

### **The outcomes**

This workshop proposed to the parents of the children attending the course of introductory music (3-6 years old) was greeted positively by the Management of the Oltrepò Mantovano Music School of Quistello. A distinctive feature of this school is the fact of wanting to be a reality dedicated to cultural diffusion, social cohesion and to be a stimulus for constructive and creative dialogue between the associations in the area. Thanks to the direct involvement of the parents of the children of the school of music - some of them are also engaged in other leisure activities such as theater or work/volunteer with associations working with disabled and elderly people - partnerships with local social

realities, and course openings also to adults without children, have been proposed for the future year 2017/2018 school year.

This was an important result. You cannot hide that there were numerous initial concerns linked to this idea: the number of adult participants was in doubt (in fact, not all the parents of the children enrolled have joined) as the fact that the path could be significant and constructive for both the adult and the child. As the activity progressed, though, these fears have gradually disappeared. This path will see its conclusion at the end of May: in the occasion of the last meeting of the introductory music course for children, it will be organized a meeting where parents and children play together, combining the proposals, working and having fun together. To support, promote and enhance the playfulness and the complicity between children and parents, in parallel to the standard offer of the school (children's activities and workshop with parents) during the school year two extra moments of music play and sharing are organized: that allowed me to monitor the progress achieved by both adults and children and thus to be able to structure proposals that can be suitable and useful to the achievement of the objectives proposed by the project.

### **Conclusion and implications for future work**

This work is still on going; it will see its conclusion only at the end of May 2017. Currently, the feedback is highly positive - indeed, two moments of sharing between children and parents have reported observations progressively richer and more meaningful. Parents have proven to be more and more confident of their musical abilities; The sound dialogue between children and adults was carried out in a situation of understanding and equality of the means available; it fostered an atmosphere of well-being, peace and constructive sharing between the dyad.

Through this proposed workshop was spread a very important message; the music is definitely an educational tool. In addition to enriching the cultural point of view its practitioners, both adult and child, can become a tool to educate towards civilization, cohesion and teamwork.

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# **A child-centred approach to the playing of tuned musical instruments**

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## **Abstract**

Playing tuned musical instruments often requires highly specific motor-coordination and reading skills that are not essential components of general education. This project looks at how musical instruments can be re-designed to develop children's pre-existing natural skills, encouraging both rapid musical and general educational progress. This longitudinal project has involved over a million children in every conceivable learning environment, from home to school to community, across 59 countries over 34 years. This paper will focus on children aged 8 months to 8 years.

The aim of the project is to offer an alternative tuned musical instrument that:

- 1) maximises the effectiveness of first instrumental experience, in a child-friendly way
- 2) makes instrumental lessons easy to teach for any teacher, including general class teachers
- 3) allows children to successfully perform an extensive repertoire of solo and ensemble music
- 4) involves every child, regardless of their musical and other abilities
- 5) motivates children to want lifelong involvement in instrumental and other forms of music.

Initial research resulted in the discovery of the embryonic English 4-hole Ocarina as a suitable instrument to be specifically developed for education. Prototypes were manufactured and Ocarina teaching methods published. These have been refined through teacher-training and mass-playing workshops. Teachers, parents and children provide feedback, and their progress is recorded on video.

Results show that a ten-month old can make a clear and full sound on an Ocarina with no special embouchure, and that children demonstrate all the manual dexterity required to cover the four holes from one year onwards. Children between three and five years of age can play 20+ different full-octave tunes in the keys of D and G major by reading ocarina tablature. And children in whole-class music lessons make demonstrably quicker progress with the English 4-hole Ocarina than with any other tuned musical instrument. Whilst Ocarina-playing from grassroots education upwards has been externally assessed as 'outstanding', universal understanding and acceptance from the top down has been lacking. If the newly discovered benefits of English 4-hole Ocarinas are to be harnessed and not permanently lost to music education, further research and informed discussion are essential.

## **Keywords**

Child-centred music, English 4-hole ocarina, whole-class music

## **Background**

Over the last 40 years, a wide and diverse range of musical instruments has become available for use in the classroom. No longer are children limited to playing percussion or recorders as their sole introduction to

instrumental music-making. So, how do we choose what instruments to offer and at what stage they should be introduced?

In 1976, I began teaching music in Primary, Secondary and Adult Education and searched for tuned instruments that could be used with all ages, and in a whole-class context. My initial experiments were with tin whistle, guitar and keyboard. After three years of teaching up to 30 players at a time, over a thousand in total, I decided to take a year out to travel and to reflect on this experience.

In exploring Latin America, from Mexico to Tierra del Fuego, my attention was drawn to the vast number of ancient flutes that have been lost or largely forgotten. Highly prized amongst these are globular flutes, found in abundance in museums and labelled as 'Ocarinas'. Despite their historic proliferation, globular flutes are largely unknown and rarely played by indigenous musicians today, even though their acoustic and ethnographic significance made them more valuable than gold in pre-Columbian society (Llonch, 2013; Olsen, 2002).

On returning home, I found UK craftsmen making experimental clay flutes, and I began working cooperatively with them. My aim to create child-friendly instruments soon became focused on the embryonic English Ocarina and its unique fingering system.

Starting with a blank canvas, I was able to determine the size and musical range of each Ocarina and its fingering, tuning, voicing and presentation. These variables were regularly tested in educational and community settings. Since there was no pre-existing repertoire for the English Ocarina, I began arranging and publishing Ocarina music.

### **Initial results**

By 1984, the first tuned sets of ceramic Ocarinas had been tested in class and the first music books and teaching resources published. Initial reaction was positive with regard to ease-of-playing and sound quality. Reservations were expressed over the fact that Ocarinas were ceramic and breakable. However, the main concern of hygiene was answered by making glazed Ocarinas that could be easily cleaned with sterilising fluid. These glazed Ocarinas were very different to the more commonly found cheap, terracotta Ocarinas sold around the world to tourists.

By 1988, demand for school Ocarinas led to the development and production of the first plastic English Ocarina. This opened the way to wider usage by ever-younger children - Ceramic Ocarinas had been played by children aged eight to 16 - with the introduction of a slightly smaller, impact-resistant, plastic version, children as young as three began to play at home. Saturday music schools introduced Ocarinas to small groups of four-year-olds and increasing numbers of children in the six- to seven-year-old age group began playing Ocarinas in class.

The instruments proved to be intrinsically popular, as did the teaching

methods. At the Sidmouth International Festival of Folk Arts, Ocarina-playing workshops grew each year into outdoor sessions at which over 100 people at a time queued to play together, many as families, with an age range of five to 80. Everyone performed dozens of tunes from scratch. Many had no previous experience of playing instruments or of reading music. Two reasons for the instant success were the simplicity of the Ocarina itself and the immediacy of reading tablature. During the 1980s, school Ocarina groups won awards at music festivals and appeared on national television; professional Ocarina groups recorded and toured internationally. As an 'entry-level' instrument, the English Ocarina was showing more musical potential than could have been anticipated.

### **Teacher responses**

The most positive initial responses to English Ocarinas were from teachers in Special Schools. They made two observations: Firstly, they saw that only two fingers on each hand are used to play the octave. This motor-coordination involving the first two fingers and thumb is the minimum required for holding a pen or pencil. They noted that playing an Ocarina strengthens this coordination in both hands, simultaneously, side-by-side. Left-handed and right-handed children benefit equally as they make music and exercise this manipulative skill. Secondly, they thought that children with moderate learning difficulties would be able to follow the Ocarina charts. These positive responses resulted in the successful early adoption of Ocarina-playing in Special Education. Teachers in Infant schools also reported some interesting findings.

An Early Years Advisor observed a class of 30 five-year-olds playing 'Twinkle, twinkle little star'. She rang to tell us that these disadvantaged children had not yet learned to read. However, they played the tune perfectly by following Ocarina charts from left to right, and down the page. She said that Ocarina-playing was promoting reading-readiness for these children in a very effective and demonstrable way, as well as giving them a great sense of achievement.

A lifelong Infant Teacher, who was finding it increasingly difficult to teach six-year-olds to play recorder, decided to try English Ocarinas with her classes instead, although she was extremely reticent about letting go of her recorder lessons. The same teacher rang a year later to describe the successes that she had encountered. She said that Ocarina-playing had made a world of difference to the children's subsequent recorder playing. They could tongue notes and play tunes musically and confidently as a direct result of playing Ocarinas first. The teacher rang again the next year to say that she had dropped all recorder lessons in favour of progressing the children's Ocarina-playing from 'beginner' to a 'more advanced' level. All four classes of six-year-olds played together in music lessons each week, 120 children in all.

By the end of the year, they could all play most of Play your Ocarina Book 1 fluently, including Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy' and 20 other one-octave tunes in the keys of D and G. One group played the Book 3 tune 'Yellow Bird' to me in two-part harmony, negotiating difficult syncopated rhythms with considerable skill. (Liggins & Liggins, 1992)

An external inspection report noted that these Ocarina lessons made a "significant positive impact on the pupils' learning and achievement":

"All the pupils in Year 2 learn to play the ocarina and are encouraged to perform in assemblies. This has a positive influence on the pupils' attainment and means that, by the end of Year 2, they all read musical notation." (Office for Standards in Education, 2004).

This teacher has now used Ocarinas at the same Infant school for 25 years. In the UK, some 4,000 schools have incorporated Ocarinas into lessons, and over a million children have played them. Many of their stories are collated in a report that includes teacher comments and the results of inspections and adjudications over the first 30 years of 'Ocarinas in the Primary School' (Liggins, 2014).

### **Continuing development**

In 2006, the "Oc<sup>®</sup>" plastic Ocarina, was redesigned to be even more accessible for small fingers. The addition of a lip-guard, finger-rest and a slight rim around the finger-holes has made the instrument more tactile and easier for young children to play.

In 2013, we gained a Guinness World Record in London's Royal Albert Hall, when 3,081 children played a seven-minute medley of classical tunes to become the world's 'Largest Ocarina Ensemble'. The group included infants and juniors who all played themes by Beethoven, Dvořák and Mozart without a single break or mistake, even those as young as five. To win the award, 95% of all participants had to play continuously, accurately and to a "professional level".

In 2015, a panel of music education experts shortlisted our freshly redesigned "Oc" for "Best Music Education Product Award" at the Music Teacher Awards for Excellence. To our amazement, it won with the citation that "The 4-hole Oc combines creative potential, ease of use, affordability and practicality".

We are currently preparing a new range of music books to develop this 'creative potential' through improvising and composing, and also to prepare the Ocarina for more effective use by ever-younger players, hence my participation at this conference.

### **Unique Ocarina Features**

The main defining features of the English Ocarina are its sound and sound-production, its size and physical accessibility, and the reading of

its music.

The sound of globular flutes was highly prized in ancient cultures. When breath enters an Ocarina, a single mass of air vibrates in all directions. The resulting sound is remarkably pure and free of overtones; it cannot be overblown to produce an upper octave. So, what does this mean in practice? Firstly, the Ocarina is squeak-free. If anyone blows too strongly, it just cuts out. Imagine a first lesson where only those who 'do it right' are audible! Secondly, when large numbers of children play Ocarinas together, the result is flattering, because their Ocarinas produce few overtones. It is the jarring upper-harmonics that make other wind instruments sound so unpleasant when played by beginners. In contrast, the fundamental Ocarina-sound blends well, rewarding players for their efforts. Thirdly, finger-holes can be positioned anywhere on the circumference of the English Ocarina without changing its tuning. They can even be positioned for one-handed use. With tubular instruments, the physics of sound determines hole positions and these holes, for young children, can be difficult, or even impossible, to reach. The Ocarina is the only instrument where finger-hole positions can be adapted to suit the player; players do not have to adapt themselves to the instrument.

This child-friendly adaptation is also true of breath pressure and sound control. With tubular instruments, players learn to vary their breath and embouchure subtly, according to the pitch of the note to be played. It is easy to split notes on such instruments. A very gentle and carefully controlled breath is needed to play down a scale to the lowest notes. With the Ocarina, every note from high to low is played accurately with the same moderately-strong breath. This consistent breath pressure comes naturally to enthusiastic full-of-energy children, and also to experienced players who wish to project their sound in concert. Other unique features that help young players physically handle the Ocarina are the child-friendly size and weight; the fact that it is worn around the neck; the lack of left- and right-hand dominance; the close proximity of the Ocarina to the player; the small size of the finger-holes and the fact that only the first two fingers are needed to cover them. This latter point is significant. For, whilst the use of the first two fingers and thumb is coordinated in the first year of life, having evolved over millions of years to facilitate tool-handling, the independent use of the third finger is rarely needed and has not evolved in similar fashion (Wilson, 1998). And although the independent use of the third finger is vital for concert pianists and skilled typists, its control is not a primary requirement for three-year-olds or seven-year-olds. Indeed, having to use third fingers for playing instruments can be a major barrier to early success. They are not needed at all when playing the Ocarina.

The 4-hole fingering system was invented in 1963 in London by the ethnomusicologist John Taylor (Liggins & Liggins, 2003; Liggins, 2014). It is

the simplest full-octave system to be found on any instrument. A chromatic octave is played by simply opening and covering just four holes. These holes are shown pictorially in what is sometimes known as 'cooker music' – using symbols similar to those on gas and electric hobs.

It is this tablature that provides the key to early musical success and to the all-age appeal of the Ocarina. It also enables generalist teachers to have confidence in teaching their own classes to play, even though they might not be able to read music themselves.

My teacher's instinct told me that clear layout of Ocarina music would be as vital to learning as the instrument itself. So, I introduced Ocarina tablature from the start. It works amazingly well and its success has remained a mystery to me until very recently. Wolf postulates that 2,000 years elapsed between the first written languages of cuneiform and hieroglyph, and the first alphabet; and it takes a child around 2,000 days to learn to read with this alphabet (Wolf, 2008). Ocarina tablature seems to act as a pictorial language that can be read and followed during the first 2,000 days of life, requiring little learning or instruction.

### **Ocarina Pedagogy**

Teaching with Ocarinas is very different to teaching with other musical instruments. For example, when recorder players are still learning the notes B, A and G, Ocarina-players are already playing fluently up and down a full octave. And when pupils are still attempting to make their first sounds on orchestral instruments, with Ocarinas they are exploring melody, harmony, tonguing and slurring, and a range of musical skills. This effortless acquisition of music and skills requires the guidance of an understanding practitioner. If a teacher fails to grasp the Ocarina's potential for rapid progress, he or she can easily act as inhibitor, rather than facilitator. When a teacher is ambitious to help children to explore a range of relatively complex music at a young age, and to develop Ocarina-playing skills that are all, incidentally, transferable to other instruments, then the youngest of children flourish.

Over the last 34 years, I have explored many diverse methods of teaching. These include teaching orally and with books and screens to introduce a broad repertoire of music, using tablature and standard musical notation. All these Ocarina methods are now accepted and widely adopted around the world (Liggins & Liggins, 1992 & 2014).

When our own children were tiny, we floated Ocarinas in the bath so they could enjoy blowing bubbles and sounds. Between the ages of three and five, they played all 22 tunes in *Play your Ocarina Book 1* (Liggins & Liggins, 1992). They went on to play harmonies and, by the age of eight, performed in award-winning groups. This early Ocarina experience taught them that "playing instruments is easy and fun". Our

younger child went on to teach herself to play the clarinet. After just ten weeks, she gained her Grade 5 and then retired. At the age of 23, she now plays twenty or more instruments, including the nose flute, and is currently graduating from Birmingham Conservatoire on French Horn. She won her place there after less than three years' Horn tuition. She claims that her experience of playing Ocarinas from the earliest days into teenage years is the main contributor to this amazingly rapid progress on the Horn, which is probably the most technically complex and difficult orchestral instrument to play. This experience has been replicated over the years many times. One parent did not allow his children to take lessons on cello or violin until they had mastered the Ocarina. By the age of six, this had been accomplished and all three children went on to study violin and cello. They all graduated from London's Royal Academy of Music and now have successful international performing careers.

Ocarina pedagogy, when used in both formal and informal settings, can result in long-term, effective, high quality, musical achievement.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I would like to describe two real-life encounters. The first was with the principal Oboist of an international orchestra. She attempted to play an Ocarina at our exhibition stand. Her rigid oboe embouchure resulted in an awful noise. She could not adapt to playing the Ocarina, so dismissed it as a lost cause. In contrast, a beautifully clear sound came from our lounge one day as I discovered our older daughter, at ten-months-old, sitting on the floor, blowing a ceramic Bass Ocarina with natural, relaxed embouchure and exactly the correct breath-pressure. She was very pleased with her discovery.

My initial aim of creating an alternative tuned instrument has been fulfilled. My attempts at changing human nature have been less successful.

Despite award citations and inspection reports highly commending the Ocarina, a rigid mentality exists amongst decision-makers who are musicians rather than educationalists. They cannot see things from a child's or a teacher's point of view and, like the oboist, miss the point. On the few occasions that we have been invited to lead keynote workshops for all delegates, two thirds of teachers have subsequently chosen to introduce Ocarinas to their children. When grassroots teachers are given a free choice of instrument, the Ocarina is more often than not their number one selection (Liggins, 2014). However, when higher-level decision-makers are involved, the Ocarina is often ignored, disregarded and even denigrated. And teachers and children are denied the opportunity to play. We are not looking for unanimous approval from all quarters. We are looking for informed discussion that examines the evidence critically, considers the Ocarina, its music and

pedagogy dispassionately, and is willing to recommend its use when appropriate.

I believe that the English Ocarina offers a uniquely child-centred approach to the playing of tuned musical instruments, and I welcome your comments.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This work has been shared for over 30 years with my wife Christa Liggins, whose full-time support, dedicated hard work and teaching expertise have been major factors in the success of Ocarinas in the classroom. I would also like to thank Graham Tilney of Ocarina Workshop for his assistance and encouragement, to John Taylor (inventor of the English 4-hole system) and John Langley (ceramic craftsman par excellence) for making it all possible, and to the hundreds of thousands of teachers and children who have chosen the Ocarina as their first tuned musical instrument.

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# **Multi-agency delivery of Luton Roma Music Project from 2015-present time**

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## **Abstract**

This spoken paper will report on innovative strategies to widen access to music for the most disenfranchised members of Luton society involving a grass roots community organisation, statutory services and early years music providers. Inter-connected skills and knowledge in multi-lingualism, family music provision, Roma culture and social services tested the value of music in meeting the following aims: improving communication between Roma family members; integrating Roma with the wider community; increasing use of statutory services by Roma community and initiating interaction between mutually estranged Roma groups.

A 30-week outreach programme established the following musical spaces for Roma families:

School playground Beech Hill School (12-12.45pm ages 4-10); Family Music Time Building Blocks Children's Centre (now Luton Flying Start Central) (1-2pm, ages 0-6); After-School Music sessions for Roma families (4-5.30, ages 3-7, 7+); Musical interventions in Roma family homes (6-7.30pm. Ages 0-70+) and Picnic in the Park Family Festival performances (15 July 2016 11.15am/3.00pm Ages 3-50).

Sessions combined adult and child-led practice with participants developing ideas for session content including leadership, conducting, suggesting songs and improvising rhythms, lyrics and movement.

Successful project outcomes, dependent on this multi-agency approach, provided 68 sessions of education and participation for 225 participants aged 0-70. Three music leaders each had 35 days employment. Two performances reached out to an audience of 1750. Roma family members interacted to develop musicianship skills and performance repertoire including faith songs and culturally diverse music references. Children from rival Roma sub-groups shared musical play and interacted during breaks. Activities increased Roma uptake of English language classes by Roma men and increased referrals to social services. The importance of an economic balance of power between partnering organisations was recognised. Shared skills and knowledge across collaborating organisations found solutions to long-term community problems.

Current developmental work includes: monitoring and evaluation processes gathering data for all partners including musical development, child development, identifying needs and location of Roma community and uptake of mainstream services by Roma community; project planning with elders from mutually estranged Roma groups; widening opportunity and responsibility through Roma youth music leadership programme; widening performance opportunity reflecting inherent talent and promoting health interactions through the popularity of musical play sessions.

## **Introduction**

The Luton Roma Music Project (LRMP) was established in 2015 by World Beaters Arts and Culture in partnership with the Luton Roma Trust (LRT) and Building Blocks Children's Centre (now Luton Flying Start

Central). The project's initial aim was to work alongside Roma families using music to reduce isolation, widen community engagement and improve access to statutory services. This paper will outline the success of multi-agency partnership in delivering the LRMP. Reference will be made to material presented at the World Beaters interactive session at London Early Years Music Network (LEYMN) conference 2017.

## Project objectives

The delivery of music initiatives in multiple spaces in Luton aimed to improve communication between Roma family members and initiate interaction between mutually estranged Roma groups. Statutory services, arts and community organisations wanted to see an increase in participation and attendance at community-based events in Luton by Roma families.

## Multi-agency delivery

The chart below (Figure 1) outlines the World Beaters model for successful partnerships, developed through its 15-year history of celebrating diversity with younger children, their families and care providers in multicultural communities.

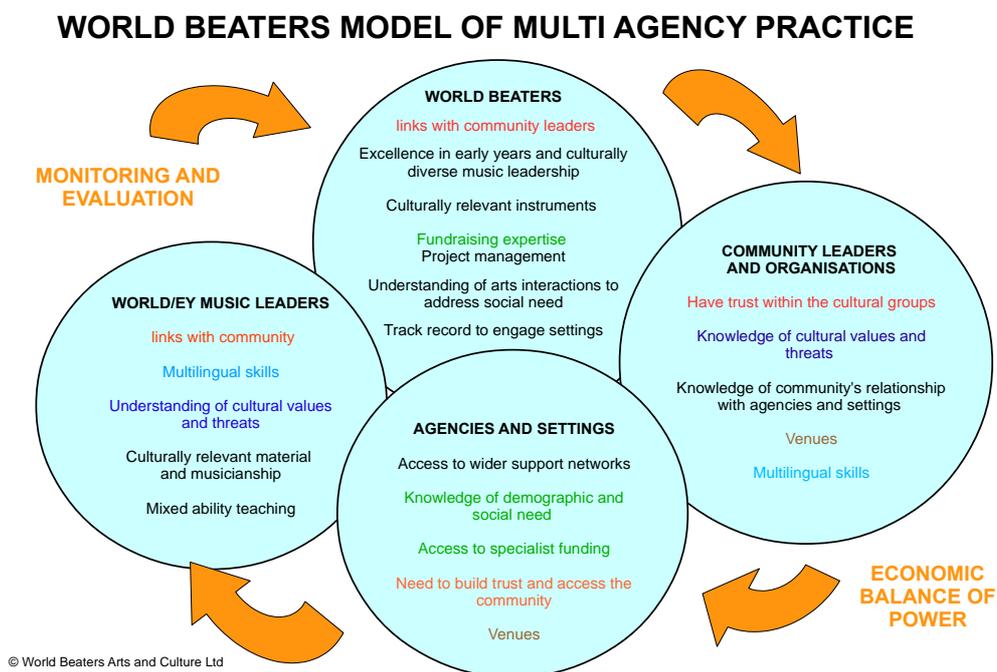


Figure 1 Model of multi-agency practice

Key partners provide mutually beneficial knowledge and skills, which reciprocate the needs of each other (marked in coloured fonts) to develop projects which successfully reach and engage target audiences. As projects evolve networks and partnerships increase.

The partnerships on the LRMP work reflect this co-operative approach. The lead community organisation, LRT was formed in response to the profound needs of the Roma community of Luton. These Eastern European migrants came to the UK to seek work and a better education for their children than they received themselves. Speaking both Romani (an ancient Sanskrit-based language) and Romanian (related to Latin) they are, however, often illiterate and need the help of the LRT team to build a new life in the UK. In addition to daily crisis interventions in every area of their lives, LRT believes long term community transformation is needed to lift the Roma out of their historical isolation and help them engage positively with the wider community of Luton. To this end, LRT works closely with an ever-growing number of other agencies and schools to help these families achieve economic stability and real hope for the next generation. LRT supports the project by attracting participants, providing guidance on suitable programme, interpretation and additional support services.

The early years setting involved, Luton Flying Start Central, hosts the project. The organisation aims to ensure children have the best possible start in life. Linking together care, education, family support, health services, and community education with an open door policy and extensive outreach programme, the Centre is able to reach those most in need living in the heart of Luton. The knowledge and experience of the staff team in encouraging community buy-in has enabled the project to thrive and they have provided a welcoming venue large enough to accommodate the numbers of Roma families attending sessions.

Our music leadership team is Alison Blunt and Spulber Cantaragiu. Spulber is Romanian Roma from a dynasty of Roma musicians. He is an accordion player and, as a Pentecostal preacher, he has enabled the project to quickly gain the trust of Roma community leaders. Alison is an experienced early years music leader and internationally renowned performer specialising in improvised music. This musical partnership shares musical excellence founded in improvisation skills, providing the skills to drop one musical idea and pick up another instantly. This flexible approach, well known to early years music leaders, has been identified as an essential skill by all project partners in working with Luton's Roma community.

Figure 2 below shows the distribution of Luton's population aged 5 and under. There are 5227 under 5s living in Flying Start Central's catchment area (the four wards marked in white). 75% of school children are from black & minority ethnic groups. The majority of children accessing the music sessions live in the 10% most deprived areas nationally. Cultural participation is low, particularly engagement in the arts, sports and



## **Project beginnings (September-December 2015)**

The first term of the project focussed on outreach into the community, providing spaces for musical engagement with Roma families in 3 ways.

Lunchtime family music sessions were established at Building Blocks Childrens Centre and targeted Roma families during the first term. Concerted efforts from the LRT team encouraged participation and incentives were provided each week such as Bookstart packs and 'goody bags' which included basic provisions such as nappies and baby wipes. One participant reported that without the goody bags, her family would have been unable to attend the project because she would have been begging to provide nappies for her children. LRT staff offered advice sessions alongside music workshops which proved a successful encouragement for community buy-in.

After-school music sessions for Roma families began in a family home in Central Luton. However, the first event proved so popular that the host family became anxious about noise complaints from neighbours. Sessions moved to Blenheim Crescent Baptist Church, a familiar space as host for Roma church services. Sessions in musical play for ages three to seven, melodica classes for children aged seven plus and an adult singing group were provided. Sessions ended with groups presentations and a religious song in Romani or Romanian. Incentives for participation included a melodica for each family who attended on a regular basis, food parcels from the Luton Food Bank and toys and games donated by local churches. Advice sessions also happened alongside activities. With an average of 30 children attending each week, these sessions quickly outgrew the church hall so Building Blocks extended its opening hours providing each activity with a designated space.

Early evening visits to family homes brought participation to those who were most isolated in the community due to deprivation and poor transport links. These visits also enabled conflicting sections of the Roma community to engage in musical activity. Home visits combined adult and child-led practice including choosing repertoire, conducting and improvising with rhythms, lyrics and movement. Musicians improvised together to provide high quality listening opportunities.

Each week news from within the Roma community impacted on our visits to family homes. For example, the death of a family member saw 40 days of mourning when families welcomed sombre music, quiet chatting and prayer. Children were gradually allowed to sing and dance as adults sat quietly. We were also welcomed to bring live

music to birthday celebrations and always took a cake, singing Happy Birthday in English and Roma.

The music team during the first year included Alison Blunt and Trish Power as early years leaders and Spulber Cantaragiu as accompanying musician. A mixture of hand-held world percussion instruments and small drums were used during sessions. Lycra and giant scrunchies encouraged focussed participation.

### **Project Development (January-March 2016)**

Early years sessions extended to the wider community with regular attendance by Asian and Roma families together with children and staff from Building Blocks creche. As weather improved we added an outdoor lunchtime session in neighbouring Beech Hill Primary School. Roma children actively participated, welcoming familiar faces and the Roma language in the playground.

The project's first year culminated with performances at Picnic in the Park, an annual early years event in Luton's Wardowne Park run by the Pre-School Learning Alliance. Hours of complex negotiation persuading Roma families to visit an unfamiliar venue and getting permission for children with poor school attendance to perform at the festival during school hours were rewarded with a major step forward in community inclusion. Extended Roma families attended and took an active part in Luton's long running family festival for the first time, gaining informal access to early years support agencies and play opportunities for their younger children.

### **First year outcomes**

LRMP provided 68 sessions of music education and participation for 225 participants aged 0-70. Three music leaders had 35 days employment each. Volunteer Paul Sayers has become employed as Luton Roma Education Champion since the project began. Two performances reached out to an audience of 1750. The project has enabled Flying Start Central, Luton Arts and Luton Music Hub to engage Roma families for the first time.

The project met ambitious targets of integration. At our early years sessions Roma families integrated with families of Asian and Eastern European extraction. Towards the end of the project they were exchanging tips on childcare, particularly supporting crèche staff to comfort children who attended without their parents.

The project supported the work LRT by initiating integration between sub-groups within the Roma community. These groups are made up of extended families from different parts of Romania who do not

associate with each other, despite sharing Roma culture. At the after-school sessions children from these rival groups sat next to each other, chatting and supporting each other in instrumental tuition and ensemble work. Careful selection of religious music, folk songs and nursery rhymes met the needs and expectations of all factions within the Roma community. Musicians became sensitive to the needs of participants and widened their understanding of delivery of music to diverse communities, adapting material appropriately, for instance using different adjectives to describe the "Drunken Sailor".

World Beaters and LRT worked effectively together, seeking opportunities to promote and develop the project. Luton Music Service, lead organisation of the Luton Music Hub Music Mix, became a valuable partner and enabled networking opportunities which have provided diverse performance opportunities relished by participants. Following a presentation to Music Service teachers and the executive committee of the Mix, opportunities for the project have flourished. Partnership with Luton Culture, a charity delivering arts, libraries and museum services, led to an outdoor musical play trip for early years families at Stockwood Park, supporting the venue's aims to increase musical play and enabling isolated families to visit this venue for the first time with the reassurance of engaging in a familiar activity.

### **Project Development (July 2016 – present)**

Partnership with UK Centre for Carnival Arts (UKCCA) has involved Bedfordshire-based singing and keyboard specialist, Jo Hudson-Lett. Revoluton's Sacred Songs Festival brought a first concert performance on the UKCCA stage, with lighting and amplified sound. Roma families shared a bill with Polish choir Wnieboglosy, UpMass gospel choir and Sinfonia Verdi. The group also sang as part of Luton Airport's Christmas fundraising concerts. Roma children took pride in raising money to help others, a positive act towards dispelling myths about the greed of the Roma community. Arts and community organisations have gained participation from the Roma community through the LRMP without taking on the heavy financial and temporal costs of outreach.

Members of the project team have been able to attend conferences which have greatly informed practice and provided insight for short, mid and long term ways forward. Discussions with music teachers at Luton Music Mix annual conference on transition (July 2016) proved useful. Their observations of how Roma children move from school to school emphasised the value of accessible extra curricula arts activity to support formal learning which is regularly disrupted. As a result, LRMP participants are given a certificate of musical skills and achievement to show new teachers as they move between schools.

Our understanding of the value of multilingual skills has grown during the project through attendance at talks and conferences on the subject. Dr Leena Robertson's presentation at the Nursery World Show 2016 on 'Meeting the communication needs of children in a multilingual settings' endorsed the use of musical play and the value of multilingual opportunities in the nursery involving parents and staff with multiple languages. She shared practical strategies for monolingual staff, including musical play to encourage multilingual children to communicate using non-verbal actions and gestures, self-initiated play, listening and observing, choral responses and turn-taking discussions with repeated patterns of language.

Further validation and inspiration came from the "Translanguaging Pedagogy: an emancipatory approach for plurilingual pupils" conference (February 2017) organised by Newcastle University. Highly relevant to the World Beaters approach to early years music delivery, Dr Heather Smith demonstrated in her presentation at the conference that the translanguaging pedagogy

"Raises the status of pupils' plurilingualism, and particularly those languages which are assigned a lower status in society, thereby indexing a shift in pupils' identity as languaging experts in the eyes of all concerned: pupils, their families and teachers, which also acts to support more equitable practices".

Research into plurilingual learning involving schools in Finland, Romania, France and UK has enhanced our practice. We recognise how inclusion of plurilingualism at an early years level can support children to be confident about their speech and language skills, engage them in participatory learning at the start of their education and enable development as mentors and interpreters for their peers and teachers. A plurilingual approach that welcomes parents to contribute their own multilingual skills fosters early co-operative engagement in home-school learning, something which is severely lacking in the Roma community in Luton. As secondary schools turn to the LRT to support learning, the potential for using this practice as a holistic path from the early years and throughout the educational lives of plurilingual families is becoming more apparent.

## **Challenges**

Poor behaviour is a challenge for the team and was reported as a common problem by school teachers both in Luton and on the translanguaging research programme. Several strategies are being used on the LRMP to tackle this issue. Participants are given a snack when they arrive providing energy to focus during sessions. Project leaders and families also work together, washing up and tidying the space in preparation for music. Our detailed work around exploring song lyrics has shown that poor behaviour is linked to language barriers and not understanding the content of sessions. Time spent translating

lyrics in sessions has improved engagement. Advice from volunteer Noah Munyurangabo who shared his experiences as an unruly teenager has helped the team find ways to support those who struggle to manage their behaviour.

Empathy has become an essential skill. There have been times when participants have required team members to listen and respond to critical need rather than to engage in planned music activity. Both personal and national events, such as the bereavement and the impact of the Brexit vote, have made understanding through discussion an essential part of the project.

Irregular attendance has required music leaders to be flexible in delivery of sessions, adapting the programme and spaces to accommodate groups varying from 6 to 36 each week with mixed abilities and wide age ranges.

Attendance is inconsistent for several reasons. Roma families are scattered across Luton and public transport systems are not effective in encouraging participation. Family members attend different schools due to shortages in school places and because Roma children often start school well into the academic year. As driving is the quickest way to travel around Luton and with car ownership being unaffordable, several families share cars making overcrowding an issue. This has been resolved through home visits and volunteer drivers collecting children.

### **Current development work**

Discussions around frailty and care are being facilitated by performances at Moorland Gardens Care Home. Roma children are developing an understanding of old age and how to adjust their behaviour to meet the needs of others.

Touring opportunities will continue with events at community festivals over the summer period. LRT is taking initial steps towards a mentoring scheme for Roma youth people, supporting musical talent and leadership skills through these performance opportunities.

LRT is seeking a permanent venue that the Roma will identify as their own space in which to deliver advice sessions, church services and the music programme. World Beaters has created 'Toothy Tales,' a pilot project using music to explore dental health with families at Building Blocks Children's Centre.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The project is indebted to LEYMN as the initial spark for the Luton Roma Music Project happened during a comfort break at a core group meeting. Several members of the LEYMN core group have contributed to the growth of the project during its first year, either as musicians on the programme or through positive encouragement from the sidelines.

The project was initially funded by Arts Council England with match funding from Near Neighbours. Local funding from Luton Youth Fund and an Awards for All grant

has enabled the project to continue into its second year. All partners have a financial stake in the project, either as a named applicant on a funding bid or by contributing funds towards activity. This financial balance of power is particularly important for organisation which represent disenfranchised communities.

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## Traces of music

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### Abstract

This presentation is based on experiences from a collaborative project involving 38 kindergartens in Bergen, Norway, over a period of four years from 2012 to 2016, with eight to ten kindergartens participating each year. This project was initiated, supported and organised by the department of kindergarten at the municipal level and was academically led by two lecturers from NLA College University of teacher education. During the project period, three to four participants from each kindergarten participated in joint seminars with both theoretical and practical focuses, and the kindergartens received supervision from university lecturers and art pedagogues on their own practical work and project plans.

In autumn 2016, surveys were conducted among all the participants followed by group interviews in two kindergartens to determine what effect the project had in the kindergartens and among the single practitioners. The theoretical base for this project was theories on the connection between music and language in a broad perspective and theories on building a developmental project based on engagement and commitment among the practitioners.

This presentation will focus on the benefits of the work with music activities and what skills the pedagogues have developed and maintained after the project period. The presentation will attempt to outline some elements of musical learning among the participants and how this may have benefitted the children.

The research data was collected through reports and evaluations from the four-year project period. Also, there was a survey among all participants and two group interviews with a focus on the participants' musical skills and capabilities after the project period. Such skills may be better belief in one's own singing voice, skills in leading a musical activity and skills in playing instruments, like the djembe.

The presentation will also show what factors need to be presented to succeed in such developmental projects. Some of these factors may be ownership of the project, motivation caused by the common engagement among the staff and commitment to colleagues, and the aims of the project and the project management.

### Keywords

Kindergarten teacher education, music and language, collaboration, communities of musical practice

### Introduction

This presentation is based on experiences from a collaborative project named 'From Music to Language' with the research question: What traces of music remain in the everyday kindergarten life after concluding a developmental project that focused on music and second language acquisition? ('Kindergarten' refers to group of children one to five years old. In Norway, children start school at six)

The project involved 37 kindergartens in Bergen, Norway over a period of four years, from 2012 to 2016, with eight to ten kindergartens participating each year. The purpose of the project was to strengthen the staff's ability to use music and drama to stimulate language learning, especially in multicultural kindergartens (Møen & Thoresen, 2015). The project was initiated, supported and organised by the Department of Kindergarten of the City of Bergen. Two lecturers from NLA University College of Teacher Education mentored and led the project academically. During the project, three to four of the staff<sup>1</sup> from each kindergarten participated in joint seminars on the theoretical and practical aspects of music and language development, and the process of implementing music activities in kindergartens. The staff received supervision from college university lecturers and art pedagogues on their project plans and didactical practices. The project plans were for each kindergarten, each of which had different groups of children, from one to five years old. All participating kindergartens received a musical instrument kit that consisted of one big djembe, two small djembes, 20 sets of egg shakers, claves, haki balls and chiffon scarfs. Several songs and instrument-related activities were introduced and practised together at a kick-off seminar. The participant staff members were also taught methods for building reliable project plans. They were also encouraged to set personal goals and goals for the kindergarten as a learning organisation. The concept of SMART(E)<sup>2</sup> goals (Hals, Trydal, & Aase, 2011, p. 89) was used as a framework for goal-setting. The project group members participated in supervision sessions, wrote reports on their outcomes and wrote implementation plans to help them to carry what they learned from the project into the future.

The purpose of our research after the project is to look at the outcomes for the kindergartens, children and staff. This project may be viewed as a type of communal learning, and the study is a hermeneutic study in a social constructivist paradigm. This paper focuses on the music learning outcomes in the kindergartens among both children and staff and what factors facilitate success.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This paper concentrates on the traces of music in the kindergartens and among the staff. The learning outcomes among the staff are socially constructed, and the learning processes are types of situated learning (Säljö, 2016; Wallerstedt, Lagerlöf, & Pramling, 2014). The staff

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<sup>1</sup> In the project groups that we interviewed, these employee groups were represented: Principal, Pedagogical leaders/kindergarten teachers and assistant teachers. I will use the term 'staff' for all these.

<sup>2</sup> SMART(E) refers to: The goals should be Specific, Measurable, Accepted, Realistic, Time limited, Evaluable.

members in this study are a part of a *community of practice* (Säljö, 2016; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015; Wenger, 2004) in their kindergartens, because they have a common responsibility for planning a good learning and developmental environment for the children. During the project, the participants also become a part of a larger community of practice when they met staff members from other kindergartens, art pedagogues and lecturers in the project at the joint seminars. In this new community, music is both present and expected. A *community of musical practice* is defined by Ailbhe Kenny (2016) as “a group of people who form a community of practice through music making and/or musical interest” (Kenny, 2016, p. 16). Thus, for the participants in this project, a community of musical practice is a place for learning music skills and creating meaning through music. To succeed as a community of practice, a common feeling of engagement, involvement and ownership is necessary (Balsnes, 2011). The findings from this study also show that the children were a part of a community of musical practice through the increased focus on music activities in their kindergartens.

Other theoretical frameworks for this project are those that focus on the connections between music and language more broadly (Ehrlin, 2012; Jederlund, 2003; Kulset, 2015; Kultti, 2014). The authors emphasise the importance of music in children's lives, the connections between music and language, and the use of music for children's development and communication skills. Particularly for children of different cultural backgrounds, music can be seen as a community-building tool, one with which to communicate and socialise (Ehrlin, 2012; Kulset, 2015; Kultti, 2014). Certain elements in the music activities, such as repetition, tempo and the positive relationships with other children are focused on. Again, these elements supports children's second language learning (Kulset, 2015) and stimulate language abilities (Paquette & Rieg, 2008).

In a study about music, language and learning, Pitts (2016) finds that music activities in circle time and free play cause positive language development. She refers to how linguistic breakthroughs happen during musical activities and play. Through a predictable and well-planned circle time session, children with different backgrounds and needs can experience a sense of achievement, because during circle time they develop other skills, such as listening, understanding others' actions, collaborating with others and using their language (Pitts, 2016). Pitts (2016) also outlines the importance of giving staff music training on how to make music and how to support children's music activities. Such training gives staff members the opportunity to discover how children participate in music making and when children are having linguistic or social breakthroughs through music. A common understanding among the kindergarten staff is essential to discover this.

Susan Young (2009) describes observations and reflections of practice as important ways to increase music quality in kindergartens (Young, 2009). Reflecting on practice and learning theory both had important places in the joint seminars during this project.

The arts are an important element of the Norwegian Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2011). Aud Berggraf Sæbø (2017) highlights that the arts in Norwegian kindergartens should be characterised by curiosity, creativity and a bodily and playful way of teaching (Sæbø, 2017). Young (2009) specifically defines the different activities that should be a part of music in kindergartens: listening, playing instruments, singing and dancing (Young, 2009). Still, staff may feel insecure about different music activities such as playing instruments and letting the children participate more actively. They might also feel ashamed of their own singing voices (Møen, 2014, 2016; Schei & Duus, 2016). Therefore, the music content in the daily activities of kindergartens can sometimes be limited. Similar experiences are found in Swedish preschools (Ehrlin & Wallerstedt, 2014). Challenging such myths about themselves was a clear focus among the staff in this study.

## **Methods and Data Collection**

The collected data consisted of reports and evaluations from the four-year project. In addition, we conducted a survey of all participants as well as two focus group interviews (Halkier, 2010; Kvale, 1997). The focus group interviews focused on the participants' music skills and capabilities after the project, as well as their experiences on music as a way for bonding and communication among the children. We selected interview groups from two different project years, and we selected groups that we knew had some opinions about the process, even though we had not spoken to them since the end of the project. The focus group interviews gave us insights into how the staff members thought about their daily work with music in kindergartens. Because we knew the participants from the earlier project, we could not be objective when collecting and analysing the data. However, this knowledge and the familiarity that developed between us also encouraged the interviewees to be more honest and to reflect about the process with a long-term perspective. We based our findings upon our own observations, theoretical framework on the subject and the participants' own experiences.

The questions, or the themes, for the focus group interviews were based on findings from the survey. We focused on what they did successfully and also how they coped with resistance or negative experiences. We recorded the conversations digitally and then transcribed them. This paper is shaped by the analysis of the data from the focus group

interviews, which were based on the data from the survey and the reports from the project.

## **Findings**

In general, the reports and survey show that there is now much more music in the kindergartens than before the project and that the staff are more aware of the positive effects of music on children in general and on the linguistic outcomes for children's second language learning and children with special needs.

### ***The Traces of Music in the Kindergartens***

The music in kindergarten 'Play Garden' is described as an opportunity for the children to participate through movement and song. Children with Norwegian as their second language can understand what is going on because there is no talking, only singing, moving and playing with instruments. The interviewees point out that the music activities are some of the most important ways to stimulate linguistic learning for the youngest children. The music is an essential way for young children without verbal language to express themselves: *"This is so important for them. They may not say a word, but they sit and hold the claves up to their heads and show which song they want to sing"*, one of the interviewees says. Shy children can also take part in music activity; suddenly, after many repetitions of a song or a music play, they take a new step by saying the words to the songs or wanting to do the movement at a certain place in the song. The staff recognise both social and linguistic breakthroughs in the music activities.

It seems that most of the staff that participated in the project witness the children's shared interest in music. Music appeals to every child. Music is also an arena for friendship and socialisation among the children. The staff from kindergarten 'Ant Hill' highlight the following strong outcome for the children: *"We notice another sense of community after this project. It's different"*. In other words, through playing instruments, making their own music circles and developing a common repertoire of songs, a new community developed among the children. This correlates with theories both about music and language (Ehrlin, 2012; Jederlund, 2003; Kulset, 2015; Kultti, 2014), and to previous, similar research (Paquette & Rieg, 2008; Pitts, 2016).

The staff from 'Ant Hill' tell us that the children gather drums and other instruments and want to play and sing together every day. One of the interviewees admits that this would have never happened before the project period, because they did not have many musical instruments and the ones they did have were not available to the children. The staff used to think of music activity as noisy and chaotic and did not allow it. They admit that this is a dramatic change. Now the children know how to handle the instruments, they have a repertoire to play

and the instruments are available to them. Furthermore, the staff are much more relaxed about music activity among the children, because they can see the positive effects for both single children and for the sense of community within the whole group. A common repertoire of songs and music activities for all children in the kindergarten makes it possible to connect in the music and to use it anytime, anywhere. A community of musical practice (Kenny, 2016) is visible in 'Ant Hill' every day. The staff also show the children's interest in music to their parents, organising 'pick up concerts' in the afternoons that are a big success. Generally, through the day, children are more active with their bodies, suggest songs and activities, and play the instruments, just as the framework for Norwegian kindergartens outlines (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2011; Sæbø, 2017).

Both focus groups see the potential of music for children with special needs. During the project, the staff practised didactical planning for good circle times, they developed a repertoire of songs and activities, and they learned the importance of repetition and movement. They are also discovering the effects of starting a song or a rhythm when they need the children to focus. This helps especially the children with special needs. *"We don't need to hush and wait; they're already singing and focused"*. When the kindergarten teacher starts to sing, one very uneasy boy from 'Play Garden' brightens up and focuses, as if to say, *"Yes! Now it's starting! I want to be a part of this!"*

### ***The Traces of Music among the Staff***

The staff members in both kindergartens are aware that the quality of the music activities improved after the project. There is more variety in the music activities, and the staff are more aware of how they plan and organise the activities so that the children get the most out of them. One pedagogue says, *"I have become more aware of the quality... it's like I have improved myself one hundred percent"*.

The staff are also more secure about their pedagogy connected to music and language. They are convinced that music helps children to develop in many ways. They develop their pedagogy through reading literature, participating in lessons on the seminars during the project, practicing, and observations and discussions with their colleagues. Observations and reflections about music practice are essential to creating good quality music for children in kindergarten (Young, 2009, p. 21). The staff are more sure of their goals and how to achieve them.

During the project, the project group in the two kindergartens had a special focus on involving all the colleagues in the kindergarten. They wanted to make everybody feel comfortable making music with the children and with their colleagues. They practised the drums both together and alone, learned new songs and felt confident enough to

lead the daily music activities. They are still practising these new skills but are much more relaxed with themselves and have greater belief in themselves as competent leaders and initiators of music. Some of them feel less ashamed about their singing voices, and now it is not only the staff members who are the 'best' singers who are responsible for music activities. Their learning is situated in the kindergarten, with their colleagues and with the children, which creates motivation, ownership and engagement (Balsnes, 2011). In 'Ant Hill', the staff still sing and play together in meetings to learn new songs or to maintain their skills. In addition, members of the project group still seek each other for support and inspiration. This group is now a community of musical practice, a place for doing music together (Kenny, 2016).

The staff in 'Ant Hill' often use instruments in activities with the children. It is important that the adults are models for the children's instrument playing (Young, 2009, pp. 95-96) and also that the children can manage the instruments and take the initiative to play when the adults are not leading. In this way, the staff can relax when the children want to play the instruments on their own. It also minimises chaos during circle time.

### ***The Traces of Music in the Kindergartens as Organisations***

Both kindergartens have more planned music activities with the children because of the project. These activities are now a shared responsibility among the staff. This was a tough process for some of the staff members in kindergarten 'Ant Hill'. However, the recognition of how important music is for the children motivated them to take new steps. *"If we don't do it, the children don't get what they're entitled to"*. Both kindergartens have implemented music activities as a part of their yearly syllabus. In 'Ant Hill', circle time with drums and percussion instruments is a regular activity for all groups of all children. The staff members from both kindergartens also consider music circles with songs, rhythmical rhymes and instruments as a part of language learning. 'Play Garden' even defines music activities with singing, rhymes and rhythms as their main approach to language stimulation for the youngest children. The fact that these activities are still written into their plans means that the engagement among the staff is still alive and fresh.

### **Conclusion**

In both kindergartens, we recognise elements of communities of musical practice, both among the children and among staff. Staff were already part of a community of practice through their colleagues, and the courses and seminars during the project led them into a bigger community with a shared focus. Their community and colleagues in the kindergartens now consider making music together

an important part of their work. They share music goals and interests, even if their music skills are at different levels. The staff members in the project groups have come to look at themselves as competent teachers of music in kindergarten. From being not involved in music activity, spectators of music activity, or rather peripheral members of the music community, the staff members now feel themselves to be active members who share mutual interest in music with the children. The children benefit from the staff's new engagement and knowledge about music. The children naturally take part in music activities that, for many, have opened up new opportunities to participate, communicate and learn. Traces of music remain in the kindergartens, and both the children and staff are still walking on musical paths.

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# The missing place of Early Years in England's music education policy: issues, challenges, and innovations.

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## Abstract

2011 saw the publication of England's first ever National Plan for Music Education. Despite the plan declaring that "music teaching starts in the Early Years", its vision covers children and young people aged 5-18. This means that English national policy – and, importantly, the funding that underpins it – does not include Early Years music-making. This omission is:

- Contrary to significant evidence suggesting that 'active engagement with making music should start early for the greatest benefits to be realised' (Hallam, 2015)
- A missed opportunity to address the 'patchiness' in provision that the plan sought to address – particularly when the Department for Education (the plan's publisher) has responsibility for teaching and learning in the Early Years.

What does this exclusion say about the status and importance of music in early childhood? For the purpose of music education in the Early Years? What does a lack of policy framework mean for the workforce? For progression planning beyond the age of five? And for the ability of the early years music 'sector' to come together to advocate and strategically plan?

As a significant funder of Early Years music education in England (investing over £1million annually), the National Foundation for Youth Music is witnessing first-hand some of the negative consequences associated with this policy framework omission. However, at the same time we are witnessing some creative responses and cutting-edge practices borne out of passion, resilience and a need to innovate. Five years into delivery of the national plan for music education, we reflect on the implications, challenges and innovations arising from the missing place of Early Years.

## Keywords

Policy, innovation, workforce, strategy, practice

# **The bridge is singing: Working with Cultural and Linguistic Difference**

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## **Abstract**

This paper discusses the relevance and implications of practical approaches in support of young immigrant mothers with their pre-school children's learning and development in an urban community in central England. The Peep Learning Together Programme is delivered in a 'stay and play' context where parents (mostly mothers) from diverse backgrounds come together with their children and play, sing, and use their own stories and experiences to help themselves and their own children under four. One such weekly group is attended by women from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Algeria, France, Poland, Albania and India.

We present case studies of two mothers, from Afghanistan and Pakistan whose lives, like those of so many refugees, have been on the move, from country to country. During their journeys they have had to negotiate their ways through different social, cultural, and linguistic contexts including attitudes to birth and child rearing. Through telling their own stories and sharing their songs, they overcome their fear, rediscover their traditional musicality, and value each other's voices.

We explore the role of the practitioner whose remit is to help parents with their children's learning, using the ORIM framework (Hannon, 1995) based on opportunities, recognition, interaction and modelling parents offer children day to day in their home learning environment. We refer to Noddings' ethics of care (2010) to enlighten our encounter with cultural and linguistic difference. We suggest empathy and understanding command the foreground and that singing and stories create a bridge between individuals in place and in time.

## **Keywords**

Parents, singing, home learning environment, culture, language, difference

## **Introduction**

This paper is about the role of singing within mother-child relationships both on a one-to-one basis and as a group activity that brings together families of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Two case studies explore the stories of two women; one from Afghanistan and one from Pakistan, who sometimes struggle to make sense of the services offered them in support of their children's learning and welfare. In each case remembered songs and stories from childhood serve to act as a bridge

between their past experiences and their present situations, between their personal identities as expressed in their home languages, and more formal expressions of belonging, and between their intimate playful repertoire with their child and their general aspirations or fears. They provide a snapshot into the lives of recently arrived mothers. Populations are on the move for a range of reasons including economic, political, conflictual and climactic conditions. As such their experiences deserve to be taken into account as part of the increasingly significant discourse of music as socio-cultural practice focused on the day to day lives of families from diverse ethnic backgrounds yet living in the same country (Young, 2016; Marsh, 2013). The year 2016 saw a record number of refugees seeking new lives in Europe where individual countries consequently expressed increasingly protective attitudes against immigrants. The practice explored here dates from Autumn 2016, in an urban community in central UK. It outlines the aims of the charity Peep, considers the practice in relation to previous action research projects, describes the activities, especially how singing is used, the role of the Peep practitioner and the implications for working with cultural difference in music education with parents.

### **Aims and rationale**

The Peep Learning Together Programme (LTP) is active in all regions across the UK. It aims to help parents and carers to improve their children's life chances through making the most of everyday learning opportunities; listening, talking, playing, singing, sharing books and stories together (see [www.peep.org.uk](http://www.peep.org.uk)). In turn it offers parents the chance to realise and act on their own learning potential. The programme is run by the charity Peep, funded by grants from both the voluntary and public sectors whose remit is to support raising attainment in the early years through parental engagement. The programme reflects the increased attention over the last twenty years in educational research focused on the learning potential of the earliest years and to the effective influence of the home learning environment (HLE); (Sylva et al., 2003). For further explanation of its rationale and related research on parental engagement see Street, 2009; Street & Smith, 2016).

A parallel groundswell of research is evident likewise in music education, focused on the significance to musical development of younger children's day-to-day experiences (Barrett, 2008; Young, 2008; Young, Street & Davies, 2006), on children's audio environments both at home (Ilari et al., 2011) and in settings (Burke, 2014) and on parents' singing in informal situations (Custodero, 2006; Street, 2006).

Songs and rhymes are key components of the LTP, as they have been found to enhance relationships, to build mutual understanding and to encourage interactions between adults and babies (Street, 2009).

Whereas some studies suggest that a traditional repertoire of lullabies

has been forgotten and needs to be re-taught to parents (Baker & MacKinley, 2006), it is clear that many Western mothers do sing to their babies, although they consider what they do to be not musical in the sense of performance art (Street, 2004). They interpret it as mimicking their babies' sounds, or the jingles on radio, television and digitised toys. Research shows that the tuneful 'doodles' emerging in parents' chatter and the sing-song patterns of their communication with babies and toddlers can be helpful both in regulating a baby's mood (Trehub, 2009), as a resource for play and dance (Littleton, 2002) and invention (Trevanthen & Malloch, 2002). Peep practitioners draw attention to voice play, and to how singing or playful chants can help both adult and baby in day-to-day caring and expressing their emotions and remembered experiences.

### **Activities**

Learning Together uses a framework to structure and extend its work with parents and children, with respect to a range of parental skills and attitudes. The ORIM framework originates from Hannon and Nutbrown's research on parental support for literacy (Nutbrown & Hannon, 1997; Hannon, 1995). It recognises the role of parents and carers in providing Opportunities for learning, Recognition of their children's achievements, Interaction around playful activities and as role Models. So practice ranges through time for talking and listening, for singing and sharing stories, practical ideas for play and learning and places to go or ways of coping with a baby or toddler. Sometimes this is on a one-to-one basis in a home visit or in group work, depending on a family's needs. With play songs and lullabies in mind in multi-diverse groups ORIM is explored with parents through offering:

- **O**pportunities to sing and talk about childhood memories and stories
- **R**ecognition of music's expressive role in enhancing and supporting children's home language
- **I**nteraction through playing and singing together
- **M**odelling the gestures and words of songs both old and new.

### **Allowing time and space**

We have learned from previous action research projects, such as Time to Play (Young & Street, 2010) which sought to develop inter-culturally sensitive approaches to creative play in Children's Centres serving majority Muslim communities in four English cities. In terms of relevant practical activities in creative play with groups that are multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural we have to seek starting points. Strategies found to be effective evolved through celebrating festivals, such as Eid, with associated food, offered by mothers and shared by all. These groups therefore often start late morning and may run over two hours, allowing for time to meet, eat, play, talk and feed babies.

## **Talking time**

Time to talk or share ideas about how children play can be challenging with so many languages. In the projects above mothers were invited to represent ideas, their memories of songs or stories from home by drawing on fabric. Fabric is important, as it is more durable and less disposable than paper. Nuzhat Abbas can speak Punjabi, Urdu, Russian, and English and has recorded, collected and arranged songs and traditional folk tales in Urdu and Punjabi that recognise and reinforce these memories and develop a shared remembered and valued repertoire. In addition adults' and children's names are useful triggers for conversation or representation, and emphasise familial relationships. Displayed maps of the world indicate countries of origin and offer starting points for mothers to share information about their journeys or experiences. The following accounts are from two mothers, whose names we have changed here, who came to a weekly group over six months.

### *Noor's story*

'I am Pakistani, and came to the UK after my marriage. I have a seven year old boy and my girls are six, four and two. When I first became a mother I was very fearful and desired to know more about how to bring up my child. I had no idea about how to put my baby to bed or what I should play with him. I was not sure if singing lorian (lullabies) in my home language was right or wrong. I was thinking, he is a baby and is not going to understand what I am singing. Then one day at the Children's Centre Nuzhat invited me to join a group and we used to sing in circle time, and Nuzhat encouraged us to sing what we remember from our childhood in our own language, Punjabi. At home I used her CDs with my child sitting together in the corner as a special time. Slowly, slowly the children began to enjoy these and the best thing was that they started to follow in my own language. It encouraged me to share with them more of my own songs. I am unable to explain enough the happiness I felt through having these songs and stories. In my childhood I used to sing Choo choo chacha. It was jolly and is now a favourite in my home. So is Choo choo choo, about the little chick. Visitors enjoy it too. These two songs have changed our home environment which is now a bit noisy but they have bound us together. These songs and the group sessions have made us all feel less isolated and I am now relaxed'.

### *Nasreen's story*

'I am from Afghanistan, but left the country using secret routes because of conflicts between the Hazara and Pashtoon communities during Taliban and war. First we found

refuge in Iran and then came to UK to save our lives. At home we speak Dari or Persian and sing songs in Farsi, English and sometimes my husband sings in Urdu with our little girl who is 20 months old. Every day I get up at 4.30 and work in the supermarket from 6.00 til 12.00 and my husband then travels to work at a different supermarket from 2pm til 1.30 am. It is very hard when my baby wakes at night because we both need our sleep so much before we work. But in this situation singing her favourite songs help us to make her sleep. The song she loves is Lulye Lulye zachima... this song reminds me of my mother and her singing to me. We are very happy that our baby is enjoying our singing and learning lots of words. My husband wants me to become a teacher and progress my education. We hope our daughter will get better opportunities for education than we both had.

Even though there is still no electricity in our village, yet no night goes by that we do not dream of that place and of the sound of my mother singing Lulye Lulye Zechima ...When things get better we will go home'.

### **Accommodating cultural difference**

As we listen to the accounts of families' journeys across borders, and their experiences with authorities, frontiers and services we are reminded not only of their resilience in confronting daily dangers, but also that their family stories shape who they are, what they value and practise and believe. This challenges us to confront our own identities and to seek to understand notions of difference in relation to common understandings of what it means to be human. Appiah (2016) in his BBC Reith lectures, 'Mistaken Identities' asserts that 'the cosmopolitan impulse that draws on our common humanity is no longer a luxury but a necessity'. In terms of how we view cultural differences he distinguishes between two contrasting and still prevailing views of the meaning of culture both of which have their roots in Victorian England. One is that espoused by Matthew Arnold. This saw culture as pursuit of perfection in modes of culture, as in poetry, literature and music. The other, promoted by Edward Tyler was one of the earliest articulations of the meaning of cultural anthropology, representing a complex whole including knowledge, beliefs, art, law as well as habits and customs. Appiah interprets the latter's relevance for contemporary behaviours in the face of uncertainty and political volatility; that culture is a process we join in a life lived with others; that our social identities connect the small scale everyday things through which we live, such as meeting and greeting and eating, with wider movements, causes and concerns. There are choices to how we can make sense of our lives on this wider scale; he argues that concepts of creed, colour, country and

culture can become both forms of confinement or conceptual mistakes, but they can also give contours to our freedom. Such philosophical views are not miles away from our day to day practice with families. Indeed, they are both backdrop and substance of how we make choices of repertoire; thinking of which song to sing, or how it may relate to family routines like eating and sleeping, coping with siblings or understanding about dangers as expressed in children's folk tales and then in their real lives. Some parents enjoy the familiarity of joining in with a repertoire of newly adopted traditional nursery rhymes as they can identify with aspirations to learn a new repertoire on behalf of their children. Jessica Pitt's research (Pitt & Hargreaves, 2016) illustrates the dynamics of such group singing in Children's Centres in England. By contrast, other mothers are moved and delighted at the chance to share a song from their own childhood as Nuzhat has found in her work with South Asian families in Peeples. What seems key to what and how to offer is an awareness to provide experiences that are meaningful and relevant to parents with their children; to invite and to listen.

### **Ethics in partnership relations**

Engaging with parents about their children's learning is often a balancing act in power and control. The aim of the charity Peeples is to improve young children's life chances. To this end practice has to work in partnership, and this involves taking risks and maintaining flexibility; taking risks in terms of managing unpredictability as family circumstances are always changing and subject to adult work patterns, health and childcare responsibilities (see Dencik, 1989), and flexibility on the part of the practitioner to keep options open when balancing educational priorities with parents' needs and skills. Where partnership working emphasises listening and trying to understand the other's point of view in order to offer support, ethics of care come into play. Noddings' (2010: 7) analysis of the ethics of care found that being 'in relation' to someone precludes 'caring for' them. She concluded it takes both parties to play their part; how care ethics are not so much about rights as about responding to needs, where emphasis is on attention, listening and understanding. In educational engagement with parents and families this response asks for competence, critical thinking, and maintaining open-ended flexible practice.

### **Conclusions and implications**

This paper has explored how practice can work with parents in culturally and linguistically diverse groups in one urban location in England. The stories of Noor and Nasreen illustrate the complex linguistic background in each case. Noor's home language is Punjabi. In Pakistan it is the language mostly spoken in all areas of the Punjab and in the UK it is also spoken at home by many families. However it has

not been taught in schools in Pakistan for political reasons for around 150 years. Urdu and English are the official languages. So there is confusion in Noor's mind about what is right for her children; her own Urdu and English are not strong, but she does not want her children to be disadvantaged by hearing Punjabi at home. She seems caught between two worlds. Singing in her own language has been a relief and source of joy.

For Nasreen and her husband, they appear to be confident in speaking Dari and having songs in both Farsi and Urdu to share with their daughter. They face demanding shift working patterns, express aspirations for their own and their daughter's education and long to return to a distant home. Their language competence appears to be sophisticated and both have used singing to communicate in different ways with their baby since birth.

It is sobering to consider the international, national and local contexts that impinge on many families who have already faced danger and conflict. Once in the UK they come to a children's centre, that has systems to support families' health, welfare and learning, but which are currently subject to budget constraints and consequent reduction in provision of services in the community. In addition, staff are often younger and less experienced in life than the mothers, and are themselves subject to regulations, targets and fixed requirements for time and space. They can therefore feel challenged in how to listen, or to respond to difference in culture and in how to value others' existing competencies.

In terms of music education with young children Young elaborates how difference has in the past been conceptualised along ethnicity lines, that choices of repertoire and resources have been motivated by aims into integration or assimilation. She suggests what is increasingly recognised are 'intersecting divisions of poverty, gender, religion and urban/rural location and that genuinely accommodating difference to avoid replicating disadvantage, even unwittingly, is complex' (2016:4). To this list we might add divisions in time, for example when applied to tensions arising between more settled groups, for example, from Syria, and recently arrived refugees from Afghanistan. These have been expressed, for example in adults' contemporary accounts of attitudes to language classes in urban German locations.

We argue that through attentive listening to mothers' voices as they sing and tell stories, we may share our diverse cultures and come to understand how to relate more meaningfully, and through relating, to interpret our encounters as opportunities for dialogue about diversity, about music and about education.

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## Tafelmuziek (Table Music)

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### Abstract

How do we develop a musical attitude in a daycare centre? How do we motivate and involve caregivers that have no specific musical background? In autumn 2015 'Tafelmuziek' (Table Music) was launched in order to investigate the possibilities of and requirements for an approach that invites and supports all participants of a daycare centre in adopting a musical attitude during daily routines. The project started as an experiment at the daycare centre of Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) in collaboration with Erasmus University College Brussels (Pedagogy of the Young Child). Tafelmuziek established a context that stimulates musical development of children and caregivers on the basis of immersion, spontaneous interaction and 'implicit musical invitations'.

A broad stance towards musicality as a sounding, social, embodied and timed phenomenon allows us to tackle the hesitation that often arises when caregivers are invited to act or express themselves musically. In doing so, and without being taught, musical sensitivity and skills start to develop organically by means of mutual reinforcement: all participants invite, inspire, surprise and initiate with each other musically in the trusted situation of daily activities and interactions. Their development is not guided by a programme with planned music sessions or repertoire, but by an increase of the reciprocal recognition of spontaneous musical behaviour: from being aware of mere sound, to interactive musicking, singing songs, improvising and listening to diverse musical idioms. The results were a greater willingness towards collaborative play, a better awareness of the environment, reciprocal entrainment, and more initiatives and creativity in dealing with available materials.

Since the initial experiment, Tafelmuziek has been successfully introduced in the daycare centre of Campus O<sup>3</sup>, Huis van het Kind (House of the Child) in Genk (BE), literally involving 'everyone', from babies to even administrators. On the floor, the interactions feature a threefold relationship between children, caregivers/other personnel, and professional music coaches, who interact musically on an interpersonal equal level. This talk gives insight into the guidelines of the concept, and how they are being applied in practice.

### Keywords

Musical attitude, musicality, daycare centre, mutual reinforcement

### Tafelmuziek

Musica, Impulse Centre for Music is an organisation started out almost forty years ago, in the wake of the early childhood music movement, but has transformed itself into an impulse centre for music that carefully focuses on topics that can feed musical life and music education, while always taking an artistic stance.

It is from this perspective that we also aim to stimulate the experience of sound and music among the very youngest children.



We have been doing this for years with workshops for children with their parents or carers: in all kinds of contexts from libraries to museums, from childminders' homes all the way through to festivals. We also run training sessions for child carers at day care centres and breakfast and after-school clubs, as well as in nursery school teacher training courses, sometimes on site or through national training bodies.

However, we have found that the material is not always easy to translate into practice in the short term, and once participants return to their own working environments they are sometimes hesitant to experiment with music. The emphasis often remains instead on a carer's childcare and administrative tasks.

## **The Research Question**

***How to develop a musical attitude in a day care centre?  
How to motivate and involve caregivers who have no  
specific musical background?***

In Autumn 2015, we launched the “*Tafelmuziek*” (*Table Music*) coaching course to investigate the possibilities and requirements of an approach that invites everyone involved in a day care centre to adopt a musical attitude to their daily routines and supports them in this process. The project started as an experiment at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) day care centre, in partnership with Erasmus University College Brussels (Pedagogy of the Young Child). The research study lasted three months and focused on two target groups at the day care centre; a group of babies aged three to eighteen months and a group of toddlers aged eighteen months to three years.

The research began with an audio interview for the six participating child carers, administered by a Pedagogic Coaching student. An approach was devised on the basis of their responses and following an observational visit by the coaches. For example, there were some child carers who sang a lot themselves and made up songs. In that case the coaches' input was mainly focused on putting the children's games to music and imitating the sounds they heard around them (with the space itself as a third teacher).

Two musical coaches and a Pedagogical Coaching student worked on the project for three months. The musical coaches came to the centre five times for three hours and gave the children music input while they were playing. This was documented by the trainee, who followed up what they had done with tips and games at times when the musical coaches were not present.

By offering materials for free play such as empty toilet rolls, scarves and insulation blankets, we stimulated the children and their carers to take a different approach to music and sound. The popular children's CDs or constant radio noise were eventually switched off. What was striking was that the experience with the toddlers was very different than with the babies. For the child carers in the group of toddlers, a strict daily schedule meant that music was regularly present, but as part of a planned activity. The activity usually consisted of singing along to songs with a CD and encouraging the children to dance in activities initiated by the adults. Music as an impulse for the development of a musical attitude was a difficult leap for them to take at first. This study was completed in June 2016 in the form of a presentation. The presentation generated interest from Campus O<sup>3</sup> in Genk and the City of Antwerp.

## **Activities**

Tafelmuziek has established a context that stimulates the musical development of children and child carers through immersion, spontaneous interaction and 'implicit musical invitations'. The musical interactions arise organically through play. The coach from Musica introduces new musical elements and stimuli to the children's games without taking over. In this way, children, parents and child carers discover new ways of playing that encourage them to discover music and experiment with it for themselves. We do not have any pre-established final product in mind. The musical interactions through play gradually help children's ideas and possibilities for musical expression to grow. The roles of inspirers, imitators and communicators are taken on by both the child, parent and musical coach. These roles change spontaneously during play. Sometimes it is the children themselves whose enthusiasm and creative open-mindedness lead them to adopt a pedagogical role towards the carers and coach.

For example, the musical coach introduced a one-year-old child to a sound game with a scarf, in which the child's sounds were translated into movement and exaggerated. Later that day, the child wanted to play the game again with a child carer. The child explained with gestures what she expected from the carer. This led to a new game. The child began to dance with the scarf and asked the carer to join in. The carer had to hold the scarf up high so that the child could spin around with the scarf, making whizzing noises. This ended up being such a popular game at the daycare centre that the child carers decided to knot a long line of scarves together and attach them to the ceiling.

We noticed as well that there was a greater willingness to engage in collaborative play, a better awareness of the environment, reciprocal entrainment, and more initiatives and creativity in dealing with available materials.

The development of each participant is not guided by a programme of planned music sessions or repertoire, but by an increase in the reciprocal recognition of spontaneous musical behaviour: from simply being aware of sound, to interactive music-making, singing songs, improvising and listening to diverse musical idioms. A broad attitude to musicality as a sounding, social, embodied and timed phenomenon allows us to tackle the hesitation that often arises when child carers are invited to act or express themselves musically. In doing so, and without being taught, musical sensitivity and skills start to develop organically by means of mutual reinforcement: all the participants invite, inspire, surprise and initiate each other musically in the familiar setting of daily activities and interactions.

### **Development of practice and next steps**

Since January 2017, the Tafelmuziek concept has been introduced to seven childcare projects, including (Speel'Wij) at Campus O<sup>3</sup>, and the Huis van het Kind in Genk. Speel'Wij is a playgroup and social group in every neighbourhood of Genk. It is a place where parents and grandparents can bring their baby, toddler or young child (aged 0 to 3) every week, except during the school holidays, to play, exchange experiences, have a breather or chat to other parents over a cup of tea or coffee. Everyone is welcome – including parents-to-be – until their children go to nursery school. Each Speel'Wij has its own atmosphere and activities, provides a warm welcome and offers a large room with toys and books plus a cosy seating area for parents. The Speel'Wij is usually organised by a childcare professional working with local neighbourhood volunteers.

The process is introduced over a period of nine months. During those nine months, two sessions of three hours each are organised just for the staff. These include a mindsetting session, the introduction of various ways of working with music and an explanation of the pedagogical context. This is followed by general coaching in the workplace with children, parents and all the staff.

There are four working visits of two and a half hours each, spread over four months. During these visits, we introduce new musical impulses through play. After every visit there is an evaluation and each carer is taught tips and games. At the end of this process, we ask the children and parents about their experiences, and we conclude by extending this question to all the staff.

The next step is to turn this Tafelmuziek for 0-3 year-olds into a version for children aged 2½ to 12 who use childcare facilities before and after school. The research phase is scheduled for the autumn of 2017 and spring of 2018, and will be conducted with a bachelor student in Pedagogical Coaching at Karel de Grote University College and three different childcare facilities in different contexts: an urban, rural and inner-city setting.

Children learn to work with children of different ages and with different interests, taking each other's wishes into account. Everybody's input is valuable, irrespective of the child or carer's age, background or (musical) experience.



# Eersteklasconcerten: a different look at music participation of children in concert halls

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## Abstract

Eersteklasconcerten is a journey of artistic, interactive experience for children in their first year of primary school. This co-production by Musica, Impulse Centre for Music and Concertgebouw Brugge (BE) puts a different renowned ensemble in the spotlight each year. In the past, for example, Blindman, Brussels Jazz Orchestra, Nadar Ensemble and I Solisti del Vento have worked on the project. Once more, the 2017 edition in partnership with ChampdAction will confront young ears with contemporary composed music and its interpreters, without compromising on the artistic content.

Eersteklasconcerten breaks down the borders between listening, active experience and performing. It demonstrates that young children can get really enthusiastic about music from the past and present, irrespective of its complexity. Often the format challenges the interpreters', concert organisers' and teachers' view on children's aptness to 'understanding music'.

Involving big groups of children with their teachers, and addressing both categories as participants on an equal basis, Eersteklasconcerten is meant as a shared experience in the first place. For many it even happens to be a unique experience on the personal level as well. The format shows that, as long as the context is well thought of, young children can be confronted with complex and layered phenomena, like music, because they are apt to 'absorb' them as a whole experience and in a meaningful way, even without any verbal explanation. At the same time, and in an often confronting way, the format reveals a problematic gap between the emotional involvement and complicity of the six to seven year old participants and many of their accompanying teachers.

Eersteklasconcerten makes us aware of the opposing strategies of children and adults in dealing with the world. It reveals children's need for symbolic play in a context of shared experience and companionship as a basis for being educated. It illustrates children's sensitive openness and aptness for being part of a whole, even without 'really' understanding every aspect of what is happening.

Eersteklasconcerten reminds us about the role that our understanding of human musicality could, and probably should play in rethinking education as a way of participation.

## Keywords

Music participation, young children, concert hall, shared experience

## Introduction

Contemporary composed music and music from the classical repertoire is often considered as too abstract or too complex for young children. Nevertheless, it is very questionable whether 'abstractness' is a feature of this music in itself. Then what would it mean? That the

music isn't 'about' the real world? That it doesn't 'describe' reality? Most music does not, even if one can imagine that it reflects aspects of reality. And as complexity is concerned, children are faced with all kinds of complexity from birth. Should complexity then be avoided when dealing with music?

Music that is being perceived or thought of as abstract, rather refers to the lack of experience with an idiom or its performance practice. In fact, the only abstract music that exists, is the music we can't imagine or remember (Strobbe & Van Regenmortel, 2012), or the one that lacks contextual anchor points with one's own experience. Concerning complexity, let's not forget that most people, young children included, are often more acquainted with a diverse range of musical idioms than they themselves would expect or are conscious about. Thanks to the immersive effect of watching films or TV series, most of them already have been listening to and have been moved by music that could have been composed by Richard Strauß, Stravinsky, Berio, Ravel or Kurtág (Strobbe & Van Regenmortel, 2010).

Then, how can a concert hall confront young audiences with high level music of the past or present and its performers? First of all, it shouldn't worry too much about the aptness of the music for a young audience because of its supposed abstractness or complexity. Secondly, it should provide a context that makes music of high artistic quality a shared experience for both performers and listeners: the concert as an immersive, interactive and contextual event.

Musica, Impulse Centre for Music (Neerpelt, BE) and Concertgebouw Brugge (Bruges, BE) take up this challenge with Eersteklasconcerten each year.

### **Organising a context for young ears**

Eersteklasconcerten is an immersive journey of artistic, interactive experience for children in their first grade of primary school (in Flanders, this means 6 years olds). This production puts a different renowned ensemble in the spotlight each year. In the past, for example, Anima Eterna, Blindman, Brussels Jazz Orchestra, Nadar Ensemble and I Solisti del Vento have worked on the project.

Once more, the 2017 edition in partnership with ChampdAction successfully confronted young ears with contemporary composed music and its interpreters, without compromising on the artistic content. The whole journey lasts no less than 80' to 90', which is a considerable amount of time for six years olds. Nevertheless, the children manage to keep a substantial level of attention without any problem, absorbing music that for many adults (e.g. their classroom teachers) isn't always obvious at first sight.

Young children are capable of making sense of the world in all its complexity on their own terms, without any need for explanation, provided that the context makes sense and that the adult's expectations are fluid. This simply means that the children have to feel emotionally connected with what is happening around them: connectedness as proof of 'understanding'.

Another typical feature of Eersteklasconcerten is the total lack of verbal explanations and instructions during the whole journey. Each group of children is guided by an employee of the concert house. At each station the children are welcomed by two Musica-teachers (sometimes assisted by trainees), who only communicate by means of body language and facial expression. This welcoming often immediately takes a musical form, and as such is part of what is about to happen. The spot itself communicates as well, as it is organised in a clear and inviting way. Each station features some minimalistic theatrical elements, that are thought of in function of the active or immersive experience.

Let's look at an overview (Table 1) of a typical Eersteklasconcerten journey (approximate timings include displacements).

Arrival of 150 children + teachers Each child receives a coloured wristband according to their group			
Small concert or activity: gain a focus (all children + teachers)			5'
Station 1 (50 chldrn + teachers)	Station 2 (idem)	Station 3 (idem)	25'
Station 2	Station 3	Station 1	25'
Station 3	Station 1	Station 2	25'
Small concert or active performance with everyone involved (150 children and teachers + Musica-teachers + musicians)			5'

Table 1

A small introduction already results in a specific focus and sharpened expectations. A general theme is (implicitly) being introduced: e.g. 'wind instruments' (I Solisti del Vento), 'jazz as improvisation on the spot' (Brussels Jazz Orchestra), 'direction and timing of sound' (ChampdAction), etc. This focus will remain central on each of the stations that the participants pass by. The general theme acts as an anchor point for getting a more profound, recognisable and emotionally connected understanding of the music. After the introduction the children go to their respective first station in 3 groups of

50, each group following its own (different) order of consecutive stations.

In general, a station consists of any combination of a mini-workshop and a mini-concert:

- workshop + concert (e.g. *Pression* by Helmut Lachenmann)
- concert + workshop (e.g. *Composed Improvisation* by John Cage)
- workshop and concert crossfading in each other (e.g. *Lohn* by Kaija Saariaho)
- concert and workshop interwoven (e.g. *Voices and piano* by Peter Ablinger)
- a longer workshop, related to the introductory or closing concert (e.g. *Case History* by Roderik De Man)
- embodied concert by dancing to the music while listening for the first time (e.g. *Concert Champêtre* by Henri Tomasi)
- etc.

### **Preparing for a new edition**

The preparation of each edition starts with a discussion with the ensemble about a program that makes sense in its own right, regardless of its complexity or artistic niche, nor the specificity of the target group. Each program reflects the artistic DNA of the ensemble. At this stage, there is still no concern whatsoever about the design of the workshops. Only a possible central element that could serve as a thread for the program is already taken into account, as well as the timing of the individual works being performed in order to find a good balance between workshops and concerts.

Indeed, it isn't true that children only need simple children's songs. They are ready to tackle the world on their own terms. Even if they don't understand it the way adults do, they experience it. The only criterion that we do consider in respect to the children's age, is the timing of the different pieces of music in order to find a well thought of balance between listening and active engagement.

How is it possible not to compromise on the artistic level when dealing with contemporary composed music or complex music from the classical repertoire? How is it possible to tackle the (apparent) lack of experience and familiarity with a musical idiom that - at first sight - is often far away from children's daily experiences? How can we familiarize them with unknown musical idioms, on the spot and with only limited time?

### **Breaking down borders**

First of all we break down the borders between listening, active experiencing and performing, all of them being historically evolved

adult distinctions of possible engagement with music. This doesn't mean that there is no real listening in the traditional sense anymore. On the contrary! Young children can listen in an astonishingly focused way. But the listening is contextualised by what happens before, after or along with the music. Or it is prepared for by active engagement, or it is embodied. The latter easily allows to 'read' the children's level of attention and involvement: their 'sympathy' with what's going on.

The distinction between the performer on stage and the listeners apart, isn't taken for granted anymore just because this is a tradition or because the room is organised as such. Nor does it mean that it is avoided. Putting the performer on stage is rather seen as a specific theatrical element. Think of the horn player in *Appél interstellaire* by Messiaen, standing on a small stage above the seats of the concert hall, who, in combination with the backlight, gives the illusion of him floating through space.

Other possible relationships between performer and listeners are:

- the listeners sitting or lying on the ground around the performer
- the performer walking through the audience while playing
- all performers making a circle around the public
- the children moving around while the musicians play
- etc.

Where the music itself is concerned, there may be a shift from its structural properties to timbral, spatial and contextual aspects.

### **Making music tangible in the literal sense**

Children have no need for 'replicating the same.' It is already enough in having them perform something alike. This 'relative approach' precisely is proof of musical intelligence, because the children are able to recognise similarity.

As the music itself is technically too demanding for them to replicate even part of it, we focus on an aspect that represents the general theme, and which they are immediately able to grasp in the literal sense. This thread often refers to basic psychological aspects that they also know from non-musical contexts, such as *direction of sound*, *time*, *chance*, etc. or any combination of these.

When listening to the concert immediately afterwards, they get the feeling - even the conviction - of having invented the music by themselves (e.g. *Lohn* by Kaija Saariaho). During this year's edition with ChampdAction, one of the children spontaneously whispered to a Musica-teacher: "That's what we just did!"

### **An embodied and shared experience**

Although most children nowadays grow up with music coming from loudspeakers, TV's and online interfaces without the real presence of musicians, this situation masks the fundamental origin of music as a human, interactive and shared phenomenon. Seen from the classical performance practice, making music an embodied and shared experience could sound somewhat uncomfortable, for some even revolutionary. In fact, it isn't. Let's not forget that the 'traditional' concert practice mainly originated as the result of Mahler becoming director of the Wiener Hofoper. As late as in 1897(!) he

*"codified the etiquette of the modern concert experience, with its worshipful, pseudo-religious character. (...) Emperor Franz Joseph, the embodiment of old Vienna, was heard to say: "Is music such a serious business? I always thought it was meant to make people happy.""* (Ross, 2007, p. 21)

So, we can ask ourselves to what extent approaches in which the social aspects of music become more central again, are really new? Although the principle might be not so new, the forms it can take surely is. Eersteklasconcerten is one of these initiatives that transform and adapt old traditions to new contexts and audiences.

Involving big groups of children with their teachers, and addressing both as participants, Eersteklasconcerten is meant (and communicated) as a shared experience in the first place. We have always tried to involve teachers in the activities on an equal basis. Nevertheless, we are sometimes faced with 'a schoolish attitude', as a result of which some classroom teachers feel the need for (mostly unnecessary) control and management of the children's behaviour, instead of joining the workshops with them on an equal level. Many teachers even want to stay apart in order to overlook the children. So, most of them have to be invited, while only some join in spontaneously. And when they do, it has an immediate effect on the children's positive engagement and attentive attitude.

In any case, the concept of music as a well defined object coming from the outside, is still part of most teacher's collective unconscious. For that reason, the format sometimes revealed a problematic gap between the emotional involvement and complicity of the children and many of their teachers. As many of them attend Eersteklasconcerten each year, these attitudes are gradually changing towards more openness. Their willingness to leave the children in our teachers' hands is loosening. More of them start really being part of the same adventure.

Despite the shared aspect of the event, for many children it even happens to be a unique experience on the personal level as well. Last edition resulted in a child saying: *"I get tears in my eyes."* And another one: *"I want to stay here."*

## **Children as actors in a contextual whole**

In Eersteklasconcerten not just each station but the whole journey is regarded as an artistic creation in its own right. In a way, it's a spectacle, but one that avoids the spectacular. It chooses for a sensitive approach to musical experiences, with sober theatrical elements in order to enhance this experience. The participants are not approached as visitors, but as actors that are implicitly directed towards activities that appropriate them with essential aspects of the music and its performers.

In the other direction, the interpretation by the performer has lost its relevance in the traditional sense (Hamel, 2016). The most important element is how the music is construed in the participant's momentary experience, and in the way the performer feels connected with his audience. In such a context not so much the work of art stays central, rather its impact and invitation towards reciprocal active involvement. The musical composition becomes part of a wider whole. Participants are even not aware about the title of the work they are faced with, nor about the composer's name or when and where the work came about. Such information would have no relevance in the moment, and - as we all know - would vaporise immediately afterwards (although the teachers get this information in the form of an information map, including musical activities and tips for discussion afterwards).

The displacements from one station to the other are mapped out as part of the journey through the labyrinth. At the same time they are little moments of transition and relief. Within limits, on these moments children verbally interact about their experiences and express their feelings towards each other.

## **Conclusion**

Eersteklasconcerten convincingly shows that, as long as the context is well thought-out, young children can get really enthusiastic about music from the past and present, irrespective of its artistic complexity. They are apt to 'absorb' music as a whole experience in a meaningful way, even without any verbal explanation.

The format challenges the interpreters', concert organisers' and teachers' view on children's aptness to 'understanding music'. It challenges the idea that children need a methodological approach from simpleness to complexity.

The format makes us aware of the opposing strategies of children and adults in dealing with the world. It reveals children's need for symbolic play in a context of shared experience and companionship as a basis for being educated. It illustrates children's sensitive openness and aptness for being part of a contextual whole, even without 'really'

understanding every aspect of what is happening. It makes clear that children can handle musical complexity if adults are willing to adapt their expectations about what should be learned.

Eersteklasconcerten reminds us about the role that our understanding of human musicality could, and probably should play in rethinking education as a way of participation. It reminds us of the often limited and limiting attitudes of adults towards children as well. It sheds light on the way of children's development as the sharing of experiences, instead of the transfer of prepackaged knowledge.

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## ***Part II***

# ***Demonstrations and Workshops***

# Story Music

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## Abstract

Sharing stories and music is arguably the primary method we have of passing culture on to our children. Including stories in our early years music making enriches the activity immeasurably. This practical workshop is about how to bring the story out in our songs and how to put music into our stories. The aim of the interactive demonstration is to explore how storytelling, music making and movement can be combined and why this is important for children's development.

There will be songs, story telling and acting out of stories to demonstrate how these things can be combined. Reference will be made to telling stories without books and the usefulness or otherwise of props and costumes. The usefulness of having a mental toolbox of basic story elements and structures will be discussed with reference to creating stories with groups of children. There will be discussion of whether some stories are better than others.

I will argue that more attention needs to be given to story elements in music making and to using the power of music to provide children with a repertoire of stories. This has implications for teacher training and practitioner in service training. Reference will be made to relevant recent research (Haven, 2007) demonstrating that presenting all sorts of information, concepts and wider understandings in a story format significantly improves its effectiveness.

## Key words

Stories for all, early years music making, songs, repertoire, teacher training

# **Icelandic playsongs and nursery rhymes**

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## **Abstract**

In this workshop demonstration a few Icelandic playsongs and nursery rhymes will be introduced. Some are unique old traditionals that have been passed down for generations in Iceland but others have been borrowed from foreign sources and readapted in an original way into Icelandic children's culture. The songs and games presented here have all been used for years in popular courses for parents and infants in Reykjavik, Iceland. Participants will learn simple chants, songs and games that are suitable for music classes with 0-5-year-old children. Instructional material will be available, including recorded music.

## **Keywords**

Icelandic folk music, early childhood music courses, playsongs, nursery rhymes, musical activities

## **“BebéPlimPlim”: A contribution to shared listening experiences**

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## **Abstract**

“BebéPlimPlim” is currently a part of the project “GermlnArte – Artistic Transformation for Social and Human Development since Infancy”, supported by Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Along with three other works from the project (“Colos de Música”, “Raps&Rimas” and “Super-Sonics”), it is designed as a transformative transitive training in the field of arts for infants for early childhood professionals, musicians and other artists. Transformative because it is built upon individual needs and motivations, shaping the capacity to express the art within each one and transitive because it is always in process. Its main idea evolves around singing and movement as being born in the mother’s lap, the cradle of the first communicative interactions of a human being. “BebéPlimPlim” is therefore grounded in the concept of communicative musicality developed by Stephen Malloch and Colwyn Trevarthen, highlighting that Music is part of our communication matrix and it can also be present in musical artistic creations. The repertoire from “BebéPlimPlim” is inspired by different sound landscapes, from Johann Sebastian Bach, Meredith Monk, Kurt Schwitters and Hugo Balla to Portuguese folk music and Javanese gamelan. Its wide-ranging influences intend to contribute to the enrichment of listening experiences since infancy.

The main goals of this training are to explore communicative resources using the body and the voice, to be able to use the repertoire in different educational settings, to share meaningful moments of musical interaction, and to contact with professionals who work in different early childhood contexts. The demonstration aims to share one possible experience built upon this specific musical repertoire. The activities are centred in listening, movement, vocal landscapes and human interaction.

The implications for this work are to offer complementary educational and artistic perspectives not yet provided in our higher education training programmes for teachers and artists, and to develop processes of autonomy, initiative and reflection within the context of musical creation for children.

This work emphasises listening as a different possibility of connecting to music, and draws attention to sharing listening experiences as the basis of being human.

**Keywords**

Communicative musicality, listening, movement, vocal landscape, human interaction

# Early Ears: Findings from an innovative music technology with young children project

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## Abstract

The Early Ears project was a two-year Youth Music funded partnership between Laboratory Media Education, Future Projects and The School of Applied Social Sciences, University Campus Suffolk (UCS) led by Dr Wendy Lecluyse. The settings were in Great Yarmouth and Norwich, UK and the children were aged 3-4yrs. The methodology adopted for the assessment of the project was IMTAP (Individualized Music Therapy Assessment Profile)

By exploring cutting edge music-making technology and techniques, integrated with music therapy, we aimed to establish a new approach to improving the musical and wider development of children under the age of five years in challenging circumstances, by virtue of deprivation or social/economic disadvantage.

In this Workshop, participants will have the opportunity to experience new and unique methods to delivery and monitoring that can be enjoyed with technology. We will show how working through non-directive relationships encourages 'communicative musicality'. This hands-on session will leave participants with the confidence to use technology immediately and effectively in their settings. This will be supported with film evidence of the impact of the technology used in settings. The session will also include opportunities for exploration and discussion of the activities.

In the workshop we will present findings from the project in relation to where we started from with use of technology, how it developed and how it affected our delivery. We will also explore the relationship between data collection and reflective practice. We will outline findings related to the opportunities and barriers that technology brings, the use of technology to develop enabling environments and free play.

The main areas of learning from the project that we would like to share are related to accessibility, engagement, using music tech as an approach, monitoring, positive relationships and 'enabling environments'. We have new information to share in connection with how using music technology can benefit language development. The project has pioneered the use of non-directive relationships and the effect this has on children's engagement. We will also share the impact of working with a music therapist in the team.

## Keywords

Music technology, methods of assessment

# ***Spoken Papers***

## ***Part III***

# ***Research Papers***

# Communicative musicality: Exploring parent-child musical relationships through toddler crib songs

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## **Abstract**

During infancy, parents and babies are drawn closer by their shared musicality that enables them to converse emotionally and share meaningful time together, thus generating and participating in what Trevarthen and Malloch define as "communicative musicality" (2009). Their interactions are often reflected in toddlers' private "crib songs" (Sole, 2014). Previous research (Sole, 2016) has shown the pulse, quality and narrative (Malloch, 1999) of such vocalizations, as if the interactive moments of daily musical engagement continue to be re-lived privately at bedtime. Through spontaneous pre-sleep vocalizations, some toddlers (18-36 months old) reflected and made sense of meaningful moments of musical communication shared with their parents during the day. More recently, Cali (2015) expanded the view, applying redefined parameters of Communicative musicality to parent-child relationships. In her study on families, she examined parent and child relationships, through an analysis of the frequency, strength, duration and impact of each musical interaction (Collins & Madsen, 2003) as reported by family members.

In the current study, the redefined parameters of pulse intensity and form, were used to investigate parent-child relationships of three toddlers as emerging from family interviews, journaling of daily musical experiences and the analysis of audio recording of the toddlers' bedtime singing. Preliminary results indicate that parent and child are both active agents in shaping their relationship, and suggest a strong bi-directional influence (Kuczynski, 2003) of which parents are often unaware. Music shared between adult and child during the daytime feeds toddlers' musical exploration and reflection at night. In turn, such awareness influences adults, increasing and expanding daytime musical sharing with toddlers.

### Keywords

Communicative musicality, toddlers, crib songs, musical relationships, bonding

# **The effects of a collaborative approach on reflection among a group of early childhood music practitioners**

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## **Abstract**

The field of early childhood music education is characterised by a diverse pool of practitioners with a myriad of skills, knowledge and experience. Many work on a freelance, independent basis with little or no opportunity to share and discuss their work. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, reflection is considered to be a necessary part of personal and professional development.

The main purpose of the qualitative study was to look at whether collaboration, a coming together to share and discuss experiences, can help practitioners reflect on their practice. The study reported on a three month action research project whereby a focus group of five local early childhood (music) practitioners was established. The group met 3 times and it used these occasions to discuss issues relevant to members of the group. Journals were also kept by members of the group in between meetings. The study investigated how members of the focus group used these opportunities to reflect on their practice and how such an environment may have become the catalyst for further reflection.

A postmodern methodology and constructivist lens were used, providing a framework which allowed participants to become actively involved co-researchers. The methods used to gather data – semi-structured interviews, focus groups and journals - were congruent with this framework and allowed the different viewpoints of the participants to be recognised. Data, collected over three cycles of discussion and reflection, were analysed on an on-going basis.

The study found that collaborative discussions enabled points of focus to emerge for further reflection. These were specific to individual participants, depending on their needs and stage of development. Perspectives were broadened, allowing participants to begin to think about their practice in a different way. Discussion and reflection led to more awareness among participants of their individual developmental needs. The small-scale localised opportunity for development that this project offered was seen to be pertinent to how adults learn and was relevant to their everyday practice. Establishing local groups could then feed into regional or national CPD days, which could tailor their programmes to suit the needs of the participants.

## **Keywords**

Reflection, development, action research

## **Introduction**

The field of early childhood music is a varied and diverse sector, with no regulation (Young,2007). Practitioners themselves come from all walks of life – musicians, parents, teachers; the places they practise range from private nurseries to school settings, children's centres to privately run groups. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience within the sector, but most of it is not shared because of the inherent

way early childhood music is practised, namely in an isolated way. Being an early childhood music practitioner can be a lonely profession with little or no opportunity to discuss and share ideas.

In today's workplace, professional and personal development are considered an essential and expected part of all professions (Moon, 2004), including early childhood music education. However, as practitioners working in isolation, what form does that professional and personal development take? How can practitioners develop themselves? Reflection is one means by which practitioners can develop their thinking and their practice. It is recognised as a valuable way for professionals to generate thinking in order to improve practice (Brock, 2015). Brock (*ibid.*) comments that 'reflection and reflective practice are core values of professionals and have a key role in professional learning' (pg.7). For the freelance early childhood music practitioner, however, reflection may not come easily, as 'the autonomy bred by isolation' (Stanley, 2011 pg 73) is comfortable and reassuring. However, the feeling of isolation felt by so many lone practitioners is not comfortable or reassuring. Having the opportunity to come together to share discuss thoughts, ideas and feelings with like-minded people in a safe and caring environment may be a way to overcome the sense of isolation without compromising one's autonomy. Sharing is not a compromise for autonomy. In fact, it may help to build a sense of agency and may be a way to help overcome the barriers to reflection and collaboration which are sometimes prevalent in this area of education. It may lead to an enhancing and broadening of self-awareness, with the possibility of bringing about changes to practice, through an increase in one's knowledge base. It may also result in different ways of thinking, thus arriving at a better understanding of teaching and stimulating improvements.

Professional development also occurs through more formal means, such as conferences. They are a good means of disseminating current information and are useful for networking and connecting people. They may also have an impact in creating a sense of renewed energy and enthusiasm among practitioners. But in reality, how effective are they? Do they provide real possibilities for practitioners to develop and reflect on their practice in the long term? Is the content relevant to practitioners and their daily work? For how long do practitioners feel re-energised and enthused?

This paper will report on an action research project undertaken as part of an MA in Early Childhood Music Education, which sought to provide the benefits of development at a local level, in a way that was relevant to the participants with a view to helping them reflect on their practice.

## **Background and Aims**

As a practitioner and researcher, I am interested in how these two areas can be more connected. My studies afforded me the

opportunity to reflect on my practice by becoming a researcher, studying my own work and looking at ways of developing and improving it (Craft & Paige-Smith, 2011). Students on the course came together through a series of face-to-face days, as a learning community, to further knowledge. We would reconnect as a community, sharing and discussing ideas and thoughts, problems and joys, with a view to supporting each other and stimulating alternative views. Discussions emerged from a theoretical standpoint, but always relating to lived through experiences and it was these real life experiences which bonded the group as we discovered how common certain themes and issues were. The process helped me to reflect more deeply on my practice and encouraged a broadening of perspectives. As my course came to an end, I wondered if it would be possible to recreate this environment closer to home. However, although my own experience of accepting the need for change had been positive, I questioned whether others would be willing to take that first step. Would it be possible for a group to be established? Would practitioners want to share their practice? Would they feel threatened by sharing ideas? Also, once I embarked on my own journey, I had negative as well as positive feelings. I felt vulnerable because of questioning what I thought I knew. Would others be willing to commit to starting their own journey if it meant possibly having negative feelings? Through my own reflections and from my own experience, I have come to believe that collaboration is an extremely powerful way of creating a mutually beneficial environment where meaningful knowledge can be co-constructed, leading to professional and personal development. The purpose then of the study was to establish a focus group of local early childhood (music) practitioners to meet regularly, providing an environment which could become the catalyst for reflection.

Communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), a framework for exploring learning in social circumstances, provides an opportunity for the link between theory and practice to be explored. They enable people with different experiences and levels of knowledge to come together to share, support and acknowledge each other's skill set, thus validating and affirming one's beliefs, and also moving people forward in their thinking. They offer an opportunity for participants to be socially active within a group, sharing and reflecting on their experiences in order to make them more meaningful and valued. This interactive learning environment creates and sustains a shared view of the world relevant to all participants. Communities of practice (CoP) are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. They are a means for the social generation of knowledge, not necessarily to reach a general consensus, but to provide a supportive environment where mutual learning enables knowledge to be increased. This sharing of

experiences and real-life scenarios is also consistent with the way adults prefer to learn.

The study looked at how practitioners used a series of opportunities for discussion to reflect on their practice, promoting debate as well as critical thinking. It explored reflective practice in terms of the qualities of depth and thoughtfulness necessary for it to be significantly effective. However, reflection is not easy and the depths of one's reflections depends on what stage of development has been reached. It is a process which involves among other things, a combination of critical thinking - theory based understanding of a topic - and critical reflection - practice based implementation of that understanding. It requires asking questions of ourselves and our beliefs, being able to see outside the box and to see the bigger picture. It is a long and emotional journey, which can often lead to negative feelings of inadequacy and inner conflict when practitioners start to question and challenge what they are doing and why they are doing it? Wackerhausen (2009) refers to this as 'second order reflection' (pg 466), which takes practitioners to foreign territories, where they experience alien concepts and unfamiliar perspectives. It develops into an abstract conceptualization of their experience, where they become uncertain of their role, their practice, which may be hard to accept and hard to define. It brings into play the question of balancing theory and practice. However, by moving through these phases of questioning and doubt, practitioners may come out stronger and reconciled to new ways of practice. Learning is enhanced and a feeling of empowerment and increased self-confidence may be found. Paige-Smith and Craft (2011) remind us that reflection is a long, difficult and seemingly never-ending journey.

## **Method**

The research was carried out using an action research approach. This method encapsulated the philosophical basis of the research, namely a postmodern, interpretivist perspective within a social constructionist paradigm, and allowed for contextualised analysis. Action research is concerned with linking theory and practice in a way that is commensurate with communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). It is of the people and for the people with the primary aim of expanding knowledge which can then be used to enhance practice. The main characteristic of action research is that it is participatory, where interaction and reflection may help to shape thoughts and deeds. Action research is a cyclical process which goes through the phases of doing and reflecting, leading to more doing and more reflection in a progressive way.

The design of the project allowed for participation and collaboration, as well as reflection, within the cyclical process. The methods needed to be appropriate for the type of project, concerned as it is with allowing different perspectives and voices to be heard in an attempt

to provide a meaningful learning experience for all involved. Therefore, a focus group was established giving participants the opportunity to discuss their viewpoints (the doing) and journals were offered as a means of thinking about the discussions within the focus group (the reflection). The cycles happened three times. Initial one-to-one interviews were also carried out prior to the focus groups. Figure 1 provides a pictorial description of the process used.

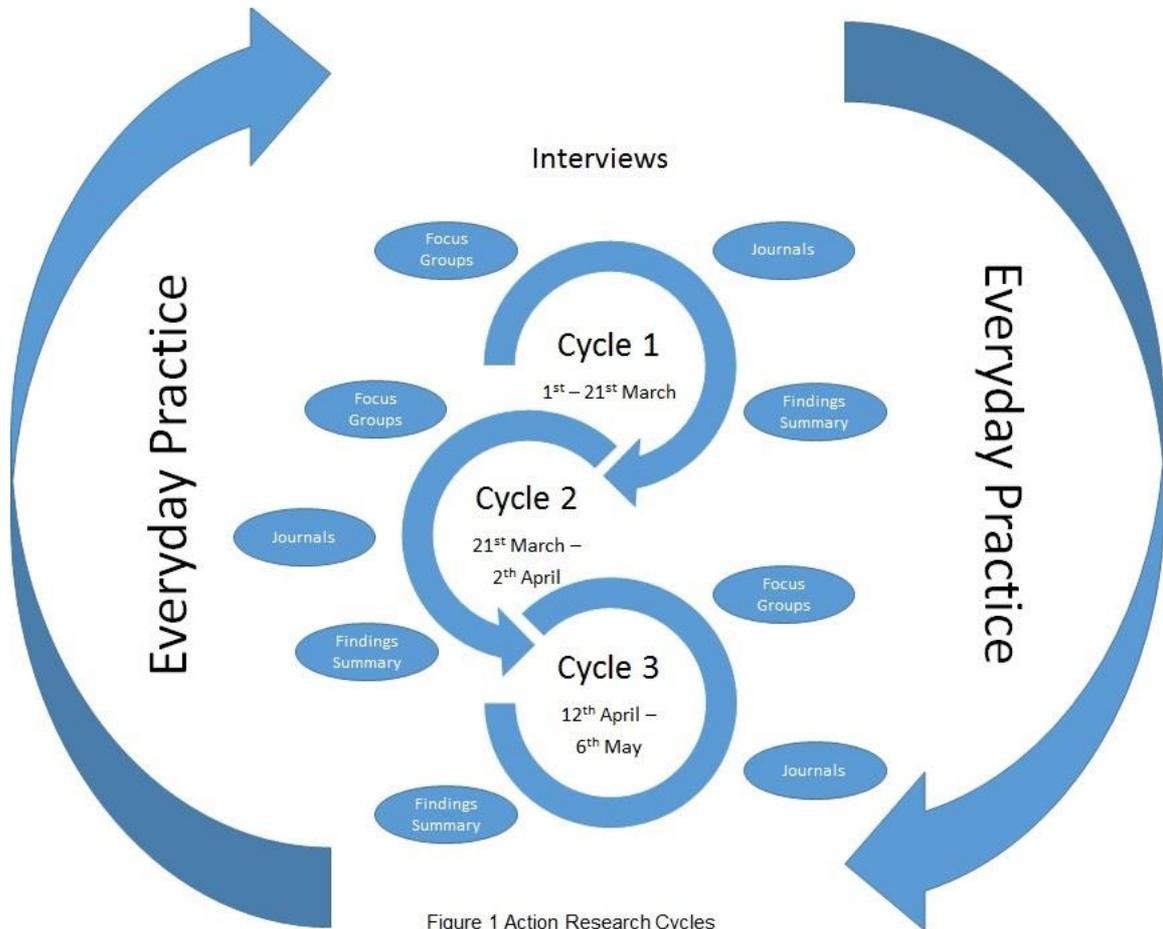


Figure 1 Action Research Cycles

The semi-structured interview allowed for flexible responses and enabled participants to determine their own context, thereby engaging them in the process as active participants. Using a focus group as a method of collecting data was pertinent to this study and its fundamental philosophy as it is a tool which allows participants, as active listeners and critical friends, to share and experience a deeper understanding of local and contextualised practice (Gruenhagen, 2007). It promotes an equitable participative openness, which enables ideas, thoughts and feelings to be aired in a safe environment. It is also consistent with the type of situated learning context which appeals to adult learners and which is prevalent in communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). It is a way to challenge one's thoughts which may lead to a reconceptualization of knowledge. By

doing this it may be possible to open up new ways of thinking, new perspectives and to broaden perceptions, to socially construct learning through an active, relevant and experience-led process (Gruenhagen, 2007). The aim of the focus group for this project was not to reach a consensus (Liamputtong, 2011) of what early childhood music education looks like, but to share and recognise the diversity and complexity inherent in personal experience, offering support and scaffolding, with a view to making practitioners more expert in their field.

Areas which were important to the members of the group needed to be acknowledged and addressed for the focus groups to be an effective tool to engage in reflective dialogue. By not setting an agenda, the focus groups allowed participants to express their views freely and allowed for a reciprocal sharing necessary for the generation of knowledge in an adult environment (Merriam, 2008; Taylor, 2010). Through open discussion and the unstructured nature of the focus group, perspectives were questioned, challenged and broadened.

The purpose of the journal for this study was to enable participants to reflect on what had been discussed during the focus groups and to try to equate what had been discussed with their practice.

## **Findings**

The initial semi-structured interviews generated an overarching theme of diversity and its prevalence within the sector - diversity of ways into the field of early childhood music, diversity of knowledge and skills, diversity of types of settings and sessions and diversity of reasons for participating in the project.

The combined knowledge, expertise and wisdom which participants brought to the focus group, based as they were on real life experiences, helped to shape the discussions and helped to move participants forward in their reflecting. The discussions ranged from general practical issues, pertinent to all the participants – for example, staff/parents not joining in – to thoughts on perceptions – how we see ourselves and how others see us – to more specific individual developmental needs – how to reflect more, needing to take more risks. Participants were able to process negative feelings and expand their self-perceptions and perceptions of others. For example, feelings about staff not joining in evolved during the groups as we began to question why they were not joining in and how we could make it easier for them to do so. The diversity within the group enabled participants to begin to think about issues from different perspectives, leading to a broadening of perceptions. It enabled participants to begin to recognise areas of development and to support each others' needs (Gruenhagen, 2007), such as taking more risks, admitting our limitations, learning more repertoire. The collaborative discussions then

acted as a catalyst for participants to reflect further on their thinking about possible developmental needs.

The journals showed that participants reflected on discussions in between each group meeting. For example, one of the participants brought up the notion of whether they considered themselves an educator or an entertainer. After discussing the issue within the group and then reflecting on it via the journal, the participant was able to accept and be happy with how they saw themselves. Participants were starting to think about their specific needs – next steps, how to relieve boredom, needing to read/learn more about the subject, acknowledging that reflection may mean change.

The interaction of the focus groups, followed by personal reflections, offered a meaningful route to self-discovery and assisted the feeling of autonomy rather than hindered it (Stanley, 2007). This active reflection enabled participants to begin to draw on the collective experiences of the group to 'revise, modify and refine their expertise' (Finlay, 2008, pg 4). This showed how real life knowledge and practice reflects the values and needs of the learners, allowing participants to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge (Hansman & Wilson, 2002).

The participants used the focus groups as an opportunity to share ideas, to reassure each other, to process thoughts and ideas. The discussions helped to validate current practice as well as beginning to look at ways to improve practice. Discussions also helped to enhance participants' sense of value. This reassurance led to a feeling of empowerment and growing confidence, which in turn led to a broadening of outlooks. Participants used the diversity of the group to focus their thoughts, helping the reflective process. Perspectives were broadened, needs were identified and problems aired, with consensual solutions being offered as part of the democratic learning process.

It is interesting to note how fewer entries were made in the journals after the last focus group, indicating that the focus group was a necessary part of, and the motivation for, the reflection process.

## **Conclusions**

The diversity of experience and knowledge, highlighted during the interviews, played a part in contextualising the reasons participants gave for participating. These components lend weight to the thoughts of Merriam (2008) that historical and sociocultural contexts should be taken into account in an adult learning environment. They also add to the argument that large scale conferences are not necessarily the optimum route to help practitioners to develop, as they are too general and not specific enough for the needs of individuals (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). At a local level, the diversity of knowledge and experiences, together with an acknowledgement of those as being valid and meaningful, led to an enrichment of knowledge and perceptions. Through the sharing of experiences, through an

acceptance of different perspectives, through empathy towards each other, participants were able to reflect on their own personal needs and their next stages of development. They were able to expand their horizons looking at issues from a different perspective and started to look at the bigger picture and to think more deeply about their practice. Whether this reflection is of a practical nature or of a theoretical nature, depending on individual stages of development, the fact that a collaborative approach has enabled participants to focus on and highlight these needs shows it to be beneficial. It also helps to relieve feelings of isolation and as such participants have agreed to continue meeting even though the project has come to an end. Participants have also been to see each other's work, which has offered another opportunity for new ways of thinking about our practice. This could potentially lead to an acknowledgement of what best practice might look like. By continuing to share ideas and observe each other's work a collaborative approach to practice and reflection on practice is beginning to emerge, in a way which links research and practice.

This type of action research project could also be used between early years practitioners and the visiting musician to help build better relationships between the different parties, including parents, involved in children's education. Having time to reflect on events is a powerful means of coming to a shared understanding and could lead to a more integrated and relevant music education for young children.

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# **Toward a comprehensive, creative and culturally responsive early childhood music curriculum in Hong Kong**

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## **Abstract**

This paper reports on an action research project that aimed to develop a comprehensive, creative and culturally responsive early childhood music curriculum that is appropriate to the Hong Kong context. Ten teachers in three preschools in Hong Kong participated. Pre- and post-project surveys were administered to teachers and principals. A total of 8 visits to each participating teacher was arranged when lessons were video-recorded and observations on the teaching strategies and student responses were noted. A post-observation meeting with an individual teacher after each lesson was conducted to critically reflect on the teaching and learning processes and to develop an action plan.

Preliminary findings on data include: (1) The Hong Kong culture is a special one that combines Chinese and Western ideologies. Deep inside, teachers possess a lot of the traditional Chinese values. However, they are keen to learn from other cultures, appreciating and wanting to bring in foreign ideas to advance their education. (2) Prior to the study, teachers believed that they had been integrating their curriculum. However, the level of integration was superficial. During the study, they discovered that a comprehensive curriculum is one that integrates the various learning areas which are of equal importance. Music is not used as a tool to learn other areas, but a part of a holistic learning experience. (3) Teachers learned the art of music teaching. Music is one of the creative arts and it is of utmost importance that music activities can provide opportunities for students to express their creativity. Music activities need to allow students to experience musical elements, emotions and feelings. Since music tends to excite students, teachers found the need to develop strong classroom management skills appropriate in the music classroom so as to provide students with an environment that is conducive to learning. (4) The experience of participating in action research was shown to be helpful to teachers in providing them with an opportunity to reflect critically and deeply on the teaching and learning processes. It also increased their confidence and ability to implement a comprehensive curriculum that includes music in their classrooms.

## **Keywords**

Integrated curriculum, Hong Kong, preschool, action research

## **Introduction**

### ***The Need for Creative Arts in a Comprehensive Early Childhood Curriculum***

We are currently living in a time of socio-economic and technological changes that call for new ways of learning and thinking. More than ever, younger generations need to develop diverse capacities that will help them face the world's future demands (Gardner, 2007). Gardner's highly influential theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983; 1993; 2006) recognizes that people have different cognitive strengths and styles. He argues that in American schools, only the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences (two out of eight intelligences) are emphasized. This does not provide opportunities for human potential to be developed to its fullest. Integrating the arts in education is an important means through which we can nurture children into well-rounded, creative individuals.

The significance of arts in school curricula and in student learning has been stressed by numerous educators (Davies, 2007; Eisner, 2004; Fowler, 2001; Rabkin, 2004). Teachers need to acknowledge children's ability to construct their own understandings about their world and to express their ideas in original, inventive ways, which can be achieved through arts-based learning (Isenberg & Jalongo, 2013). Jalongo and Stamp (1997) found that teaching becomes 'routine, monotonous, and spiritless' when the arts are not included. They contend that arts are 'an integral part of authentic learning' that teaches the whole child to develop socially, creatively, emotionally, intellectually and physically (p. xvi). An interdisciplinary curriculum connecting the arts and other subjects can foster students' relational thinking and make learning meaningful (Barrett, 2008).

Brain research has demonstrated the significance of early brain plasticity, concluding that the absence of the particular forms of cognitive stimulation provided via music and dance can have long-term adverse consequences for cognitive development (Flohr, Miller & Debeus, 2000). Young children naturally love the arts, as observed from their engagement in activities such as drawing, singing, dancing, and dramatizing. Moreover, the arts have been found to yield numerous benefits for students: enhancing verbal and nonverbal communication skills, increasing attention, concentration, motivation, and cognitive involvement with and comprehension of subject matters (Fowler, 2001). Thus, besides providing a well-rounded education, a comprehensive curriculum that integrates the creative arts can also motivate children's learning interest and prepare for their success in school.

### ***Promoting an Arts-Based Interdisciplinary Curriculum for Preschools in the USA***

Throughout my education and teaching career in Hong Kong, I was told that 'Western pedagogy' (i.e. an integrated curriculum, learning through play, a child-centered approach in which children are active learners discovering new knowledge rather than being taught passively) was more advanced than the pedagogy that was practiced by Hong Kong teachers. But when I emigrated to the USA in 2001, I was surprised to find that like the schools in Hong Kong, there had been an over-emphasis on test score achievement in the academic subjects of language and mathematics, especially at that time with the introduction of the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act. Consequently, teachers have to teach to the test rather than attend to student learning needs. The focus on tested subjects marginalizes other subjects in the curriculum (Chapman, 2004, 2007), resulting in an average decrease in instructional time for art and music in school (CEP, 2008).

I was disappointed that what I learned as 'advanced Western pedagogy' was not practised in American public schools in general. Therefore, I founded the *Educating the Creative Mind* Project (Chen-Hafteck, 2014a; 2014b) to promote arts education and to bring a well-rounded education to children. The project started with an international conference in 2010, featuring Professor Howard Gardner as keynote speaker and bringing together over 500 national and international educators. It was followed by a year-long professional development project during 2012-2013, supported by a National Endowment for the Arts grant. A total of 27 preschool classroom teachers and 4 school administrators worked together to implement an arts-based interdisciplinary curriculum into their classrooms. Data indicated that participating teachers increased their interest and commitment to the arts, understanding of how to develop integrated arts experiences for their students, and confidence with using the arts in their classrooms (Chen-Hafteck, 2013b). (See project website for more details: [www.kean.edu/~creative](http://www.kean.edu/~creative).)

### ***Developing a Comprehensive, Creative and Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Curriculum in Hong Kong***

As a Hong Kong native, I have an in-depth understanding of its education system and culture. Even though I no longer live in Hong Kong, I have continued my research on Hong Kong children. In 2016, I received a Fulbright research award to conduct a research project in Hong Kong, expanding and adapting the *Educating the Creative Mind* idea on arts-integrated early childhood curriculum to Hong Kong preschools.

For many years, early childhood education was given a low priority in Hong Kong. Both the status and salary level for preschool teachers were comparatively lower than teachers at other levels of education.

Preschool education was not included in the nine years' free and compulsory education until very recently. Preschools are run by private organizations, with limited government funding. However, with the major education reform in 2000, early childhood education has been given a special status for the first time. The vision of enabling students to attain all-round development through early childhood education is established. Moreover, arts education has been identified as one of the eight key learning areas (Curriculum Development Council, 2000; Education and Manpower Bureau, 2001). In 2003, the government announced to allocate one-fifth of its annual budget to education, the largest allocation to any policy priority (Chen, 2007). In 2006, the government allocated US \$8.7 million as a 'Capacity Enhancement Grant' for kindergartens to acquire more teaching resources. The government also provides 'education vouchers' worth up to US \$1600 per year for each child aged 3 to 6 starting from 2007 to subsidize school fees and to be invested in the professional development of teachers (Education & Manpower Bureau, 2006; HKSAR Government, 2006). It also requires preschools to increase the proportion of qualified kindergarten teachers employed in their schools in order to qualify for the government's subsidy (Chan & Leong, 2007).

In 2006, the 'Guide to the Pre-primary curriculum' was issued by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC, 2006). It introduces developmentally appropriate practice for young children, emphasizing learning through play and child-centered approaches. Six learning areas, including Physical Fitness and Health; Language; Early Mathematics; Science and Technology; Self and Society; and Arts, are identified for teachers to ensure a comprehensive and balanced curriculum. An integrated curriculum across different learning areas is recommended, allowing teachers greater flexibility in devising learning and teaching strategies that cater to children's holistic development in the cognitive, language, physical, affective, social and aesthetic aspects.

Despite these policies to reform early childhood education, the results in local schools have not been satisfactory due to the achievement-oriented pressure from parents and the competitive education system. Pearson and Rao (2006) reported a clash between traditional and contemporary attitudes towards education and an underestimation of the potential force exerted by the sociocultural beliefs of the Chinese people. Parents want preschools to emphasize 'academic' so that children can pass the entrance examination for acceptance to prestigious elementary schools. As a result, children have little music instruction, as they have to spend a lot of time studying Chinese, English and Mathematics. They have to learn to read, write and calculate well above the level that they are ready for (Chan & Chan, 2003; Cheng, 2006). Wong (2003) found that it is stressful for teachers to

implement a new curriculum without adequate support from the school management and parents. The Chinese concept of diligent study, in which play is regarded as trivial and a possible barrier to learning in Chinese culture (Liu, 2004; Li, 2001), poses a conceptual barrier to the implementation of 'learning through play' approach in Hong Kong (West & Chiu, 2007). Furthermore, Li (2003) found that Hong Kong teachers perceived firm traditional instruction with emphasis on planning, preparation and external judgment as indicators for good teaching. Such a teacher-directed approach is in contrast with the child-centered approach of the reform in which children are given the freedom in their learning initiatives (Rao, Ng & Pearson, 2010). It is a great challenge to change the beliefs of what are the qualities of good teachers and good teaching, which are so deeply-rooted in the Chinese culture. Therefore, Li, Rao and Tse (2012) suggested that 'people should adapt rather than adopt those pedagogical innovations developed in other sociocultural milieu' (p. 603), and that perhaps there should be a blend of direct instruction and independent learning approach.

Another challenge to an arts-integrated curriculum is that although the new policy recognizes the significance of music in the curriculum, music in early childhood teacher preparation is still very inadequate. In Hong Kong, most preschool teachers receive only 20-25 hours of music classes in their basic teacher education (Chan & Leong, 2006). Even for teachers who had completed the advanced training, their music teaching was found to be unsatisfactory (Wong, 2003). Most preschool teachers reported that they were not confident to teach music and felt the need for more in-service training (Chan & Leong, 2007). Thus, professional development in music is needed for these teachers.

In short, this is an exciting time as 'early childhood education is entering a very positive era in the history of Hong Kong education' (Rao & Li, 2009, p. 243). The government is providing full support to ensure a high quality of early education and care. Research studies in this field have blossomed, but they are mostly collecting data and reporting on the current situation and challenges. It is evident that the present need is for the teachers to receive the support they need to put into practice those ideals advocated by the education reform. Therefore, the present project aims to make a difference by improving teaching practice through an action research method. Providing mentorship in supporting teachers has shown to be effective (Chen-Hafteck, 2013b; Tse & Leung, 2010). Thus, my role as the researcher has often included working with the teachers in the field, serving as mentor who facilitates teachers' observations and reflections, guiding them to discover the teaching approach that is culturally responsive and progressive, that I hope, will eventually lead to advancement of early childhood teaching practice in Hong Kong.

## **Objectives**

The ultimate goal is to develop a comprehensive, creative and culturally responsive early childhood music curriculum in Hong Kong. With my support as the researcher, the participating teachers created and improved on their curriculum design and instructional strategies that feature an interdisciplinary curriculum – where the educational goals of both music and other learning areas can be achieved most effectively through drawing meaningful connections between the different learning areas in the curriculum, fostering relational thinking and deepening understanding (Barrett & Veblen, 2012). Hopefully, the project will serve as a starting point for teachers to understand what it means to implement an integrated curriculum.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions of the present study are:

1. How are music and other learning areas taught in early childhood classrooms in Hong Kong? To what extent are the two subjects integrated?
2. How can teachers shape their curriculum design and instructional strategies that can integrate music and language learning, providing a holistic and creative learning experience that is culturally responsive?
3. To what extent can action research help teachers in increasing their confidence and ability to implement a comprehensive curriculum, using a child-centered approach, and including creative arts and play in their classrooms?

## **Method**

Action research method was used and qualitative data were collected. Three preschools in different localities (Shatin, Tuen Mun, Fanling) participated. One teacher from each grade from each school were the research participants. Pre-project interviews were used to investigate teachers' ideas and opinion about integrated curriculum and to measure the self-perceived level of confidence and ability in implementing a comprehensive curriculum, using a child-centered approach, and including creative arts and play in their classrooms. Then, during three months, eight lessons were observed and post-observation meetings where teachers discussed with the researchers about the lessons were conducted. Through the action research cycle of observing – reflecting – identifying problem – developing action plan – acting on the plan – back to observing, etc., teachers and researchers were able to develop more efficient teaching strategies and lesson plans after each meeting. Finally, there was a post-project interview that was similar to the pre-project interview, and the data of

the two interviews provided a comparison for evaluating the effects of the project.

## **Findings**

At the time of writing this paper, data analysis is still on-going. Therefore, this is a report of the preliminary findings of this study.

First, it was found that the Hong Kong culture is a special one that combines Chinese and Western ideologies. Deep inside, teachers possess a lot of the traditional Chinese values. However, they are keen to learn from other cultures, appreciating and wanting to bring in foreign ideas to advance their education. During the project, they became aware that any new teaching philosophy and methods need to be adapted and adjusted according to student learning needs so that they are suitable to the local Hong Kong children.

Second, prior to the study, teachers believed that they had been integrating their curriculum. However, the level of integration was superficial. Most of the time, they thought that by singing a song about a topic in their classroom, they had already integrated music into the curriculum. During the study, they discovered that a comprehensive curriculum is one that integrates the various learning areas which are of equally importance. Music is not used as a tool to learn other areas, but a part of a holistic learning experience.

Third, teachers learned the art of music teaching. Music is one of the creative arts and it is of utmost importance that music activities can provide opportunities for students to express their creativity. Music activities need to allow students to experience musical elements, emotions and feelings. For instance, teachers realized how much more children can gain from a singing activity when they insisted on children's singing with good pitch, rhythm, tone color, and expression. They discovered children's diverse creative ideas when they allowed children the freedom to explore different ways of playing a percussion instrument instead of giving instructions on one way of playing it.

Furthermore, since music tends to excite students, teachers found the need to develop strong classroom management skills appropriate in the music classroom so as to provide students with an environment that is conducive to learning. They had to work on the balancing act between teacher-directed and child-centered approaches in their teaching so as to achieve an effective learning environment in the classroom that can also provide children with a creative outlet.

Last but not least, the experience of participating in action research was shown to be helpful to teachers in providing them with an opportunity to reflect critically and deeply on the teaching and

learning processes. It also increased their confidence and ability to implement a comprehensive curriculum that includes music in their classrooms.

## Conclusion

The overwhelmingly positive responses from the teachers and principals throughout the project have supported that an arts-based interdisciplinary curriculum in preschool classroom can motivate children's learning and enhance the teaching and learning processes. Through well-designed lessons integrating music and other learning areas, the teaching and learning processes become more meaningful, relevant and creative. Such lessons also promote children's self-expression and creativity. Integrating music and the arts in education is an important way through which we can nurture children into well-rounded and creative individuals.

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# Maternal wellbeing through singing

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## Abstract

Every Monday afternoon a group of mothers gather for Mamasing in a small studio at the back of a baby shop in Essex. Their infants lay on cushions or are worn in slings, their toddlers shake eggs and tambourines as they roll and totter around the rugs. The mothers sing together. Gospel, soul, rock, pop, traditional, classical, the style doesn't matter. The mothers sing, and they experience something they describe as "soul-soaring", "magical" and "empowering".

In this qualitative study I explored changes in subjective wellbeing that occurred through group singing, investigating the relationship between singing and musical parenting. I used the Warwick-Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) with a group of twelve of the mothers before and after a singing session. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four of the mothers exploring their perceptions of singing in the choir in relation to their well-being, and their musical interactions with their infants and toddlers away from the choir.

This paper shares the perspectives of some of the mothers, with the research results showing a significant increase in wellbeing for mothers and reporting a resultant increase in frequency and type of everyday musical interactions between mother-infant dyads.

## Keywords

Maternal wellbeing, maternal singing, singing and health, musical parenting

## Introduction

Every Monday afternoon a group of mothers gather in a small studio at the back of a baby shop. Their infants lay on cushions or are worn in slings, their toddlers shake eggs and tambourines as they roll and totter around the rugs. The mothers sing together. Gospel, soul, rock, pop, traditional, classical, the genre doesn't matter. The mothers sing, and they experience something they describe as "soul-soaring", "magical" and "empowering".

In this study I investigate mothers singing together and with their infants and toddlers present. This research is targeted on a particular group of mothers in MamaSing, a parent and infant choir that rehearse together weekly singing contemporary songs and popular music in harmony. The study assesses the subjective wellbeing of the mothers and investigates mothers' perceptions of how singing in the group affects their wellbeing. It explores how singing in the choir relates to the vocal interactions they have with their children when they are away from the choir.

There is already a considerable body of research around the benefits of music in early childhood with the emphasis upon the child ie: child centred music groups led by adults and child initiated music making. The importance of music between mother

and infant is further established through the conceptions of communicative musicality (Trevarthen & Malloch, 2002). Equally so, music and health is a growing area of research including, in particular, the connections between choral singing and mental wellbeing. However, there is a paucity of research regarding music making of parents and how this relates the parent child musical relationship in everyday life.

This study explores the theoretical background to singing, health and wellbeing and is an exploration into the perceived changes in wellbeing of mothers who choose to sing together in the company of their infants and children.

### **Maternal Wellbeing**

At an extremely vulnerable time when new mothers are experiencing a plethora of emotions, tiredness, and hormonal changes, they also have responsibility for a new life. With a bewildering quantity of articles available via the Internet asserting various hypotheses around infant development and parenting, these mothers encounter vastly differing attitudes and an underlying pressure to conform. Mackinlay & Baker discuss a mismatch of what women expect of motherhood and how they feel, how they manage in reality, coping with realities such as “feeling out of control, loss of freedom, loneliness and isolation, entrapment, lack of achievement and recognition, and interruption to personal interests” (2005, p. 70).

The wellbeing of a mother has a direct affect on the wellbeing of her infant (Murray & Cooper, 1997; Roberts, 2010), highlighting the relevance of this research to the early childhood sector. One of the dominant theories of infant wellbeing underpinning current early childhood policy and practice is attachment theory.

Studies with infants at 18 months showed a correlation between insecure attachment, and those infants whose mothers experienced post-natal depression (Murray, 1992; Murray and Cooper, 1997).

Milligan, Atkinson, Trehub, Benoit & Poulton (2002) investigated the emotive qualities of mothers' vocal communications according to attachment classifications. This study suggested that there was an association between the attachment style of the mother, and the way the mother responded vocally to their infant when distressed.

### **Every Day Music and Musical Parenting**

Västfjäll, Juslin & Hartig ask the questions “Does music have beneficial effects also in the flow of everyday life? Do the effects extend beyond the immediate situation?” (2012, p. 405). The day-to-day interactions of infants with their mothers are filled with music and it could be constructed that music conducts the flow of everyday life for an infant. Singing and playful chants help with the day-to-day routines and help mother and infant show each other how they feel (Street, 2009).

In the course of everyday life mothers sing to their infants. This is the most frequent form of musical activity between parent and infants (Illari, 2005). Mothers sing to promote sleep, and they sing to play and have fun. Custodero, Britto, and Brooks-Gunn (2003) assert the position that singing songs and lullabies is an extension of the early musical communications between parent and pre-verbal infant. They sing to distract and they sing to comfort. The choice of songs varies in style and purpose. Illari found that mothers gave a wide variety of responses regarding what they believe to be appropriate music for infants, and yet 82% were found to sing only lullabies and children's songs (2005, p. 653). The repertoire for this research was a mix of contemporary and popular genres.

This underpinning theoretical background and review of the literature finds that mothers' wellbeing can be vulnerable to pressures of society and yet is imperative to the wellbeing of infants. Singing and vocalisations are a natural and instinctive part of mother infant relationships and communication. Furthermore the literature implies singing can affect the wellbeing of mother and form part of the parenting toolkit within the context of everyday music. This study will endeavor to investigate the interconnectedness of these dimensions, and find out how singing in a choir with infants can affect maternal wellbeing, everyday music and parental wellbeing.

## **Method**

The primary question this research asked is "How do the mothers perceive their singing in a choir affects their wellbeing?" I used a questionnaire to gather a small amount of subjective wellbeing information that was then followed up with semi-structured interviews to explore the qualitative details through the perceptions of the participants.

I selected the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) as being the most suitable instrument for this study. In this study I assessed the wellbeing of the mothers at a specific point. A wellbeing measure was taken immediately prior to singing and then again immediately after having rehearsed in the choir. In order to do this it was necessary to adapt each question in the scale into a time specific questionnaire creating a better fit with my research and asking the participants to consider how they think and feel "right now" as opposed to over the last two weeks.

There are 12 mothers who attend the choir regularly with their children ranging from 6 months to 4 years in age. The wellbeing questionnaire was used with all 12 mothers in order to give the best size sample. This is a small sample as is typical of qualitative social research around singing and health (Clift, 2012).

The secondary stage of research took the form of four semi-structured interviews that were conducted between the parents and myself. These interviews sought to represent the views of the mothers about

singing in the choir and how it affects their wellbeing. The interviews also gathered information about how the choir mothers sing in the home, how singing and vocal play are used as part of daily routine and if singing is used as a parenting technique.

A specific set of questions was devised to create the semi-structured format of the interviews. The questions were a mixture of open and closed questions. The open questions encouraged the participants to share their thoughts and perspectives. The closed questions were supported with probes to then draw more depth from the responses. All interviewed mothers received the same set of questions. However the questions were asked in a different way for each participant, and I adopted a flexible and emotionally sensitive approach in interview style.

### **The MamaSing Context**

The entire repertoire used in this research project is arranged in two parts, the main melody and a simple harmony line, usually pitched lower. During a rehearsal the mothers are taught a new song, line by line using a listen and copy approach. The songs are a mixture of popular contemporary songs, folk, world, gospel, jazz and soul. The lyrics are displayed on a screen to facilitate hands free singing. This enables the mothers to continue to hold and care for their infants and toddlers while singing. They also have sheet music available, a two part score for the fluent readers, and also a single line melody part for those who wish to follow along.

### **Wellbeing Questionnaire Findings**

The findings of the subjective wellbeing component of this research are very clear and statistically significant. The start score and end score from the wellbeing questionnaires were calculated into a total score for each participant. Putz, O'Hara, Stewart-Brown & Taggart, (2012) recommend using a group average when measuring wellbeing changes as a result of an intervention. The minimum scale score is 14, and the maximum scale score is 70. The average score of the group at the start of the singing intervention was 47. At the end of the intervention the average score rose to 60, giving a total increase of 13. When a change of between 3 and 8 occurs it can be considered that "mental wellbeing meaningfully improved over the course of the project" (Putz et al, 2012). In this context the women clearly perceive an improvement in their wellbeing as a result of singing in the mother and baby choir.

The individual scores for each woman were also examined. Each individual participant showed an increase in mental wellbeing as a result of the intervention, though not all individuals increased on all questions.

The results were then mapped to each question to see if there were any specific aspects of wellbeing that saw notable changes as a result

of the singing intervention. There were two questions that saw an exceptionally large increase in wellbeing score of 18. These aspects with the biggest increase represent how relaxed the women felt and how much energy they felt they had. These two questions were scored the lowest at the start of the intervention and experienced the largest increase as a result of the intervention. This is congruent with numerous qualitative studies that find participants in singing experience feelings of both relaxation and energy (Tonneijck, Kinebanian & Josephsson 2008; Clift, 2012). The aspect of wellbeing that showed the smallest increase was how loved the women felt, with a small increase of only 3. This aspect of wellbeing scored highest of all questions in the average start scores, so a smaller increase would be expected.

### **Interview Findings**

A large amount of relevant information was gathered through the interview process. I then scrutinised each interview in turn and developed a simple coding system for every response to reduce the quantity of data. I adopted the practices of In Vivo coding (King, 2008 and Saldana, 2013) using words and phrases that were taken directly from the participants. After this initial coding phase I then repeated the process and carried out a second coding (Saldana, 2013) to improve accuracy and reliability.

Through the coding process it was possible to then collate data from across questions bringing the information back to the main question categories. The collated data was examined for common responses and I began to identify emergent themes.

The interviewees all reported a feeling of uplift or an increase in energy. Their minds are taken off stresses and difficult emotions that are often present prior to sessions, and they associated a feeling of wellbeing with being with others.

Having the children present was important to the mothers. All the mothers felt the choir was something for themselves, that it met their needs, and they described the choir as something that was good for the children. This is supported by the literature that suggests music is a means of shared experience for parents with young children (Custodero et al, 2003), and provides a formalised, structured environment to extend everyday music.

When describing their singing ability, with one exception the mothers all described a lack of confidence. Attending the choir was reported to be building confidence in ability, and the women felt less self-conscious, sang out more and thought they sounded a little better. Despite this none of the women thought they were musical, and associated this with an inability to play a musical instrument.

The shared experience of singing with others was ardently important to all the women and some powerful words were used to describe this such as "tribal", "sisterhood", "mums together", "girls together" and "energy you get from each other". The interviews gathered evidence

that the mothers also experience and highly value the social aspect, and an acculturation process is taking place helping them to connect with their new community of “mums together”. Pavliceic describes the conception of community music therapy through singing in which “the whole group creates itself and shifts itself into a different musical, emotional and group space” (2004, p. 39). This is almost certainly what the interview participants are describing.

The mothers all reported singing at home with their child. Two described an increase in the amount they sing and the repertoire of songs since being in the choir. One mother also gave a reflection on the relationship between siblings and how her 3 year old now sings choir songs to his baby sister “If I sing he’ll join in, look at her face and sing to her.”

All the mothers described instances of singing as a parenting tool, such as calming with a song, singing to distract an upset or restless infant, changing tones of voice to engage in activities such as eating, and singing songs to encourage desired behaviours such as walking. One mother reported that this is a new technique and that she didn’t sing or use her voice in this way at all before singing with the group. Although she frequently sang songs around her daughter she hadn’t used songs as a form of conscious interaction with her daughter to regulate mood or encourage behavior until singing in the choir. This is consistent with the research of Mackinlay & Baker in which a group of mothers participated in a 6-week lullaby-singing programme. The narratives given by the mothers through the interviews and the conclusion of the study was that singing had become “an essential skill in their mothering toolbox – nourishing, reviving, and desirable musical food for the soul” (Undated, p. 41).

### **Pedagogical Implications**

Maternal wellbeing is closely linked with infant wellbeing, and women are particularly vulnerable to episodes of mental illness such as post-natal depression in the early stages of motherhood. Singing in a choir with their infants has had a significantly positive effect on maternal wellbeing. The effect is measurable and significant after a single singing intervention.

As a result of singing in a mother and baby choir the mothers found a specific improvement in their relaxation and energy levels. This was measured in the wellbeing surveys, was further reinforced through the interviews in which all four interviewees reported a feeling of uplift, feeling better, increase of energy and feeling good. One of the strongest themes that emerged from the interviews was that of the sense of “mothers together”, and how highly the choir was valued as a supportive shared team environment created through a common aim of singing. Through singing together these women not only perceived an improvement in their own wellbeing, but they also felt connected to their community.

The guilt that is described by mothers when doing something they perceive as being for themselves was alleviated in this experience by the inclusion of the infants and children in the choir. It was recognized by all the participants that their children benefitted directly from being present during the sessions. Even those who described the choir as also being good for their infants because it was good for them said they probably wouldn't have attended without their child.

Participating in the choir with their infants and toddlers gave ideas to the women for ways to increase musicality and musical communication in the home. They replicated some of the interactive warm ups and songs when away from the choir. They also developed new strategies and techniques such as calming and soothing with song. As found by Dionyssiou and Fytika (2013) enthusiasm from parents participating in musical events and activities results in an increased level of enthusiasm from children.

## **Conclusion**

The women participating in this study were enthusiastic to chat and share their experiences of singing, reporting strong feelings of improvement in subjective wellbeing. Many of the women felt they had a story to tell, and a need to share and connect through their story. A longitudinal ethnographic study to capture the anecdotal chatter of women singing in a mother and baby group would be of future interest.

Through the findings of this research it can be conceived that maternal singing is central to motherhood. Singing is used as a tool to connect and communicate with both infant and community. It can be used as a strategy for parenting, and mothers incorporate singing into everyday music making.

Maternal depression is linked with decreased prosody and decreased levels of affective communication with infants (Milligan, Atkinson, Trehub, Benoit & Poulton, 2002) and this in turn has a negative impact on the attachment relationship and wellbeing of the infant. Through singing in a mother and baby choir there is an increase in wellbeing for mother, and a reported increase in frequency and type of everyday musical interactions and parenting techniques between mother-infant dyads.

It is therefore feasible that singing in a mother and baby choir could become a non-invasive, low cost activity for improving maternal wellbeing, facilitating acculturation, promoting positive attachment, and supporting new mothers to form and connect with new communities of motherhood.

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## **Music in Swedish preschool classes**

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### **Abstract**

Research shows that many teachers in preschool as well as school feel uncertain about singing and playing musical instruments with children, and that music activities therefore risk becoming marginalized. There is also a risk that those music activities that do occur remain limited to content that the teachers feel comfortable with. These are circumstances that jeopardize children's opportunities for developing different aspects of their musicality in preschool, preschool class and school. The aim of the presentation is to highlight what opportunities a six-year-old child in preschool class in Sweden might have of participating in and being inspired by music. We ask the following question: What factors determine how music teaching is conceived and carried out in preschool classes?

The present study is quantitative in character, and data were collected by means of a survey sent out to all teachers working with preschool classes in a Swedish municipality of about 100 000 inhabitants. 17 of 23 schools returned completed questionnaires, giving a response frequency of 69%. As our sample consisted of the entire population in a specific municipality in Sweden, it is reasonable to assume that the results can be generalized for that municipality, but based on previous research the result may also be generalized for other municipalities in Sweden or even other countries.

The conclusion we can draw from the result is that the preschool class teachers in the study without a fundamental view of music education carry out few music activities. Teachers who mainly see music as a skill subject carry out more activities, while teachers who value music's transfer effects carry out many more music activities, and with a greater range of variation. The result also show that it is important that teachers in early childhood education reflect on opportunities for children to learn about, in, and through music and about their opportunities to explore music in different ways. It also indicates the importance of music being taught and reflected on in preschool and primary school teacher education.

### **Keywords**

Music, Preschool-class

### **Introduction**

The aim of this presentation is to highlight what opportunities a six-year-old in preschool class in Sweden might have of participating in music activities. We ask the following question: What factors determine how

music teaching is conceived and carried out in preschool class? The result of the study is also presented in an article for International Journal of Music Education. (Ehrlin & Tivenius , In press)

### **Swedish context**

In Sweden children ages one to five years can attend preschool on a voluntary basis. Once a child turns six, they can attend a 'preschool class' even though it is voluntary, most six-year-olds do so. The curriculum for comprehensive education contains no specific syllabus for preschool class activities (National Agency of Education, 2011). The curriculum, Lgr-11, has syllabi for various subjects including prescribed content specified for years 3, 6 and 9. One of these subjects is music, and its learning goals focus on pupils' opportunities for developing musical knowledge. The goals for the younger pupils to develop are:

- *play and sing in different musical forms and genres,*
- *create music as well as represent and communicate their own musical thinking and ideas, and*
- *analyse and discuss musical expressions in different social, cultural and historical contexts.*

(National Agency of Education, 2011, p.96).

The preschool curriculum (Lpfö-98/10) has no prescribed content for music as a subject. It emphasises that various forms of aesthetic and creative expression are to be included in activities, but are also to serve as a method for promoting development and learning. Our interpretation is understanding music as both content and method in preschool, preschool class and during the early years of school can involve regarding music as play.

### **Theoretical premises**

Vygotsky (1995) argued that teaching in different areas gives pupils new experiences that can form the basis and inspiration for spontaneous play and thereby for learning. One theoretical premise of our study is that individuals are constantly learning and being shaped by the communities they are part of. The thoughts, views and actions of individuals can be said to be situated in social communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). Such a community can be a preschool or a school, and it is our understanding that the individual is continuously influencing, and being influenced by, these communities (Rogoff, 2003). Teachers' notions of their practice are thus not based only on interpretations of curricula, syllabi, content, learning goals and methods, but also on prejudices regarding social and cultural factors.

Teachers in preschool class can have either a music educational perspective or a general pedagogical perspective and this fundamental view affects their teaching (Hanken & Johansen, 2004). From a music educational perspective music can be regarded as art, craftsmanship or science. Music education can take the starting point in any of these (Nielsen, 1998).

## **Method**

The present study is quantitative in character, and data were collected by means of a survey sent out to all teachers working with preschool classes in a Swedish city of about 100.000 inhabitants. The questionnaire included nine closed and two open questions. The first two questions were about the respondent's background, training and years of experience. Questions three to nine dealt with the extent to which the respondent taught music, what the content of music lessons focused on, and how the respondent acquired new impressions as a basis for teaching. These questions were formulated as statements with which respondents could express their degree of agreement or disagreement on a four-point Likert scale. The two concluding, open, questions dealt with why music should be included in preschool classwork, and what opportunities and obstacles respondents saw in teaching. 17 of 23 schools returned completed questionnaires, giving a response frequency of 69%, or 68 of a total of 98 distributed questionnaires. We claim solid validity based on impeccable statistical handling (Esaïsson et al., 2002). We have observed all the ethical rules prescribed by the Swedish Research Council (2011), and can therefore claim a fully adequate ethical foundation.

## **Results: statistics and interpretation**

The initial responses of 68 informants to a questionnaire containing 14 variables were entered into a matrix. A first correlation analysis produced about 60 correlations at a maximum significance level of 0.05. Reading these correlations into the program focused subsequent interest on specific phenomena, which in turn generated further questions. Various statistical analyses based on the research question – some of them of an exploratory nature – initially generated interesting correlations, which were then followed up with crosstabs and analyses of variance and mean values. Significant correlations potentially representing associations were interpreted and discussed. Patterns could be discerned during the process, and these were tested against other associations, producing various ever clearer pictures.

Crosstabs were created to delve further into the underlying data distribution of the correlations of interest. In the questionnaire we asked how often the informants lead various music activities and also how often they are led by someone else. Cross tabulations showed that

groups of children whose teachers often lead them in various music activities receive music activities comparatively more often than groups of children whose teachers rarely, or never lead them in music activities.

We also asked if the informants lead various music activities such as singing, playing instruments, listening to music and dancing. Cross tabulation confirmed the pattern seen above: teachers who lead their children in one specific activity also lead them in other activities, while teachers who don't lead their children in one specific activity tend not to lead them in others either. The upshot is that some teacher's pupils receive almost no music teaching at all. These crosstabs generated further questions, the responses to which were included in the comprehensive interpretation. We employed frequency tables, which primarily help to show how the sample is distributed across the different variables, in order to also obtain an overview of the volume of data. Frequency analysis of question 4 shows the distribution of teaching input in more precise terms.

Table 1. Frequencies of different music activities.

		Number	Percentage of the whole sample
Singing	Yes	2	.2
	No	3	.3
Dance and movement	Yes	1	.13
	No	7	.7
Listening to music	Yes	5	.8
	No	3	.2
Playing an instrument	Yes	4	.6
	No	4	.4

The most common music activity in which teachers lead their groups is singing. The least common activity is playing an instrument.

Our overall interpretation is that pupils in preschool class are provided with a varying extent of music activities, with varying content. Some children hardly come into contact with any music at all, while the majority make music at least once a week. The most common activity is singing.

Only three teachers stated that the children have access to musical instruments for use in their spontaneous play.

Question 11 in the questionnaire was an open question: “Why is music important?” 93% of informants stated at least one reason, and several stated more than one. We coded the responses and entered them as new variables in the matrix. Crosstabs, frequency tables, and analyses of variance and of mean values provided a picture that became clearer as the work progressed (Glass & Hopkins, 1996; Vejde & Leander, 2000).

Table 2. Frequencies of different conceptions of why music is important.

	Number	Percentage of the whole sample
Music is important for joy and emotions	6	.9
Music is a means of learning	0	.1
Music is important for learning about music	3	.8
Music is important for social purposes	0	.4
Music is important for body and mind	2	.6
Music is important for personal development		.8

The most common conception of why music is important in preschool class is that it is important for joy and emotions. The least common conception is that music is important for personal development.

Stating that music is important for learning about music implies that music is good for its own sake and therefore that music is regarded as a subject that demands practical skill. We refer to the other reasons as transfer effects, since the teachers claim these effects are more important than the music itself. In the next step, answers were re-coded into a three-level gradation that was used as a variable, and correlation with other variables was examined.

This new variable correlated with four others and gave the following result: The higher an informant values transfer effects,

- the more often the informant leads pupils in playing instruments,
- the more often pupils have access to instruments to use in spontaneous play,
- the more the informant partakes of and uses music-related teaching materials, and

- the less the informant considers her/himself to lack interest and/or competence.

Our interpretation of this is that a teacher's view of what music in preschool class can be good for is reflected in how active she or he is in teaching music. Analysed in greater detail, these data show that in practice pupils get less music teaching when the teacher's view of music is that it is intended for its own sake, i.e. that it is a subject demanding practical skill.

The variables *Lacks competence/interest* and *music as a skill subject* correlate. Our interpretation of this is that the more teachers see music as a skill subject, the more they feel that they themselves lack competence or interest. This can further be understood as teachers who see music as a skill subject also considering that it requires competence – which they lack. Similarly, the variable *Lacks competence/interest* correlates with the variable *Music is important for body and mind*. We understand this to mean that preschool teachers who feel that music is important for body and mind also feel, to a greater degree than those teachers who don't feel that music is important for body and mind, that they possess the necessary competence.

It thus appears that a decisive factor for music-making in preschool class may be the teacher's personal view of music. The teacher's idea of what qualifications are necessary also appear to be significant, but this is primarily among those who see music as a skill subject.

Three variables that show statistically reliable mean values for groups formed from the answers to "Why is music important?", based on the coding described above, "I partake of and use music-related teaching materials", "Does your group of children have access to instruments they can use in their spontaneous play?", and "I regret the absence of a music teacher".

The group "Both transfer and skill subject" is the outlier for all three questions. Despite being somewhat vague, this nonetheless suggests that teachers with the broadest view of music – those who appreciate both transfer effects and music as a skill subject – may not have a fixed fundamental view, but rather see all aspects as advantages. Further cross tabulations show clearly that the group "Both transfer and skill subject" is the one that carries out least music activities in their classes.

## Conclusions

The conclusion we can draw from the result is that the preschool class teachers in the study without a fundamental view of music education carry out few music activities. Teachers who mainly see music as a skill

subject carry out more activities, while teachers who value music's transfer effects carry out many more music activities, and with a greater range of variation. Thus the conclusion – and the answer to the research question – is that the fundamental view of music education, irrespective of what it is, determines to what extent music teaching occurs, and how it is carried out, in preschool classes in the municipality studied.

## **Discussion**

Our study contributed to demonstrating the factors determining music in preschool classes in a city of 100.000 inhabitants in Sweden, but we also think that discussion of the results could shed light on important issues regarding music education in the early years of education, and not only in a Swedish context. The results show that it is important that teachers in early childhood education reflect on pupils' opportunities to learn about, in, and through music and their opportunities to explore music in different ways. It also indicates the importance of music being taught and reflected on in training preschool and primary school teachers. In a Swedish context this is very much connected to the goals in the curricula, for example the goal of giving pupils the opportunity to develop the ability to create music as well as to represent and communicate their own musical thinking and ideas (National Agency of Education, 2011).

Our study shows that singing is the most common music activity among the preschool classes included in the study, which is a result also reported in studies conducted in the United States (Giles & Fergo, 2004; Nardo et al, 2006). Most children at the preschool class level in our study are offered singing. It is clear that many teachers offer little variation in music activities. Some groups of children, however, were hardly ever offered either singing or other music-related activities in class. Our result also shows that most children in the preschool classes participating in the study had no access to music materials or musical instruments in their spontaneous play. Only five % of the teachers in our study stated that the children have access to any kind of music during spontaneous play. Opportunities for spontaneous play with, exploration of, and expression through music were limited. Our study shows that those teachers who regarded music as a skill subject also stated that they lack competence and interest. They could see that music has something to offer in itself, but this is not something they felt they were capable of conveying, nor did they offer the children opportunities for exploring music themselves in a spontaneous and playful approach. The study shows that the fate of music in each preschool class was determined by what the teacher offered and his or her view of music.

The results from our study are puzzling, and raise further questions. There is a statistically discernible separator for how, and to what extent, music

teaching is practised in preschool class: the fundamental view of the function of music. Teachers who did not regard music as a goal in itself gave their children a comparatively richer music experience, while teachers who regarded music as primarily a skill subject declined to offer music. Traditionally, teachers at municipal music schools – who ought to be experts – are the ones who have an art-for-art's-sake attitude to music, while also defending a rich musical offering (Tivenius, 2008). Within the studied sample it is exactly the other way around. Possibly, this tells us something about the prejudices of general teachers as well as of music teachers with regard to what music is good for. It may also tell us something about teachers' self-image with regard to their abilities in music education. The result points to a discourse that is not in step with the curricula (National Agency of Education, 2011) in terms of music activities, nor of content or education. It seems as if teachers who value music's inherent qualities take the view that they have nothing valuable to impart to the children musically, and therefore they don't even try. Nor did they delegate this task to someone else; one may well wonder why that is. As there are generally no music teachers in preschool class education, the task can only be delegated to colleagues who do not have formal qualifications for teaching music as a skill subject. Seen from that perspective, delegating is unlikely to improve anything, and thus teachers may refrain from doing so – with the result that the children get no music at all.

If the premise were that music in preschool class should be taught as a skill subject, it would be easy to understand teachers' resignation when faced with the task. But as the focus of the curricula – as we understand it – is on transfer effects instead; it rather seems as if teachers do not realise what mechanisms are active, and are therefore at a loss when faced with the task of making music with the children. Our theoretical understanding (Lave & Wenger, 1991) is that this lack of meaning is situated in the preschool classes as social communities of practices where teachers' notions of their practice seem to be based on their interpretations of music as a skill subject rather than what is stated in the curricula. Perhaps it is a general discourse which has gained force in the shadow of portentous PISA reports – a discourse that presents the core subjects as overriding all others – that makes teachers treat music so unfairly, not daring to rely on transfer effects and other factors linked to the concept of aesthetic learning processes – creativity and spontaneous play, for example (Wallerstedt & Pramling, 2012).

Inspired by Vygotsky (1995) it may be apt to ask the philosophical question: What else can music be if not play? Perhaps this is where the problem lies for those who are so keen to see music as a skill subject. And in this light one might ask if other forms of play could be treated as

skill subjects. The truth about music would seem to be that skill is attained through doing – that skill is attained through play.

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# The effect of body movement on children's graphic representations

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## Abstract

Embodied music cognition advocates the role of the body for musical understanding (Leman, 2007; 2010), and the embodied approach during the process of learning has been taken up recently by various scholars (Juntunen & Hyvönen 2004, April 2011; Davidson 2012; Kerchner 2014). In the meantime, graphic symbols such as invented notations are considered an external representation to access children's musical cognition.

The aim of this research is to analyse the effect of children's body movement on their external representations with graphic notations during the activity of listening. More specifically, it was observed and analysed in which ways children's invented notations change when the activity of listening to a piece of music is described and interpreted by body movement or by verbal description of the different features of the piece.

Fifty 7-8 year-old children attending primary school and without any formal music education, were required to listen to a musical fragment with salient sonic parameters. In the second phase half of the children were invited to describe the features of the piece by their body movements, and the other group, with the help of the researcher described the piece verbally. In the last phase, all the children were invited to describe the musical fragment with their own invented graphic notations. The procedure was concluded with an interview with each child to allow them to explain their graphic production.

Data were collected, analysed and compared according the categories suggested by Verschaffel et al. (2009) and Elkoshi (2002), such as global versus compounded or differentiated notations, in which one or more sonic musical parameters are described. A significant percentage of differentiated or compound notations drawn by children who used body movement was found, compared with the global notations used by children whose verbal descriptions were proposed.

Different notational strategies closely connected to the body and musical parameters were analysed: more frequently size, or different shapes are used to represent mainly rhythm and articulation (*legato/ staccato*). An embodied experience of the musical features could have elicited differentiated perceptions of the musical parameters so as to influence the notational strategies.

## Keywords

Embodied music cognition, listening, graphic representation, body movement

# Assessment of relationship quality in improvisation

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### Abstract

This presentation is of a currently conducted research project. Inclusive teaching seemingly sets a high challenge to music pedagogical approaches. By taking a closer look into the anthropological intent of music making, we discover that inclusive interactions with music and movement/dance can be very natural and models that are commonly known. The fact that schools are changing towards inclusive teaching compels us to set new and different goals in music teaching, mainly such as learning through simultaneous imitation and improvisation.

At the moment much research is conducted on the topic of inclusion, however we do not find any sustainable concept of inclusive teaching with music and movement. Yet referring to a successful approach in music therapy can probably help. Music therapist Karin Schumacher (1999) showed that improvisation - if a certain setting and specific interventions are provided - helps to develop relationship qualities. For this purpose she developed her criteria for the Assessment of the Quality of Relationship (AQR – in German: Einschätzung der Beziehungsqualität EBQ) and she referred to the findings of the infant researcher Daniel Stern.

In the current project we work in music classrooms and have two children at a time, who improvise on percussion instruments. We have similar settings for ten weeks and are currently very surprised how much the students like the setting. Schumacher's matrix serves as one basis for assessing the development of improvising students during the ten meetings at school.

The main goal of the project is to give crucial pointers for music education in inclusive classes. Interlinked with this is the second intention: we want to assess whether children develop their team spirit and their ensemble skills in a non-verbal, mimetic way of interacting through ten specific improvisation meetings in the classroom.

The spoken paper will show and explain the specific research setting, will present the underlying hypothesis of the project, will give some insight into current results and will display some questions that emerged during the course of the project.

### Keywords

Classroom music education, free improvisation, learning through imitation, shaping music, teacher's role, teacher's feedback, classmate's feedback, self-efficacy, listening competence, social competence

# **Musical representations and their metaphorical meanings among early childhood student teachers from different cultures**

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## **Abstract**

This research examines the relationship between musical representations and their metaphorical meanings among adult early childhood students from different cultural and religious backgrounds in Israel. The research aim was to investigate whether metaphorical associations for musical representations are culturally dependent. The research is a phenomenology research, which investigates the personal human experience from the perspective of the individual. The research is a mixed methods research built on qualitative and quantitative methodology. The data were obtained from the students through the examination of questionnaires and interviews. At the study's preliminary stage, students in a multi-cultural music class were requested to choose from a variety of percussion instruments an instrument whose sounds represent "light" and an instrument whose sounds represent "darkness" in their opinion. When their choices were presented, it became apparent that students from different cultures experienced the musical sounds differently. In the study, 180 early childhood teacher trainee students filled in a questionnaire in which they were requested to indicate from a variety of percussion instruments which instrument symbolises for them sound of "light" and which symbolises "darkness". The findings indicate that there were some differences in the metaphorical concepts of "light" and "darkness" in association with musical sounds, between students from different cultures, although not all of them were significant. The researchers conclude that when teaching music to multi-cultural student groups, educators should be sensitive of cultural differences within the population and be aware that perceiving music is acquired through the building of musical schemas that are culturally dependent.

## **Keywords**

Culture, Early childhood educators, Musical representations, Metaphor, Percussion instruments

## **Introduction**

This research evolved from a music workshop experience in a teachers' training college in the north of Israel, in which students study together for four years to become early childhood teachers. The student population in the college is a multicultural; the students come from different religious-cultural backgrounds: Jews, Muslims, Christians, Druze, Circassians, and others.

The workshop took place at the time of the year of two major festivals, Christmas and Chanukah (the Jewish festival of lights). The students

were requested to associate musical instruments with the concept of "light", an important concept in both festivals, and "darkness". During the workshop, it was apparent that students from different cultures experienced the musical sounds differently.

While most students of one culture chose musical instruments with a metallic sound, such as finger cymbals, triangles, and bells as instruments that symbolised "light", students from another culture and a different religious background indicated that these exact percussion instruments actually represented "darkness" for them. The question arose whether cognitive schemas in music are influenced by cultural differences.

As a result of this experience, the researchers decided to examine this phenomenon in an extended population, 180 Early Childhood students were recruited from two different teachers' training colleges, the students were requested to reply to a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed especially for this research and presented the students with visual pictures of the same percussion instruments that were presented in the original workshop. The students were requested to indicate which instruments represented "darkness" and which instruments represented "light".

The research looked at the differences between different cultures in their use of two specific dichotomous metaphors, "light" and "darkness", in describing musical sounds. This article presents the results of a study in which the researchers attempted to see if there was a cultural effect on the use of metaphors in musical concepts.

## **Theoretical Background**

*"A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance".*  
www.thesaurus.com

This research deals with music and metaphors, by connecting two dichotomous metaphors, "light" and "darkness", to musical sounds. The use of metaphors as a way of expressing cognitive schemes is a well-known strategy in literature or spoken language; it is a less known strategy in other forms of expression.

The subject of musical representation has been discussed and examined since the time of Plato (380 BCE). The question whether abstract music can be used to express feelings, experiences, and personal images has been addressed in the literature (Riemer, 1989). There have been past attempts to tie together the properties of music (such as dynamic, pitch, colour, etc.) and human emotion (Langer, 1957). The question that arises is: what shapes the moulding of a person's cognitive schemas when listening to music?

A major theory in the research field of metaphors is the theory of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT, Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), which

was developed in the field of cognitive linguistics. The theory states that there is a connection at the cognitive level of two conceptual domains, the source domain and the target domain. The source domain consists of literal entities, attributes, and relationships linked and apparently stored in the mind. The target domain tends to be abstract and takes its structure from the source domain through the metaphorical link (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

Conceptual metaphor theorists claim that all metaphors both hide and highlight aspects of the target domain (Lakoff and Turner, 1989). The Conceptual Metaphor Theory states that there are a few or even no abstract notions that can be understood without the use of metaphors. Present day research on metaphors sees them as natural outcomes of the human mind (Gibbs, 2008) and focuses on how people use metaphors to conceptualise the world and their actions in it.

Music is a domain that is subjective in its interpretation. Peltó and Saresma (2014) examined spatial and bodily metaphors in narrating the experience of listening to sad music. In their article, metaphorical language acts as a vehicle of communication to help understand the emotional experience when listening to music. Zibikowski (2008) states that music makes references to people's inner world of emotions or psychological states, and Barcelona (2000) infers that metaphors are a cognitive mechanism that connects between domains.

Research linking music and metaphorology has aroused interest in certain circles. Psychological research in the field can be traced back to Pratt (1930). In recent years, Eitan and Timmers (2010) found consensus regarding metaphors with relation to musical pitch; High tones are conceived as sharp, light, clear, and soft tones, while low tones are conceived as dull, rough, darker, bigger, and harder than the high ones. Eitan & Granot (2006) found that with relation to pitch, there are also motion metaphors, which were expressed by both musicians and non-musicians.

This research examines the use of metaphors in a cultural context concerning the representation of light and darkness within different cultures through the media of music. Cognitive structures, schemas, are built by the interaction of an individual with their environment. The personal interpretation of musical sounds as representing abstract symbols is a result of one's personal musical life experiences. The building of cultural identification is related to an accumulation of a myriad of daily experience built up through one's sensory experiences and language, (Lantolf, Thorne & Poehner, 2015), music being one of the artefacts for cultural identification.

## **Methodology**

The research is a mixed-methods study built on qualitative and quantitative methodology. The research population consisted of early

childhood teacher students from two different teacher-training colleges in Israel. The data were obtained through the analyses of questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire was analysed statistically using the Chi-square  $\chi^2$  distribution test. Content analysis was implemented on the open questions' responses and the interviews. The research had two phases: (1) Workshop around the time of Christmas and Chanukah, in a multicultural class of 24 early childhood teacher trainees at a teachers training college. The subject of the workshop was "light" and "darkness". This was a preliminary stage to the main part of the study; (2) 180 early-childhood teacher trainee students from two different teacher-training colleges filled in a Google form questionnaire in which they were requested to indicate which percussion instruments symbolise for them "light" and "darkness", and also answered some open questions, in which they explained their choices. Later, out of this group, 20 participants from different cultures were interviewed separately.

## Findings

The research population consisted of 73.4% of Jewish origins and 26.6 % from other cultures (12.4% from the Druze culture, 7.3% from the Muslim culture, 4.5% from the Christian culture, 1.1% Circassian population and others).

With reference to the entire population, the findings show that there is a significant difference between the instruments that were chosen to represent "light", and those chosen as representing "darkness".

Chi-Square test:  $\chi^2=110.438$ , d.f=16, Sig<0.001

From the data analysis of the entire research population, it is apparent that the leading musical instruments that symbolise "light" according to the participants are the triangle, the bells, and the big bell.

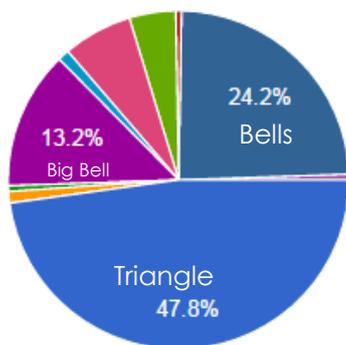
The distribution of the percussion instruments that symbolise "light" according to the entire research population is illustrated in the table below.

Table 1: Musical Instruments that symbolise "light" according to the entire research population

1	Triangle	47.8%
2	Bells	24.2%
3	Big bell	13.2%
4	Gong	6.6%
5	Finger cymbals	4.4%
6	Wooden box	1.1%

7	Drum	1.1%
8	Rhythm sticks (Claves)	0.5%
9	Guiro	0.5%
10	Wooden Cup	0%

Diagram 1: Distribution of musical instruments that symbolise “light”



From the data analysis of the entire research population, it is apparent that the leading musical instruments that symbolise "darkness" according to the participants are the gong, drum, guiro, and wooden box.

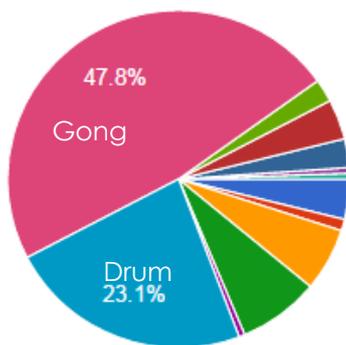
The distribution of the percussion instruments that symbolise "darkness" according to the entire research population is illustrated in the table below.

Table 2: Musical Instruments that symbolise “darkness” according to the entire research population

1	Gong	47.8%
2	Drum	23.1%
3	Guiro	7.7%
4	Wooden box	6%
5	Finger cymbals	4.4%
6	Triangle	3.8%

7	Rhythm sticks (Claves)	3.8%
8	Bells	2.7%
9	Wooden Cup	1.1%
10	Big bell	0.5%

Diagram 2: Distribution of musical instruments that symbolise "darkness"



To enable a statistical analysis of the findings, the percussion instruments were divided into categories. The category "Metallic instruments with a gentle sound" included the triangle, the bells, and finger cymbals; The "Wooden instruments" category included the guiro, the wooden box, and the rhythm sticks (claves).

The research took place in two different teachers' training colleges in the north and centre of Israel. The findings show that there is a significant difference, in the choice of instruments that symbolised light, between the Jewish population and the other cultures that took part in the research. In this case, the gentle metal sound instruments (triangle, finger cymbals, and bells) were found to be statistically significantly more popular among the Jewish population, while the big bell was found to be statistically significantly more popular among the group of other religions (Druze, Muslim, Christian, Circassian).

Chi-Square test:  $\chi^2=10.8$  d.f=4 Sig<0.05

Table 3: Cultural differences concerning musical sounds that symbolise “light”

	Druze, Muslim, Christian, Circassian	Jewish
	N=37	N= 130
Gong	6.4%	6.2%
Gentle metal	66%	80.8%
Big bell	19.1%	11.5%
Drum	2.1%	1.5%
Wooden inst.	6.4%	0

There was no statistically significant difference in choosing the instruments that symbolised “light” based on the population age.

With regard to choosing the instruments that symbolized “darkness”, there was no significant difference based on the population age and the cultural-religious background.

Similar findings arose in the open questions that were part of the questionnaire and in the open-ended interviews. In the explanations for choosing the percussion instruments, some students specified religious contexts:

- *"The sound of the bells reminds me of the church, when we hear the sound of the bell we know that the day has begun. The bell reminds me of light".*
- *"The bells remind me of "Santa's sleigh" and Christmas, a festival full of light".*
- *"Perhaps because the sound of (many) bells reminds me of morning prayers in the church, (more than one bell is rung)".*

As noted, the triangle was the most popular musical instrument that represents "light". This is how the participants explained this choice:

- *"The sound of the triangle is calm and quiet, which leaves a feeling of peace and calm, especially when one hears it in the morning. In addition it gives me a feeling of purity and certain kind of innocence".*
- *"The sound of the triangle is gentle and rich and full, one feels that it gives a feeling of hope and is suitable to symbolise "light".*
- *"The sound is very gentle and continues for a long time, I feel it enters my soul, enlightens, starts with a high pitch and slowly slowly ends on a lower pitch. It is a special sound that is inspiring and brings on positive thoughts".*
- 

In comparison, there were students who chose the triangle as an instrument symbolising “darkness”. In most of the instances where the participant chose the triangle or bell as an instrument that symbolised

“darkness”, the participants came from a religious minority group. This is how they explained their choices:

- *“Maybe because it reminds me of the ringing of the bells in the church, when someone in my village dies”.*
- *“The triangle has a quiet tone that can represent 'darkness' because when it is dark there is silence and no noise”.*
- *“The sound is deep and gives a feeling of night time”.*
- *“I chose the triangle because it has a nice gentle sound .... In the darkness there is no sound, only the sounds of the insects, the triangle has a quiet sound that symbolises the quietness of the dark”.*

Other explanations for choosing the triangle as an instrument that symbolised “darkness” were that it has a quiet gentle sound that can be played before going to sleep, as a lullaby, or that it reminds them of the stars: *“Something in the sound that changes reminds me of the darkness of night, the stars”.* Some students chose the bells as an instrument that symbolises darkness: *“The bells produce a few sounds together. There is something that is reminiscent of stars at night”.*

The instruments associated with “darkness” that were mentioned most frequently were the gong and the drum. Following are some quotations of the participants explaining their choices:

#### Gong:

- *“This instrument has a strong rasping sound. Just like darkness”.*
- *“The sound of the gong is strong and powerful, muffled. A little threatening and scary, because of that it reminds me of the “darkness”. Searching in the mist, like the echo from a mountain, it causes one to recoil and to be slightly frightened”.*
- *“The darkness brings with it mystery, as does the sound of the gong”.*
- *“I do not like it when it begins to be dark, and the darkness for me symbolises a sudden scary sound like the gong”.*

#### Drum:

- *“The drum has a bass sound, low and deep, which reminds me of the darkness because of the mystery in its sound. There is a deepness in the sound of the drum that makes me think of despondency and mystery, like at night time”.*
- *“The sound of the drum is powerful, portrays seriousness and fear, like the darkness”.*
- *“This instrument (the drum) reminds me of the darkness, because for me the darkness is a “boom”, fear, heart beating something that is stressful”.*
- *“It can be a threatening sound, and sometimes darkness can be threatening”.*

The phenomenon in which long metallic sounds symbolised “light” for participants from one group while it symbolised “darkness” for another group (as appeared in the preliminary stage of the research) was not apparent in the statistical analysis of the questionnaire.

## **Discussion**

As a result of the music workshop that took place in the first stage of the research in a multicultural class at teachers' training college, when it appeared that the building of musical concepts is affected by cultural differences, it was decided to extend the research to a larger population. The first part of the research took place in the classroom, while the second part of the research consisted of students filling in a digital on-line questionnaire. 180 students who are training to be early childhood teachers in two different teacher-training colleges', one in the north of the country and one in the centre of the country, completed the questionnaire.

The findings indicated that there was a difference in the metaphorical concepts of "light" in association with musical sounds between different cultures; however, no significant differences were noted with relation to the metaphorical concepts of "darkness".

Additionally, the differences between the cultural groups were not consistent in the two stages of the research. While in the music workshop, the differences appeared clearly when metal long sounds were conceived as symbolising "light" for one culture and "darkness" for another, in comparison, in the digital questionnaire there was a statistically significant difference between the groups in terms of their choice of the specific metal instrument for representing "light". This difference is not a dramatic or major one, as was shown in the first phase.

It is possible to explain the differences between the results of the two phases. In the first phase, the workshop took place in a classroom, with real musical instruments, where the participants played the instruments and actually heard the sounds. The students in this experience were part of a group, and their musical choices may have been affected by group choices.

In the second phase, it was possible for the researchers to reach a larger population; however, the participants' choices of instruments depended on their musical representation from previous experiences, since they specified their choices based on pictures of musical instruments that were displayed in the Google form questionnaire. Some of the students who answered the questionnaire even specified that they had no memory concerning the sounds of the instruments that were illustrated on the questionnaire.

The research question was whether there were cultural differences in the use of metaphors to describe a person's inner experience when listening to musical sounds. The students who took part in the research fully understood the use of the metaphorical concepts of light and darkness, which was similar to what is written in the literature.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), stated that a connection is made at the cognitive level of two conceptual domains, the source domain and the target domain. In this research, the music was the source domain and the concepts of light and darkness the target domain. Here the students were able to make the

connection between "light" and "darkness" and musical sounds. In addition, the open interviews made it apparent that the students were able to build concepts, and their actions in the world around them concerning "light" and "darkness", as Gibbs (2008) indicated in the literature when expanding the CMT theory. The cultural differences as shown in the findings imply that the cognitive schemas built through a person's life are affected by social and cultural environment.

## Conclusions

The findings in this research indicate that there is a cultural difference in the mental concepts of musical sounds and the abstract level of mental behaviour, the use of metaphors, to describe phenomena. This has significance for musical educators. When teaching multicultural groups of pupils or students, the educator must be aware and sensitive to cultural differences when experiencing music.

It is acceptable to think of music as being "an international language" and that there is a common understanding of musical metaphors. This research indicates that there is a cultural effect on personal experiences of music. Understanding music is gained through the building of musical schemas that are culturally dependent.

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# From Musical Culture for a Child towards a Child's Musical Culture: Women's Narratives in a Child's Musical Activity

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## Abstract

A review of studies of musical children shows how views regarding children's music education have changed over the centuries. The narratives of women who have brought up their children and now have grandchildren illustrate such transformations of attitude. Relatively short narratives of two fifty-year-old women have been chosen as the unit of analysis. They told of 1) their own early musical experiences, 2) the practices involving their children in musical activity, 3) the musical involvement of their grandchildren. Thematic narrative analysis reveals the changing nature of children's involvement in musical activity, the role of parents in shaping a child's musical culture as well as the level of involvement of persons participating and has been used to analyse the data. The data is analysed in the context of local cultures in which the children are living with attention to their family environment as well as national and cultural contexts that press upon the young lives of children.

## Keywords

Child's musical culture, narrative, musical activity

## Prelude

Late afternoon in July. We sit together with my classmate Tina in a small cafe in town. We have known each other for more than forty years: we were in the same class at school. The friendship between me and Tina continues. We meet each summer when I come to visit my parents.

We drink coffee, share our memories, and tell each other what has happened during the previous year. Tina enthusiastically tells me about her eighteen month old granddaughter and shows photos and videos on her mobile phone. When I get to my parents' home, I think about the meeting for some time, about the photos and videos Tina showed me, about the stories she told. Four of five or six stories were about Tina's granddaughter.

That summer I met with some other classmates and friends from university days. All of the women enthusiastically talk about their first grandchildren. All stories refer to or exhaustively describe the relationship between a child and his/her musical environment. I remember my childhood, the time when I was raising my children. The insights that the musical environment of the family has changed, and that there is added attention of the adults to a child's musical activity are obvious. I thought about this all summer, so at the end of the holidays we met again with Tina and Rita—another friend from college. This time I ask them to talk about how we grew up, how we raised our

children and how our grandchildren are brought up now. Early musical experiences were the focus of my attention.

## **Participants**

Tina, Rita and I are all fifty-two years old. There is a time lag of more than twenty years between the period of childhood of both research participants and the time when they raised their own children. Twenty more years later their grandchildren were born. Both Tina's children returned to their hometown after university studies, are married and live apart from their parents. Tina maintains close relationships with her daughter and son, they often visit their parents' home. Unlike Tina, after studies Rita's children stayed in the capital and return home a few times each year. Nevertheless, they often communicate on the phone. When the granddaughter was born, Rita and her daughter started communicating via SKYPE. This way Rita can see her granddaughter and communicate with her.

The lives of Rita and Tina are similar in many ways. They both were born and grew up in small towns, their parents were labourers who worked a lot and spent little time at home. Tina and Rita have completed higher education, after university studies they returned to their hometowns. They married their classmates, each has two children, a year ago their first granddaughters were born. Both women do not have a music education background, but they learned to play an instrument as children. As adults they did not participate in any musical ensembles, but sometimes they play an instrument, they like to sing. Past and present narratives told by these two women are the basis of this article.

## **Methodology**

From the first conversation with Tina it was clear to me that each story "positioned in relation to music education helped me awaken to the complexity of music education" (Clandinin, 2009, p. 202); its contextuality. Narrative inquiry was to me a way of shaping, organising, or imparting meaning to human experience, "a way of keeping alive questions, conversation" (Bowman, 2006, p.14).

The data were collected through one hour interviews and some informal conversations. The purpose of the initial interviews was to ask what engaged both participants in recounting stories from their lives that were related to their early childhood musical experiences (the 1960s), their children's experiences (the 1990s) and grandchildren's (the 2010s). I asked open-ended questions: i.e., tell me about your early childhood musical experiences, about your musical experiences while raising children, grandchildren. I followed the participants' conversational leads, encouraged them to tell their stories, adding their voice by "trying to make sense of the life as lived" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 78). The participants presented several stories. The

stories that are based on a specific event and which reveal what, how, and in what context something happened, have been chosen for analysis (Feldman & Skoldberg, 2002).

Before the first meeting I thought I knew almost everything about both women. During the interview, and particularly while reading transcribed stories, I understood how superficial and general my knowledge about them was. I met with Rita one more time, had several conversations on the phone with both participants in order to clarify information and to obtain additional data.

As a narrative researcher I was aware that my personal background and perspective, my presence as an audience would affect the narrative they told. Both of them felt a little uncomfortable at the beginning of the interview. For both women I was not a researcher, but primarily a fellow student, a friend. Ensuring openness and ingenuousness was the first challenge. On the other hand, preliminary doubts of the women that their narratives could be interesting to me and valuable (“... nothing significant has happened in my life ...”), that their stories had to be told describing the situation, the place, and relation to other persons (“... well, you know my family”) had to be overcome. Positive experiences of both women, memories of a “happy childhood”, “of the most beautiful time bringing up children”, “of the sense of the miraculous when a granddaughter was born” helped to overcome these misgivings and conduct interviews based on cooperation and dialogue.

Similarities in age and life experience allowed me to understand the essence of the narratives. As the researcher, I attempted “to discover and construct meaning in those texts” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 170). By listening to the stories of two women I became open to the mystery, open to the wonder, open to the questions (Greene, 2001). I listened to story to experience resonance (Eisner, 1991), to consider of what it might be significant in early childhood music education. The research was carried out in accordance with the structure of three-dimensional narrative inquiry space suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). While analysing stories, I looked for the following key elements: time, place, and episode of action. Texts were analysed for emergent themes and commonalities within stories.

### **The sunny silence of childhood**

While describing her childhood musical experiences, Tina uses the metaphor of a sunny time. Home to her is primarily a place of quiet. “We lived in a remote, quiet street. Somehow it appears to me as very sunny. Regarding my parents’ home, the first thing I remember is calm. We never heard parents arguing, and they talked quietly as well. Then we only had a small radio, the sounds of which I do not remember, or we listened to the radio very rarely. My childhood was full of stillness.

But I remember my mother singing. I see her as if it is happening now ... Our home is bright with sun, I am sitting on my bed, my mum is sewing and singing. Her singing is loud, beautiful, deep. Her face is bright and unearthly. Mum used a foot-pedal sewing machine – an incredibly noisy one. She sang loud so that the song could be heard .... I hear the sound of the sewing machine better than mum's singing, but mum's face makes the song visible, tangible. She does not sing to me, she sings to herself. I am afraid even to move so as not to disrupt this peculiar moment... No, nobody sang to us (children). And I do not remember any other music from my childhood."

Rita's childhood was also quiet, and her first musical experiences were related to family celebrations.

"At home we had both TV and a radio, but I do not remember music playing. Even though I attended a kindergarten from two years of age, I do not remember singing there. There are no memories related to music from the kindergarten ...

I remember singing during family celebrations. My parents had a lot of friends. They gather together and there is a lot of racket, happy voices. A real contrast to the quiet daily routine. And oh how they sang ... our flat consists of a kitchen and two rooms of 17 square metres each. During the party all chairs from the kitchen were brought to the living room. I also stayed in the same room... I find a place to sit and listen to guests singing. This is so beautiful, mum's and aunt Irena's voices are particularly pleasing – resounding, harmonious. Also, they both know the most songs. I find the song "Mažam kambareli" (In the Little Room) the most appealing. I wait for it every time and pray in my thoughts – one more verse, please, one more ... I do not know how long the party lasts. I fall asleep, then wake up again, and the guests are still singing. I sleep in a song. I still remember all the songs from my parents' younger days".

### **Raising children: music outside and inside the home**

It is the 1990s. Tina and Rita are already married and have their own children. One of the most notable features of that time was how Lithuanians aimed to revive their national identity that had been suppressed by the Soviet Union for 50 years. Events in great halls and city squares attract a lot of people. It seems as if all Lithuanians have left their homes. TV and radio programmes are filled with Lithuanian songs awakening patriotic feelings. Tina tells the story.

"Nora was born during the first year of independence, and I could not sit at home – I wanted to participate everywhere so much. When I stayed at home, it seemed as if life just went by. I then would take my daughter and we joined the others.

Once I was sewing a national costume for Nora [then she was two] until the early hours. I could not wait for the morning to come. I dressed, took care of Nora and we went to the celebration of Lithuania's

Independence at the community hall. All the musical ensembles of the town performed. The concert was long with lengthy breaks. Nora was feeling great – in the beginning she sat on my knees observing what was happening on the stage. Later she found the courage to dance and clap to the music. It was strange to see so many young people, young families. It was incredibly nice to see little children in the hall. We both got home tired, but happy. Nora could not get to sleep for a long time. I sang her all the lullabies that I knew, and the songs that I had heard in the concert. I sang all the songs in Lithuanian that I knew, I sang all my love for Lithuania”.

Rita talks about the time when she raised children in relation to her own childhood musical environment. Her narrative is also about music.

“In my family we sang less. And my children grew up listening to recordings ... We went to all the concerts in town with the children. Father played in the town's orchestra, which is why we attended all the concerts. Laura would start clapping her hands as soon as she reached the entrance to the hall. I do not know how she understood that the orchestra was going to perform. While the music was playing, she sat charmed. Once after the concert she started crying out loud. People turned around to see what had happened to the child. And Laura shouted in a lisp (then she was two or three years old) – I want more. This is how the concert ended– Laura was crying and I was laughing”.

### **Raising grandchildren: towards technology based musical culture**

Tina's daughter lives in the same town. Nora and her daughter visits her parents several times a week. Grandmother often baby-sits little Elizabeth. Tina willingly describes what a responsible mother Nora is. Even before the birth of Elizabeth she had gathered a lot of information from the Internet about childbirth and bringing up a child. Nora initiated a mothers' group called “Mamyčių klubas” (Mothers' club) with children of the same age. Young women communicate on the Internet every day sharing concerns of raising children, ideas regarding their nutrition, healthcare, and education. Tina says:

“When my daughter leaves Elizabeth for me to babysit, she brings a basket full of toys. Almost all the toys produce sounds: they play, jingle, rattle. I take out all these toys wondering why there are so many of them. I always find a music player and speakers in the bag. Her parents bought these especially for Elizabeth so they would be of good quality. Recordings are selected according to age, the playlist consists of classical music pieces. Elizabeth has to listen to music every time before sleep. This idea comes from the “Mothers' club”, they all do the same. It is said that then children will grow up more intelligent. Nora does not know that I would rather sing myself when we are together

and before sleep. I enjoy this because I remember what my parents used to sing to me, what I used to sing to my children”.

Rita's daughter lives several hundred kilometres away from her parents, she rarely visits her grandmother. However, they communicate via SKYPE several times a week. The favourite toy of Laura's daughter Agnė is her tablet computer with programmes for children, with a lot of films and collections of songs. Agnė skilfully manipulates her fingers to choose the programmes. The talking grandmother on the computer screen does not surprise the girl at all.

“We started communicating with Agnė via SKYPE as soon as she was born. There is no other way since she lives so far away. In the beginning Laura just showed us Agnė. She was about half a year old when she “found” grandmother on the computer screen. I saw her staring into the screen. She observed me for some time and ... smiled. I was so happy, so incredibly happy. She noticed me and recognized me. I did everything to maintain Agnė's attention – I sang, made various faces, clapped my hands. I looked like a crazy woman. When we were communicating, my husband came into the room. I felt his piercing eyes on me asking what was going on with me. I tried to imagine how I looked, a woman sitting in front of a computer producing various strange sounds, shaking her head and hands. And looking happy... Now we communicate with Agnė several times a week. I sing songs to her, she sways, claps her hands. When I finish one song, she shouts, ‘more ...’.

## **Discussion**

The narratives presented are not homogenous. Firstly, while recounting their childhood and the upbringing of their own children, Tina and Rita are both participants within family life. On the other hand, participation in their grandchildren's care is fragmented; they receive most of their information from other people. Secondly, while telling about their childhoods, the women presented the stories that they had experienced themselves. With respect to the upbringing of their children and grandchildren Tina and Rita are active participants of the situation; they are acting in regard to their goals and values. Despite these limitations, the stories reveal significant glimpses of children's musical culture over various periods.

Themes and commonalities within narratives at a particular period of a woman's life clearly emerge: their quiet childhood, active participation in social life when raising their children, the role of technologies when communicating with grandchildren. These themes can be analysed in relation to social, economic, political factors, such as the galvanisation of social life and bolstering of national identity when Lithuania regained its independence. Even though the participants raised their children at that time, they still participated in social events that gave

meaning to their ethnicity. National revival was felt everywhere during that period: at schools, kindergartens, in families (Balčytis, 2012). Social activeness, the moments of national identity perception are particularly notable in Tina's story. Therefore, in order to understand the musical culture of Tina's children, we have to „understand its social agency, its cultural contexts, and its relation to the powerful institutions“ (Jenkins, 1998, p. 2). As DeNora (2007) states, music education must be always understood as a holistic, culturally situated endeavour that involves explicit and implicit understandings and practices.

Until the end of the twentieth century the dominant conception of childhood presumes that children exist in a space beyond, above, outside the political. “Childhood was seen as banal and transparent, as without any concealed meanings” (Jenkins, 1998, p. 2). This can be easily noticed in the stories of Tina's and Rita's childhood: at home they are observers, they do not participate in the family's social life themselves. Later stories told by both women reveal the impact of adults on children's life, on their musical culture. At the end of the twentieth century a child is recognized “as subject to the same historical shifts and institutional factors that shape all human life” (Jenkins, 1998, p. 4). The concept of children's culture is changing as well – “a sphere, where entertainments, advocacy and pleasure meet to construct conceptions of what it means to be a child” (Giroux, 1996, p. 89). Orientation towards a child, meeting his/her needs – these ideas are clearly expressed when Tina and Rita talk about their grandchildren. They are not passive recipients of music but active agents who shape family life.

Children's musical culture is closely related to musical activities. As Katinienė (2001) states, the musical culture of a child might be characterized as the variety of musical activities of a child and for the child. From infancy, across their childhood years, and onward into their adolescence, they sing, dance, and play music. Tina and Rita do not remember such experiences from their childhood although Lithuanians have a very rich heritage of Lithuanian folk songs for children. For example, more than 1000 children's folk examples are published in a collection of Lithuanian children's songs (Jokimaitienė, 1980). Until the Second World War the tradition of singing to children and with children was alive in Lithuanian families. In the middle of the twentieth century when many people moved to cities, the tradition of folk singing was lost; urban ballads became the most popular genre of song (Balčytis, 2012). From Tina's and Rita's childhood stories we see that their parents used to sing, but not folk songs, not to their children and not with them. The participants of the research begin to use folk singing (lullabies, chants, rhythmic speech) while bringing up their own children, coinciding with the time of national revival. Twenty more years later the variety of musical activities in which Tina's and Rita's grandchildren

take part becomes highly diverse: songs, chants, rhythmic speech, movement and dance, listening to music.

As regards musical culture of today's children, the use of technologies and the media in various contexts of family life needs to be assessed. As Kertz-Welzel (2013) suggests, today's childhood is a changed childhood. Our grandchildren are the "Net Generation" (Carlson, 2005), who learn about their world through instantly accessible visual and audio resources. Musical electronic toys, cell phones, DVD and MP3 players play an important role in children's lives. Technology and the media are evident not only in children's lives. They influence parents' and grandparents' lifestyles and the way they communicate with children and grandchildren (as in the social network 'Mamyčių klubas' initiated by Tina's daughter; Rita's communication with her granddaughter via SKYPE). New technologies make a significant impact on the family and the child's musical culture (Howe & Sloboda, 1991).

And finally, what have I learned from this narrative inquiry? As a musician, from Tina's and Rita's childhood memories about their parents' singing I understood that early aesthetic musical experience is particularly significant. For both women beautiful singing remained a most striking musical memory from childhood. As a music teacher I rediscovered the importance of music in passing on human values. Tina's story reveals the role of music in the formation of national identity. I intend to act much more responsibly regarding the messages that music and musical activities send to my pupils, their parents, and community. As a mother and a future grandmother I will be careful when using technologies and the media, I will try to preserve the tradition of live performance, particularly singing, in the family. As a researcher I will be attentive while listening to friends' and colleagues' stories. It is likely that some story might encourage me to take a closer look at other people's experiences which 'might provide a means to re-conceptualise the ways in which we think about music engagement, music education, and inquiry in music education' (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009, p. 1).

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# Can infants dance before they walk? An experiment with eight to nine-month-old infants in parent-infant music classes

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## Abstract

The present study investigated the gestural behaviour of infants in parent-infant music classes. The data was collected using three video cameras in two groups with eight to nine-month-old infants and their parents over a period of five weeks. Classes were given two times a week, resulting in recordings from 20 parent-infant music classes. In analysing the videos, a particular focus was placed on the effect of social frames and of repeated musical activities on the infants' gestural responses to the music. The paper explores the notion of infant participation in musical activities and displays of infant learning over the course of time. Furthermore, the paper discusses methodological challenges and the limitations of quantifying overt responses in order to understand infants' experiences in social music contexts.

## Keywords

Infants, Parent-infant music classes, musical movement, infant behavior, dance

## Introduction

Research on music in infancy has predominantly regarded the perception abilities of infants while relatively little attention has been directed towards infants' overt responses and attempts at producing music and responding to music. The present paper examined eight to nine-month-old infants in a parent-infant music course and their behaviour during a particular social dance activity repeated in every class. Their gestures and vocal behaviour was described before, during and after the dance activity.

Music and movement frequently seem to go together. Most of the bodily movements humans associate with music can be described as some form of dancing. According to Dalcroze's theory, music and movement are inherently social activities and musical expressions are thought of as closely related to the expression of rhythm through bodily movements (Seitz, 2005). In the Dalcroze method, musicians deepen their understanding of rhythm through interactive group activities. "The orchestration of the body involves the concatenation of bodily gestures, the juxtaposition and opposition of bodily movements in relation to emotional attitudes, as well as the use of immobility (i.e. rest) and silence" (Seitz, 2005, p. 423).

Observations of a large number of infants have suggested that between four and six months they begin to respond to music with intentional movements (Moog, 1976). "The movements were not rhythmically coordinated with the music, nor in time with it. Though

they were seldom synchronized with the music, they are rhythmical in themselves, because of their repetitive nature" (Moog, 1976, p. 40). More recent research has demonstrated that even though infants do not accurately follow a musical beat, their movements are affected by the tempo of the music. That is, they move faster to a fast beat than to a slower beat (Zentner & Eerola, 2010).

In fact, infants are surprisingly capable of perceiving beats and rhythm. Even the newborn brain habituates to a regular beat and responds when the regularity is interrupted with a silence on a skipped beat (Winkler et. al, 2009). As young as six months, infants habituate to a triple meter if they are bounced to every third beat of a metronome but to a double meter if bounced to every second beat (Phillips-Silver & Trainor, 2005). Infants are also good learners of more complex irregular rhythmic patterns. At three to six months infants can learn to discriminate irregular patterns common in Bulgarian folk music which North-American adults and children older than one year cannot discriminate (Hannon & Trehub, 2005). Thus, infants are highly capable of perceiving musical beat although their ability to demonstrate their perception through body movements is limited by their command over their movements. In fact, seven-month-old infants show that they perceive the difference when a hammer moves in synchrony to a beat or not (Bahrick & Pickens, 1995).

Enjoyment of dance and music is found in all cultures and gestures to music can be seen as interpretative of the music in a similar way as gestures to speech (Lewis, 2013). Moving to music in a social group is a form of communication or more specifically, non-verbal communication. Some researchers see the ability to communicate non verbally with another human being as an act which requires some rhythmic sensibility and use the term communicative musicality in this context (Cross and Morley, 2008; Malloch, 2000; Malloch and Trevarthen , 2009). From analyses of vocal communication between an infant and a caregiver Malloch concluded that a four-month-old infant is "capable of entering the structure of a musical game with an other, participating in a musically logical way" (Malloch, 1999, p. 47). However, very young infants do not demonstrate the same variety of behavior in organized music classes as toddlers do (Custodero, 2005; St John, 2006). The only two behaviors found in young infants according to the Flow Indicators of Musical Activities (*FIMA*) are: *Gesture* and *Adult awareness* (Custodero, 2005).

### **The parent-infant music classes**

The experiment described in this paper was done with two groups of eight to nine-month-old infants in a parent-infant music program in Iceland. The program is called Tonagull (composed of two Icelandic words having the double meaning of "precious tones" or "playful

tones") and was designed by the author of this paper. The Tonagull program has been described in a previous paper (Gudmundsdottir & Gudmundsdottir, 2011). The program has been offered continuously since 2004 with increasing enrolment rates every year. The classes are 45 minute long and are run in a prescribed sequence of elements that has proven to work well to sustain interest, affect and attention of infants under two years of age. A key element of the sequence is the introduction of a social dance near the 30-minute mark before segueing into the last minutes of "winding-down" songs and activities. In our experience, the organized group dance helps in the transition from active playing with drums and instruments into the final episode leading into the good-bye-song. The dance activity sparks the attention of fatigued infants and helps them cope with the disappointment of instruments being put away at this point. The dance activity that has been the most popular through the years is a dance designed for the very first Tonagull class, called the *baroque dance*. Although all the group dances we have designed do work as intended none of them surpasses the popularity of the *baroque dance*. For example, the music to the *baroque dance* is the most requested music by parents who want to play it at home. There is no obvious explanation why that dance is so popular but we refer to *the magic of the baroque dance* because of its consistent success through the years. In the case of a difficult or fuzzy group the Tonagull teachers rely on the baroque dance to instantly create a positive synchronous atmosphere in the group.

### **The baroque dance as an activity**

The baroque dance is accompanied by a musical piece from the CD *Croc' Baroque : chansons enfantines et musique baroque*<sup>3</sup>. The musical piece is *La sauterelle* and is 1:15 minutes long (75 seconds). In class, the dance activity is usually done two times in a row. The dance participants are lined up in two rows facing each other similar to the set up in court dances from the period of the baroque. Parents in both rows hold their infants facing forward, the two rows facing each other. Thus the parents and infants in both rows clearly see the participants in the row facing them. The distance between the rows is about four to five steps.

The dance is so simple that it takes only a little explanation to get everyone dancing within a minute. In short, the two rows take turns in walking to the beat towards the row facing them, taking a bow and backing up to their starting position. While one row is moving forward and backward the other row stands still and visa versa. The tempo is close to a normal walking pace making the pacing easy and natural to the adult participants, even those with very little experience in

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<sup>3</sup> Published by Accord label, Paris, 2002

dancing.

More specifically, the musical piece (*La Sauterelle*) is composed of 8-beat phrases. On the first 8-beat phrase, row one walks four steps forwards (beats 1-4) and four steps backwards (beats 5-8). On the fourth step forwards they bend their knees as if they are bowing to the participants facing them. As soon as row one has completed the phrase walking front and back, row two walks in the same way towards the facing row in four steps (making a bow with their knees on the fourth beat) and back in four steps on beats 5-8. This gets repeated continuously throughout the 75 seconds of the music, much to the delight of the infants. The infants seem to appreciate the excitement and predictability of the back-and-forth movement in the dance. Somewhat in a similar way as infants and toddlers get excited about swinging back and forth in a swing, facing someone who is stationary. Typically, non-walking infants are intrigued by this dance and it is, in our experience, by far the most effective way to quickly calm down and regain the interest of a group of 12-14 infants who are tired, and disappointed that the free play with musical instruments is over.

### **The experiment**

Knowing the appeal of the baroque dance we were curious to look closer at the behavior of the infants during the dancing activity. In order to achieve this we needed permissions to videotape lessons. For this purpose we invited parents of six-month-old infants to enroll in a session of 10 free classes that would run two days a week for 5 weeks. The parents who enrolled consented to video recordings of all classes. At the time of the first class, the infants were all eight months old and by the last class they were nine months old. This is during the paid parental leave period when at least one parent can be at home with the infant. Most infants were accompanied by at least one parent although in some cases both parents did show up for the class.

Two groups of parents with 14 and 16 infants each participated in the study. No infant missed more than 2 out of 10 classes due to illness or other reasons. Three cameras were placed at different angles in the classroom. A total number of 30 infants recorded in 10 sessions.

For the first eight classes the baroque dance was introduced and performed in a traditional manner, with a standard repetition making a total of two runs of the dance during each class. At the ninth class (week 5) a variation was introduced. The parents were instructed to stand completely still when the dance music started and not make any movements for the whole duration of the 75 seconds the song would play. We wanted to know what the reactions of the infants would be to the stillness of their parents who usually moved predictably back and forth during this dance activity. After the still version of the dance the

music was repeated and the parents instructed to dance normally as they had done during the first eight classes.

Video recordings of the normal version of the baroque dance were analyzed for types of behaviour in the infants. Movements and gestures were identified and labeled. The reactions to the “no dancing” condition of the activity in the ninth class for both groups were described and the infants’ behaviours compared to that in the normal versions.

## Results

The behaviour of the infants was observed on recordings that started 30 seconds before the activity was resumed with the onset of the music and ended 30 seconds after the music stopped. Individual differences were found in the types of behaviour and extent of reactions from the infants. Some infants could be described as responding with high intensity and others with low intensity. A list of behaviours detected is displayed in Figure 1. The majority of the gestures and vocalizations detected were considered positive and positive types of gestures were more frequent than negative ones.

### Gestures and vocalizations detected

One leg kicking  
Both legs kicking  
One hand reaching gesture  
Both hands reaching gesture  
One hand beat approximation  
Both hands beat approximation  
Hands and legs all moving  
Relaxed posture of content  
One palm open-close  
Both palms open-close  
Head nodding approximating beat  
Head shaking side to side  
Stillness attending to facing row  
Stillness attending to parent  
Stillness attention indistinct  
Vocalizing short call  
Vocalizing long  
Vocalizing short negative  
Vocalizing long negative  
Rubbing of eyes  
Wiggling backwards discontent  
General discontent

Figure 1

A clear difference was found between the infants' vocal behaviour before the music started and after the music started. In the 30 second window prior to the activity the majority of negative gestures and vocalizations took place. In summary, 16-30 seconds of the 30-second interval were characterized by negative vocalizations by three or more infants. In contrast, when the music started a vocal silence followed in all of the recordings. In some recordings there were no vocalizations during the dance activity and in others individual short vocalizations occurred sporadically and only after 30 seconds into the dance. When the music stopped there would be vocal silence for at least 10 seconds followed by multiple onsets of negative vocalizations, even crying.

The negative body language was mostly found in the 30 seconds prior to the beginning of the activity. The parents would be standing in their positions in two rows, holding their infants facing forward to the other row. Restless infants would sway backwards, rub their eyes and display the discontent that could also be heard in the accompanying vocalizations. A few infants would be still, in a content resting position. However, as soon as the music started all of the infants would initially become still and remain still and attentive for a few seconds. About half of the infants would continue to be mostly still during the whole duration of the music (75 seconds) looking interested and content, looking forward and at other participants. The other half of the infants would display varying amount of physical movements but usually only 4-5 infants (out of 14-16) would be highly active throughout the dance with hands waiving and feet kicking in the air. In general, the infants moved more when their parent stood still than when their parent was moving. It seems that they reacted with body movements when the facing row walked towards them but when their row was moving they relaxed their muscles, hands and feet dangling down.

In the "no dancing" condition, when parents were instructed to stand still when the music started rather than doing the dance steps it was observed that all vocalizations stopped immediately, just as in the dancing condition. So the music seemed to help trigger the silence rather than the movement of the parents. Interestingly, the infants behaved very similarly in the non-moving condition in the ninth class, as they would do in the regular dancing activity, remaining interested and content throughout the duration of the 75 seconds of music. Immediately, as the music stopped the infants demonstrated restlessness in their movements and produced multiple negative vocalizations. This finding was the same in both groups.

## **Discussion**

It was clear from the recordings that the music and dance activity we call the baroque dance alerted the attention of all infants and elicited positive gestures and vocalizations. This was in sharp contrast to the 30 seconds before and after the dance, which elicited negative gestures and vocalizations. It did not seem that the parents needed to be moving in order for this effect to manifest. The "non-moving" music-only condition elicited

similar reactions by the infants as when there was movement. It is not clear if the music alone had this effect or if the anticipation of dancing played a role in their reactions. It is nevertheless remarkable that over a dozen infants can stay relatively quiet and still in an apparent state of heightened alert for 75 seconds.

This resting, albeit alert state of infants in the context of a social musical activity deserves more attention and could be viewed in the context of infant studies that rely on focused attention to auditory stimuli (e.g. Trehub, 2001).

To observers of the video recordings of infants participating in the baroque dance activity it is obvious that they all enjoy the activity. Even the ones who are tired and initially in a negative mood. The infants also seem to have a sense of anticipation of what is coming. However, systematic observations of the infants' behaviour poses methodological challenges. It is not clear that quantification of movements and gestures is helpful for understanding the infants' perceptions or experiences during the activity. In future studies it may be helpful to focus on different types of reactions from infants whose responses differ in terms of intensity.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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# **Reframing observable musical behaviours as play. A research study of musical play amongst two- and three-year old children in two Early Years settings in England**

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## **Abstract**

Music in early childhood tends to be perceived and supported by adults as “performance” and the accurate recreation of tunes and rhymes is valued. Both music and play are appropriated as pedagogical tools for learning and child-initiated, expressive, multi-modal musical play often goes unnoticed by early childhood practitioners. Consequently, the nature of musical play in the healthy development of the child is little understood.

In this study I, an early childhood music practitioner, have monitored the diverse musical behaviours of 26 two- to four-year olds at play in two Children’s Centres in the South West of England in two ways. Firstly, the Sounds of Intent (SOI) scale was used to quantify how a child’s behaviour was musically proactive, reactive, or interactive. Secondly, I collected written observational data.

At the end of 2017, research data will be examined to see if they support the hypothesis that increasing musical behaviours in an early years setting can help to “close the attainment gap” for children identified by the Centre’s professionals as being at risk of academic underachievement.

Data collected so far demonstrate a general trend in the children’s musical development. Some findings require further investigation: the disparity between the quantity of overt musical behaviours recorded for boys compared with girls; the lack of clarity amongst early years professionals over the purpose of musical play in early childhood settings, and when viewing the contextual data obtained within a Playwork Theory framework, hints emerge as to why musical play was occasionally absent.

## **Keywords**

Musical play, Play, Sounds of Intent, Playwork, Early Childhood, Ludic Play Cycle, musical ludido

## **Introduction**

This paper describes a primarily outcome-focussed project called “Move, Groove, Improve”, funded by Youth Music, supported by The Music Works and based in two Children’s Centres in the South West of England. The research hopes to demonstrate that increasing children’s active music-making will help to “close the attainment gap” for targeted children who are considered to be at a disadvantage when compared with their financially better-off peers locally and nationally. Musical behaviours of children were monitored using the Sounds of Intent Scale (Ockelford, 2008; Vogiatzoglou, Ockelford, Welch & Himonides, 2011) and the Centres have agreed to share with me, the author, anonymised data gathered as part of their monitoring of children through the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2014)

enabling the comparison of the studied cohort to other children in England. Serendipitously, this study offers a valuable opportunity to take time to observe children as they go about their play and gain deep insights into how that play is musical.

Musical play, according to Young (2003), is a way of "creating forms of organisation which 'hold on' to things in time and space through rhythmical regularities and expressive shapes". Who starts or supports that play is not prescriptive. In a Vygotskian model of teaching and learning (Vygotsky 1978) adults, and capable child peers, are an important resource in learning environments, supporting a child's progression through their zone of proximal development; however play, where adults are not present, can be superior according to Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva (2004). In a wider sense, playwork theorist Russell (2015) expanded the idea of play into a "synecdoche encompassing children's play and adults' support of it" and the Dutch historian Huizinga (1955) explained "in everything that pertains to music, we find ourselves in the play sphere".

In order to ensure a core of at least 24 children at the end of the project, and anticipating attrition of this number as children move out of the area or change their childcare facility, 43 children have been tracked from the age of two when they started at their local Children's Centres, and observations will continue until they are four years old and leave to go to school. All children in the targeted group are identified as being at risk of delay to their development and are part of a programme called "Achieving Two Year Olds" which offers carers up to five, three-hour sessions per week, free of charge. Criteria for accessing these free places includes being in a family which qualifies for free school meals and receives working tax credits; if the child has an education, health and care plan; is in receipt of disability care allowance or is in the care of the local authority. All children in both Children's Centres, regardless of their age or vulnerability, were included in music activities, yet they could equally choose not to engage in active music-making.

Staff in both Centres sing regularly with children in group sessions utilising a core repertoire of nursery rhymes. Parker (2015), surveying Children's Centre Managers, found that speech and language skills were the most popular areas of need that music was required to support. Unprompted remarks from the Centres' hard-working and dedicated practitioners hinted at their understanding of music as a tool to gather children into a group, focussed on one task (table.1). This contention between music *for* pedagogy (learning through music, as Hargreaves (2013) put it) and music *as* pedagogy (learning in music) resonates with the distinction made by Howard (2010, p205) between play *for* pedagogy and play *as* pedagogy.

**Table 1. Examples from this project where priorities of pedagogy in musical play have been apparent**

<b>Musical Play for Pedagogy examples from this study</b>	<b>Musical Play as Pedagogy examples from this study</b>
"Would you like to do some music? The children are sitting, ready".	Ali plays a bass riff on a guitar and L drums along
"Can you get them to stay on the carpet?"	Boys A and D share a drum, taking turns with "go go go!" and "stop"
A core repertoire of songs/signs with card prompts	Child-constructed "bus". R the driver sings "The Wheels on the Bus" as he drives.
Number counting rhymes	R hums to himself as he cycles past on his bike
Songs for hand washing or transitions	C and M turn Hapi Drum upside down to make "Music Soup"
Learning Sign Supported English / "Total Communication" signs through songs	Glissando "ooooeayeeayah!" as S scoots downhill

## Data Collection

Sounds of Intent in the Early Years (SOI-EY) was launched in 2015 and many of its ideas to promote particular musical behaviours have been applied in this study. The free original online SOI reporting tool has been used (Vogiatzoglou et al, 2011) for ease of data recording and to benefit from the graphical data reporting tools that this method offers. Using SOI (Ockelford, 2008), the musical behaviours of the children are assessed in three areas:

**Reactive:** Listening and responding

**Proactive:** Causing, creating and controlling

**Interactive:** Musical behaviours that occur in the context of participation with others

The cohort of children (Table 2) includes those who have joined the Centre since I started this study. Within this group of 43 children is a "core group" of 26 children who have been tracked since the beginning (Table 3).

**Table 2. SOI data May '16 to March '17 for all monitored children**

<b>Total number of sessions attended by researcher</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Total Number of SOI observations recorded</b>	503
<b>Total number of boys across two Centres observed</b>	22
<b>Total number of observations of musical play by boys recorded</b>	316
<b>Total number of girls across two Centres observed</b>	21
<b>Total number of observations of musical play by girls recorded</b>	187

**Table 3. Average Reactive, Proactive and Interactive scores for core group only, recorded May '16 to March '17**

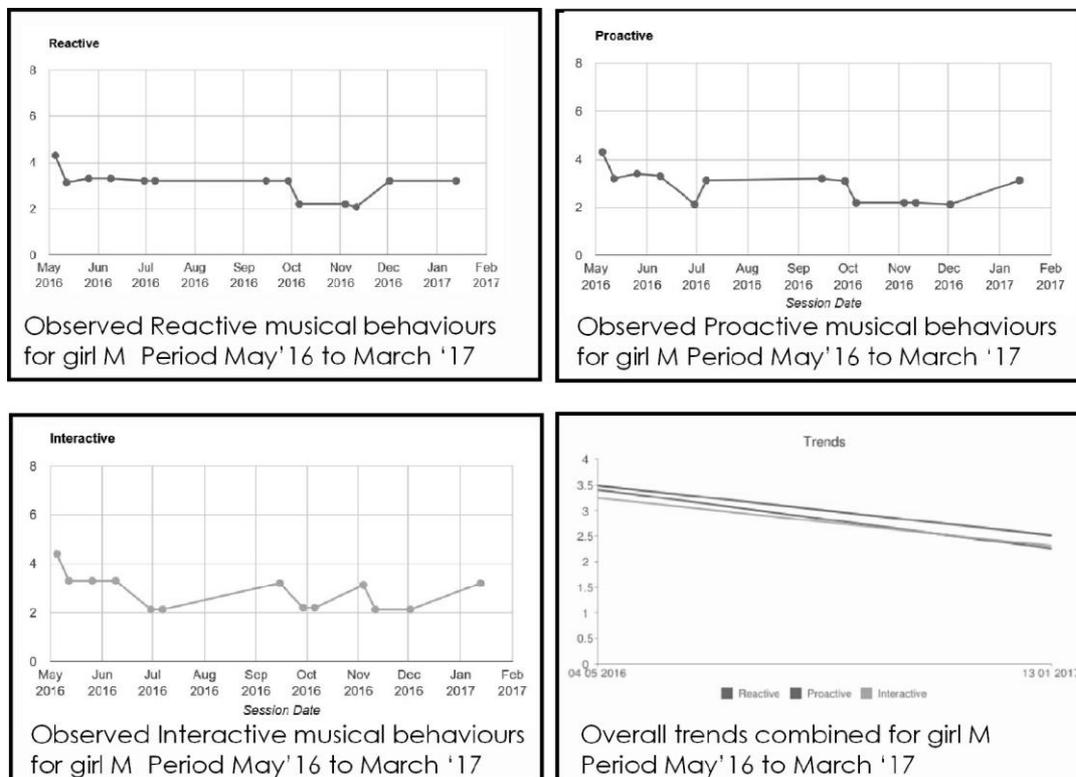
	Total observations of girls in core group	Average SOI Reactive score	Average SOI Proactive score	Average SOI Interactive score
<b>Girls (n=13) core group</b>	156	3.4	3.4	3.2
	Total observations of boys in core group	Average SOI Reactive score	Average SOI Proactive score	Average SOI Interactive score
<b>Boys (n=13) Core group</b>	224	3.1	3.0	2.9

In addition to the SOI data, I wrote brief narrative observations in my notebook every time I noticed a child's musical behaviour. I will examine here the data collected so far for two children, girl M and boy T.

### Girl M: The SOI scale, my observations and EYFS data

Figure 1 depicts M's SOI evaluation over time. The initial observation scores highly as a result of an interaction with a peer. Since then her opportunities for engaging in music and musical play have been increasing but overt musical behaviours are not frequently observed or recorded.

Figure 1. Girl M's Sounds of Intent Data illustrated as three Domains with a combined summary



My diary notes 6th May 2016: Girl Z sitting in music corner with practitioner and child M. Z offers jingles to M who shakes her head and shrinks away. The

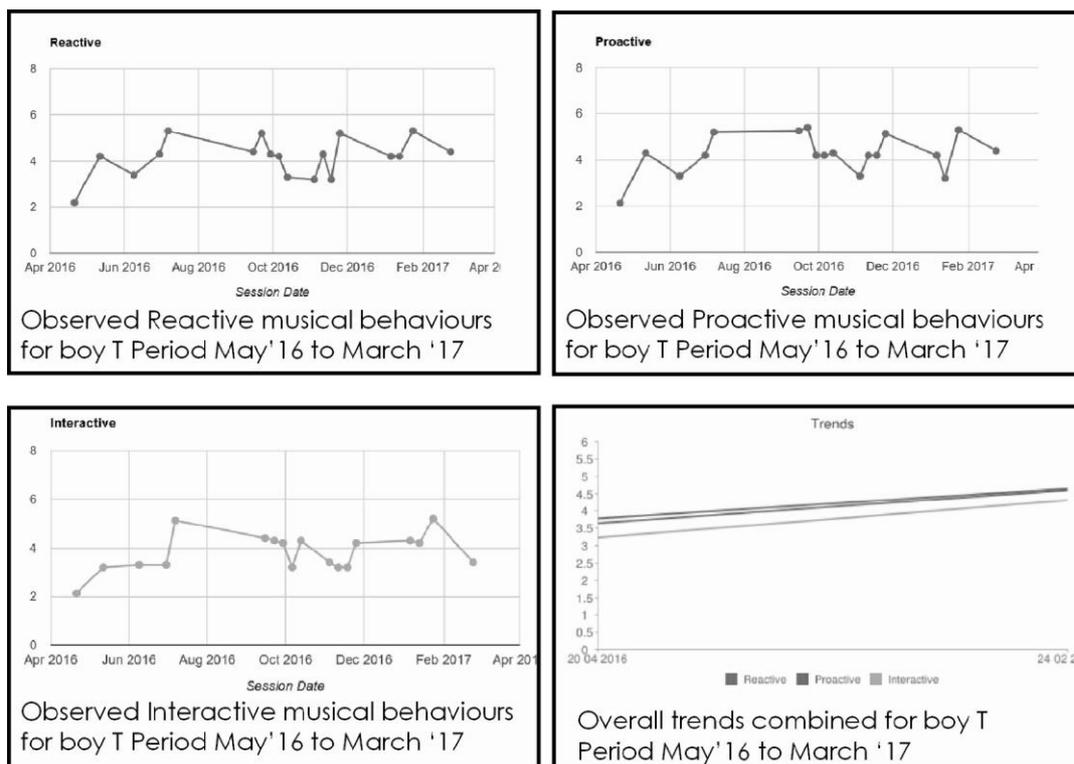
practitioner picks up a beater and softly strikes drum whilst singing “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” and picks up spare jingles and offers them to M who takes them. M takes the jingles as Z starts singing song (I can’t make out the words). M and Z look at each other shaking jingles enthusiastically then quietly together then loudly again, laughing.

EYFS measurements for M show no area of concern and that she is on target in all areas including Listening and Attention and Speaking, although fewer data points have been collected for her than some of her peers.

### Boy T: The SOI scale, my observations and EYFS data

Figure 2 shows boy T’s SOI evaluation over time. Whilst the overall trend showed an increase in the frequency and sophistication of his observable musical behaviours, some days T made his musical behaviours observable and some days he did not.

Figure 2. Boy T’s Sounds of Intent Data illustrated as three Domains with a combined summary



Observation Diary Notes: 24<sup>th</sup> Jan '17. Seven children (four boys, three girls) are gathering large wooden pallets and placing them on top of each other to a height of approximately 60-70 cms. This is quite a struggle. Boy T speaks loudly “boys, I can do this one” and places another pallet on top of the tower. He starts singing, swaying as he walks heavily past the tower:

*“Build a big tower (sol sol sol mi)  
Build a big tower (sol sol sol mi)*

*Bob the Builder (do la sol mi)*

*Yes we can" (re re do)*

And moments later, as he shifts logs amongst other children:

*"Working together to get the job done" (fa so ti so mi, mi re mi re do)*

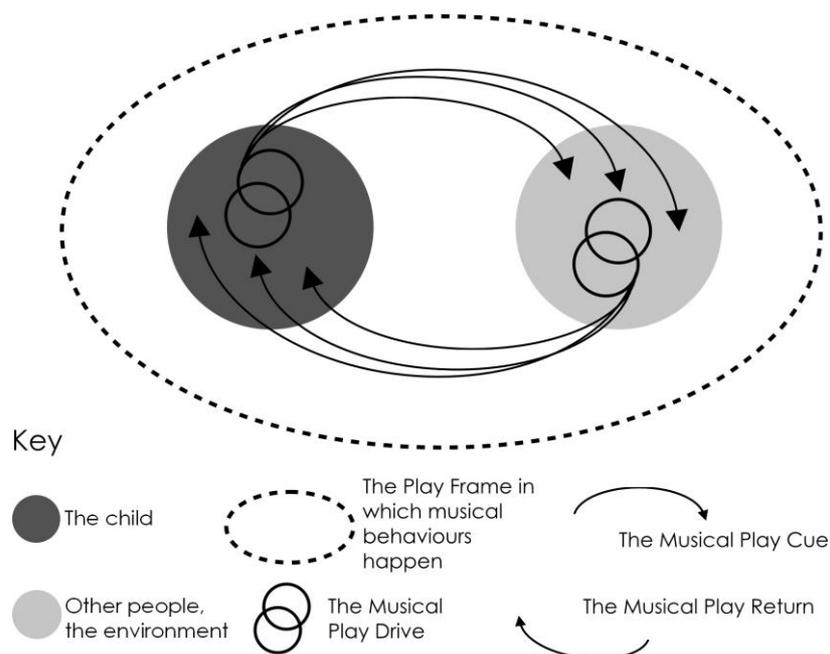
Last phrase different key, mostly in tune.

EYFS data for T show typical development for Self-confidence and Self-awareness, Health and Self-care, Reading, Numbers, People and Communities, The World, Exploring using media and materials and Being Imaginative. Other areas such as Listening and Attention, Understanding and Speaking are developing age appropriately, but are not yet "secure".

### **Discussion: A Play-focused view of Musical Play**

Sturrock and Else (1998) developed the Ludic Cycle within the discipline of Playwork Theory to depict the process of play as it occurs. The diagram (Figure 3) is borrowed from Else (2014) and adapted here by me for a musical interaction where two children are in flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1990; Custodero 2011).

**Figure 3. Musical Play in flow between two players adapted from Else (2014)**



The play frame is the physical or thematic boundary that contains the play. For boy T it was pallet-building area outside. For girl M it was a music corner with a trusted friend, girl Z. The play frame can be constructed, like a music corner or den; or a metaphorical musical environment where song and diverse musical behaviours are supported and welcomed.

The play drive, the ludido (Else 2014 p71), is the child's intrinsic conscious or unconscious desire to play which is related to the child's sense of identity or

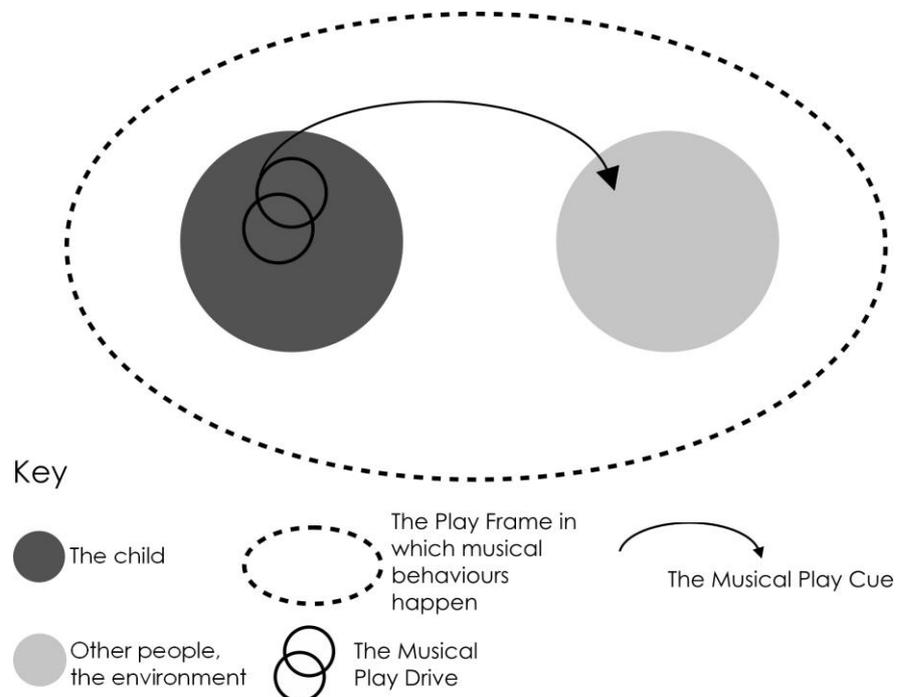
sense of power. T had a tower to build and peers to be rallied. M wanted to be included in a song. Ludido is necessary for play to become evident.

The child issues a play cue (is Proactive), such as Boy T singing “Build a big Tower”; or girl Z offering a jingle to girl M. The play cue is accepted as building continues or the jingle is taken (Reactive).

Acceptance of the play cue feeds back (the play return) to the Proactive child and boy B sings a motivating song. Girl M shakes her jingle enthusiastically. Play flow occurs briefly as the children become “lost” in their play (Interactive). Shortly, when the tower is built, boy T moves away to another area. Girl M drops the jingle and sits still. The play is annihilated (Else, 2014). Both children have already got what they wanted from that episode of music-centred play.

Even in a musical environment, music does not always “happen” and is therefore not recorded. Figure 4 depicts a musical play cue that is not returned. I have experienced this when I am being Proactive, wanting to play in a musical way by humming a tune, leading a music session, strumming a guitar or playing on the Hapi Drum, and no child joins me. It is part of my job to be Proactive in an Early Childhood environment but I rely on children to start singing on a note that they can reach so I know what key to sing in, or show me a movement, rhythm or sound that I can support and that we can “play with” together.

**Figure 4. Musical Play with no return**



**Reviewing the Data so far**

Some aspects of the data collected demand reflection: I am tracking boys and girls in equal numbers but am gathering many more observations of overt music making from boys than girls (Table 2). A part of this bias is due to staff asking me to focus on certain children with behavioural issues or Special Educational Needs and the majority of these children are boys. If I bring in interesting musical instruments for use during free play it is usually boys who arrive at the instrument first. Careful, firm and fair management of a musical instrument is essential, as is keeping the instrument available for the full duration of free play so that all children can eventually explore it fully and utilise it in their play, particularly when its novelty has expired.

Examining the average SOI Domain scores for the data collected to date, the lowest average score for a domain is the boys' Interactive score. Interactivity in the SOI sense means taking turns to copy musical motifs and can require some high level verbal skills like remembering lyrics, voice control or turn-taking. "Interactive" is also the girls' lowest-scoring domain.

Moving forward, I shall change my sampling technique from recording musical behaviours as I notice them to collecting an equal number of SOI observations for girls as for boys. I will also positively seek out and facilitate musical play that is Interactive.

Unfortunately for girl M, one skilled musical interaction between M and her peer at the start of the study gave her a downwards-pointing graph over time for her personal SOI analysis. I cannot be certain that doing more of the same musical approach will convert M's graph into an upwards incline. I am confident however that M is "musical" and that her level 2 abilities are consolidating (Ockelford 2015). Currently, Girl M's lower scores in SOI measurements do not correlate with lower scores on her EYFS observations. Her EYFS data measure "higher" than Boy T who had higher SOI scores. I will not be able to tell if the "attainment gap" has been closed or narrowed until the children leave for school later in the year. I also will never know if the gap will have been closed by more music or the excellent work of the early childhood practitioners I work with. Further data collection and analysis is required before comparing EYFS and SOI data for the entire cohort and drawing firm conclusions.

### **Conclusions: "Purposeful" Musical Play**

It would appear that Musical Play is a complex, tangled, multi-purpose activity. Counting individual threads in musical play has revealed how vital those threads are to the colour, texture and integrity of the whole fabric of children's musical play.

The newly updated EYFS (DfE, 2017) keeps a phrase from its previous iteration: "Each area of learning and development must be implemented through purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-led activity". In this study, active music-making has been implemented through a combination

of adult-led and child-led activity. The “purpose” of music and musical play appears to be different for all the children, staff and practitioners in the Children’s Centre. It is clear that musical play needs to be examined from many angles and whilst quantitative measurement offers useful information, there is a risk that promotion of measurable features of musical play might jeopardise its less-tangible or less-researched benefits. As Wood (2010) points out, the justification of quality pre-school provision is its positive impact on the long-term life chances of the children. Therefore I feel under some pressure now to show that more music, monitored through SOI equates to a positive impact on EYFS scores.

I am finding the Sounds of Intent Scale to be a valuable tool in assessing children’s musical behaviours because it facilitates a highly disciplined, if narrowly focussed, way of looking at diverse, contextual behaviours. Identifying SOI domains that require additional support is tantamount to utilising SOI data as a diagnostic tool. However, acknowledging the staff’s requirement that music could be used to modify group behaviours, and through this study having proved that the lowest-scoring domain for both boys and girls is “Interaction”, the evidence suggests that I should focus on music for group interaction for the rest of the year. I am still reflecting whether this can or should be done through musical play or through structured, adult-led activities. I also worry that such clear repurposing of music might in the short term modify social behaviours, but could pose a risk to a vulnerable child’s long-term association with music.

I am concerned as to why some children are difficult to engage in musical play, or rarely proactively initiate musical play. The Sounds of Intent domains map on to many features of the Play Cycle with the exception of “ludido” (the play drive) and “annihilation” (where the play is ended). I suggest that it is the musical drive, the child’s internal “need” to make music, the “musical ludido” that needs to be supported for some children. Without this musical ludido, musical play might lack any purpose for the child and extrinsic, behaviour-modifying goals for example, could become the child’s musical play drive.

As Ockelford pointed out (2008, p82) “And it is worth remembering that a theory need not be correct to be useful”, neither the Sounds of Intent Scale nor Playwork Theory explain the purpose of Musical Play but both are very useful in helping us to get to grips with the complex relationships between the early childhood music practitioner, pedagogical requirements, and the young musical child at play.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

My grateful thanks to the two Children’s Centres who continue to welcome me each week, to Youth Music and The Music Works.

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# **What are they learning? - exploring the tensions and complexities in a learner-centred approach to early childhood music education**

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## **Abstract**

There is a need to understand and interpret early childhood education approaches for music learning situations. The shift towards a more learner-centred paradigm poses questions for reflection. This presentation seeks to explore terminology and concepts about learning and music education in early childhood. The aim is to give an overview of this broad topic and to offer a focus for further analysis. The presentation unpicks the pedagogue's and the learner's positioning along a continuum from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach (see van Langenhove, & Harre', 1999).

Questions that have guided our dialogue with the literature: What are the tensions, complexities and dilemmas inherent in following the child's lead in a group music situation? What are the ways in which children's musical initiatives can be included and valued in a group learning process? Is there a place for pedagogue-led elements in learner-centred music learning?

One-to-one following of a child's musical initiatives may be easier to understand and incorporate into practice than adopting child-led ideas in a group-learning situation. If we conceive of the group learning process as collaborative the dialogue and the initiatives, the power and contributions are shared and negotiated within the community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The pedagogue facilitates the process by drawing together the threads and ideas to shape the artistic shared moment. Issues of the location of power, authority, control, knowledge and creativity in early childhood music education as well as questions about the characteristics of quality music teaching in this situation will be discussed in the presentation. Our findings include some key issues about how to develop and define quality music practice; assessment of learning and pedagogical attributes in early childhood music education. We hope that the discussions will raise more questions to further the contribution to knowledge that is needed in our sector.

## **Keywords**

Learner-centred, music education, teacher training, pedagogical approaches.

# The EcoSonic Playground: Project description and development

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## Abstract

Providing equal and free access to interactive musical play drives us. The EcoSonic Playground project develops interdisciplinary STEAM (science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math) and sustainability education through project-based learning. Using a differentiated, engineering focused curriculum, 7- and 8-year-old children (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades in the US) will build large-scale, indoor musical instrument play structures with majority reusable materials. Sustainability education blends architectural design processes, technology, acoustics, and materials experimentation, which immerse children in kinesthetic deep-skills learning. The EcoSonic Playground serves under-served communities, wherever exists the greatest need for creative opportunity - through constructing interactive musical spaces.

Cross-disciplinary faculty and undergraduates will facilitate the EcoSonic Playground curriculum through an after-care program at an inner-city elementary school. Children's active participation includes: Planning/organizing; collecting clean reusable materials with school community help; experimenting with those materials; instrument design visualization through aspirational drawing; and instrument building. Once the instruments are made and tested, children will build scaffolding for them following provided structural kits and blueprints. This initiative will become a pilot program – a model for the EcoSonic Playground group to bring across the City of Lowell and beyond. This project is a work in progress: It has developed quickly. Each new idea seems to spur us into further avenues of creative problem solving. This paper is a full description of the project.

## Keywords

STEAM, immersion learning, community, playgrounds, design

## The EcoSonic Playground: Project description

In the summer of 2016 a cross-disciplinary project team consisting of University of Massachusetts Lowell faculty and students entered into a collaborative venture with the Earth Day Committee for the City of Lowell, the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School, and UMass Lowell's Office of Sustainability to design and implement an integrated engineering-focused, and project-based STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math)/sustainability education curriculum.

The goals of the EcoSonic Playground look toward immersive, experiential learning for early elementary aged children through building large-scale, multi-faceted musical instruments – emphasizing community-facing benefits. Using majority reusable materials, children will design and build musical instruments that will be attached to PVC pipe scaffolding, in essence creating sculptures that can be played. The university project team designed and built two working models, which included the following: Computer tower covers, computer cord, large water containers, dryer vent tubes, telephone cords, pots and pans, bicycle wheels, electrical tape, propane tanks, large

water barrels, and PVC pipe. These models have been installed at our university where students have been playing on them – recently for a two-hour jam session (see figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1





Figure 2

Our initiative will extend its reach to a range of critically underserved populations, including: Incarcerated youth, children on the autism spectrum, children with a range of other special needs, public schools, community organizations who provide after school care, and organizations making efforts to involve at-risk youth in positive and meaningful activity. Coupled with a rigorous and structured evaluation component, this will set the stage for a scalable model that will be poised for the development of future expansion throughout the region.

Presently, we have a connection with the Lincoln Elementary School in the City of Lowell, where we will be implementing the EcoSonic Playground program starting in Autumn 2017. This school's neighborhood has been designated as low socio-economic status even as compared to other areas of Lowell (an at-risk city). The Lincoln School community comprises predominantly immigrant families, many of which are Cambodian. We are working with the school's principal to align the EcoSonic Playground curriculum with the children's skills and educational needs.

### ***Community connections***

The EcoSonic Playground will provide an effective and multifaceted vehicle for community organizations to develop in their children under care a rich variety of skills and aptitudes to facilitate their growth as creative, collaborative, culturally aware and socially responsible individuals. It also has the potential to demonstrate the interconnectedness of socio-cultural aptitudes with learning in STEAM areas. The EcoSonic Playground may lead to positive learning outcomes in the areas of general musicianship skills, improvisation, collaborative music making, and STEAM education, as well as foster creativity, ecological awareness and strengthen social interaction.

Intentional community involvement will be at the core of designing, creating, and building the prototype instruments/play structures. Focused integration of music, visual arts, and cultural relevance will create open play spaces for the public. The EcoSonic Playground will not only revitalize these urban areas but also will become a catalyst and model for transforming public areas of Lowell, which have great potential for community interaction – but that currently may be underused and/or attract illicit behaviours.

### ***The curriculum***

Participation in the EcoSonic Playground pilot project will happen through an after-school program developed at UMass Lowell's Department of Music. This program will involve students in applying STEAM skills in the following ways: Planning/organizing: Collecting clean reusable materials with school community help; Experimenting with those materials for feel, materials, and sound production; visualizing how an instrument might be designed/made through materials manipulation; creating aspirational drawings of early-stage musical instruments; and building these instruments/learning to use hand tools and hardware (safely and effectively) as part of the curriculum.

Once preliminary instruments are made, the UMass Lowell project team will provide structural kits and blueprints. These materials will allow students to build scaffolding, to which these instruments will be attached. Structural kits will include: Specially cut and sanded PVC pipe (chemical free); PVC fittings; hardware; and blueprints.

After completing the indoor structures, participating students will be given a new challenge: Design a permanent, outdoor playground where the

adventure structures are musical instruments. During this stage, the UMass Lowell project team plans to invite professionals (e.g., engineer, architect, city planner, acoustics specialist, etc.) to work with the students. Building the playground will be a school community effort.

- The after-school class will draw students into the process of civic development as they help to design their own playground.
- The school community will become involved with the afterschool program, in building the indoor playground pieces, and gathering safe, non-toxic reusable materials, aiming to reduce the neighborhood's carbon footprint and provide students with experimental materials.
- As a community development project, the playground will become a model for building other playgrounds across Lowell. It will become a concrete manifestation of that community's efforts to make their school a social center.
- Community involvement in The EcoSonic Playground will emphasize ownership, which will provide incentive for maintaining the playground over time. To mitigate inevitable wear and tear on the structures, we will use an integrated design: The instruments will be the playground structures (see Figure 3).

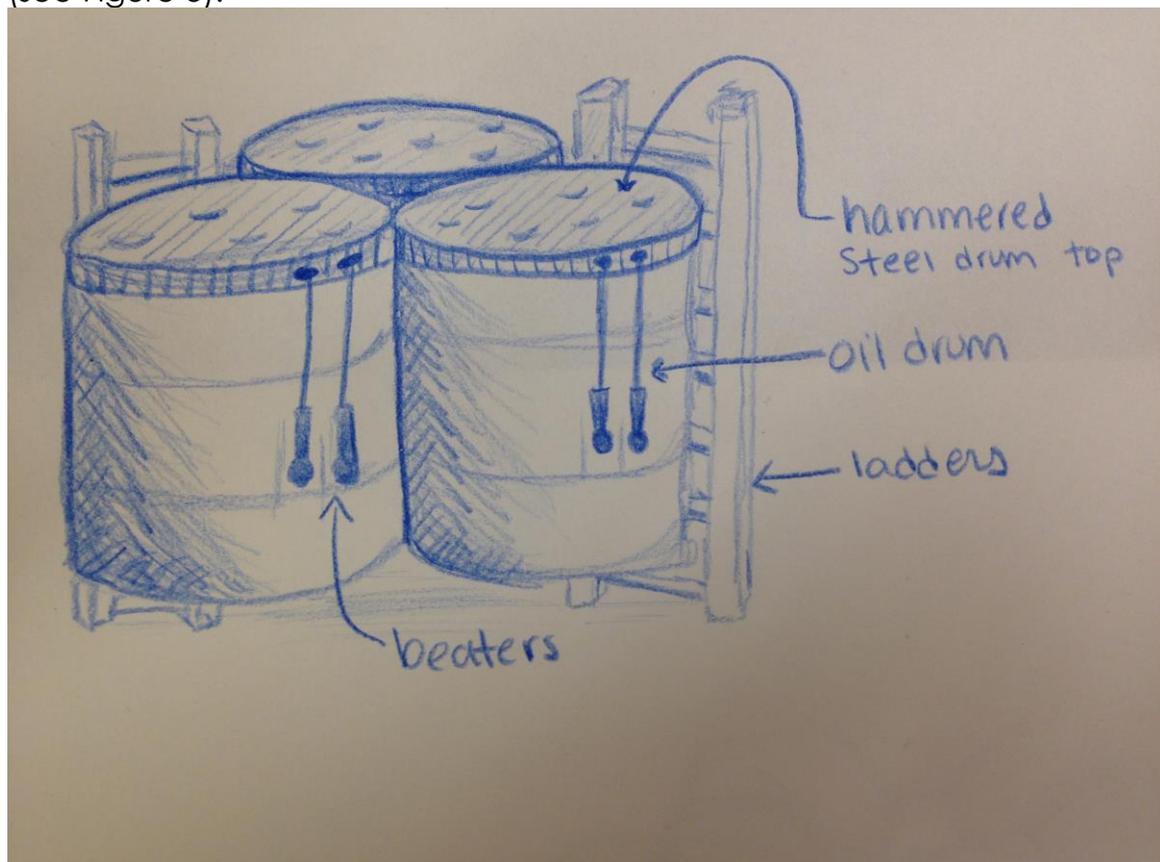


Figure 3

### **Project initiatives**

Presently, our working group is involved with two major research initiatives aimed towards understanding the project's potential.

*International partnership*

Working in parallel, Marino Institute of Education, an associate college of the University of Dublin, Trinity College will explore the efficacy of a portable EcoSonic Playground from a STEAM learning perspective (music, visual arts and social, environmental and scientific education) with elementary school children in areas designated as disadvantaged (DEIS).

In Dublin, student elementary teachers will design, test and help construct mobile EcoSonic Playground installations informed by science and music and inspired by visual artists (mobiles, stabiles, kinetic work and sound sculpture). In addition, they will co-design a STEAM interconnected learning program for elementary school including Music, Visual arts and Science and informed by inquiry-based, collaborative, and transdisciplinary learning. Findings from UMass Lowell's research on community interaction and relationship with the EcoSonic Playgrounds will scaffold efforts to approach Dublin city councils in relation to exploring similar possibilities to transform neglected public spaces with environmentally sustainable musical instrument playgrounds.

### *Case study at UMass Lowell*

Through this research initiative we will make the large-scale instrument structures our project team has produced available to students inside of the Department of Music in two different age groups: Undergraduate and elementary age. Studying these two populations will give us a baseline for all future research. We intend to compare the ways in which older and younger students use the instruments from diverse perspectives including: Spontaneous musical play, social interaction, group improvisation, community building, and musical thinking.

We believe that the data collected from both of these initiatives will help us to create and implement the EcoSonic Playground curriculum as we bring it to the Lincoln School and other organizations that serve children. We intend to involve these children in all aspects of envisioning, building, and playing on large-scale instrument structures of their own creation. Based on previous research, we believe that open and free access to musical play aids in aspects of children's musical and social-emotional development, (e.g., Chooi-Theng Lew & Campbell, 2005; Lum & Campbell, 2007; Marsh, 1995, 2012; Marsh & Young, 2006, etc.) therefore benefiting their overall well-being.

### **Frameworks**

The idea for our project stems from several existing theories of development and learning, along with the seminal work of others in the area of children's playground music making. We began with reading into Campbell's (1998) and Marsh's (2008) research into children's free musical play in playgrounds and in diverse cultural contexts. Their work inspired us to think about how we might weave together the various developmental aspects of children's music making that have been foundational to this project.

We decided to look at the musical playground from an engineering perspective – we asked how we might combine young children’s natural propensity towards music making in communication and social interaction (e.g., Burnard, 2006; Miell, MacDonald, & Hargreaves, 2005; Trevarthen, 1999-2000, etc.) with learning processes in general. We became most interested in STEM subjects as logical connecting skills to music instrument building, therefore adding the A (for arts). However, as we continue to think about this project, we also see STEAM connections to improvisation and composition – from the perspective of music as a dynamic, living form of architecture based on engineering and design principles (Bispham, 2009-2010; Kuloglu, 2015; Resnick & Ocko, 1991; Watson, 2015).

We know from previous compositional work with kindergarteners (Johnson-Green, 2016) that we may include children from early elementary in the building and design process. Creating music lends itself well to the types of learning that we hope will arise out of the entire process: From building to playing. We are constructing the EcoSonic Playground curriculum to focus on developing both technical and developmental skills. In the technical realm children will bring and practice their knowledge of STEAM subjects. And in the developmental realm, children will practice critical thinking, divergent thinking, adaptive strategies, resiliency, planning, envisioning, and creativity.

Because it covers a wide range of knowledge, the EcoSonic Playground depends on immersive learning to be effective. Here, we define immersive learning as comprehensive learning where students are asked to use all knowledge and materials at their disposal (Harel & Papert, 1991; Piaget, 1960). Models of learning immersion are often seen in second language learning programs where students need to acculturate to a new environment (Jared, Cormier, Levy, & Wade-Woolley, 2011) – or in virtual reality technology environments (Johnson-Glenberg, Birchfield, Tolentino, & Koziupa, 2014). We thought about the idea of immersion in an alternative way, where students are challenged to push the boundaries of their experience using the resources at their disposal.

The EcoSonic Playground project has potential to become a model of integrated, immersive learning in STEAM areas for music and other educators who may be interested in providing this type of experience for their own students. We hope that our findings may shed light on aspects of developmentally appropriate practice, which may provide effective, alternative ways of teaching in STEAM areas. We intend to disseminate this research to both the music and STEM education community. Depending on our results, we hope to influence policy around curriculum writing for effective, immersive music education.

## **Conclusion**

It is imperative in our present political and social climate that we discover ways to strengthen children’s social-emotional connection among peers and to their community. Especially now, children need creative outlets designed to encourage the skills of adaptation and resiliency: What is commonly

known as “grit.” These inter- and intra-personal skills are paramount to a healthy, functional society in which all children function well regardless of station or mode of operation. The EcoSonic Playground project intends to provide ongoing and long-term complex learning opportunities so that under-served children may develop these critical skills.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# Emotion, Empathy and Musical Experience with Young Children: *The Child You See, Sees You*

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## **Abstract**

Recent trends in music education in the United States emphasize what children should know about music more than what teachers need to know about children. Importantly, what we know about children determines how we teach music, the learning environments we construct, and the interdependent relationship between teacher and child that we establish. Empathy, fundamental to the premise here, influences the quality of teaching and learning as it engages cognitive and affective elements in recognition of the thoughts and feelings of others. Similarly, musical engagement involves cognitive and affective processes; and it evokes emotional responses among music listeners, players, and makers. Music's meaning is realized because of its unique form of human expression, unmatched across time and culture. Children's experience of music, like our own, are attuned to distinctive affinities and exactitudes. When we engage children in listening, singing, playing, dancing, and creating music, we have opportunities to attend to and nurture children's hearts, minds, and spirits, as well as our own.

The aims of the research a) Focus on why music matters to children; b) Examine interconnections between children's emotional needs and their experience of music; c) Investigate teachers' beliefs about children's behavioral needs; c) Suggest music classroom environments and devise pedagogies that are psychologically responsive to children, especially those who are hurt, angry, disruptive or detached.

This work examines pedagogies of kindness and respect and suggests that music education is uniquely positioned to provide an environment of care. Music teaching and learning within the context of empathy, helps the child learn to regulate his and her emotions, overcome difficulties, and experience personal joy in creating and making music. Additionally, making music with others increases children's pro-social behaviors. Children, who experience a rich and varied music repertoire across time and place are more likely to embrace cultural and ethnic differences.

Compassionate-centered pedagogy and practices that inspire creativity and self-expression and nurture positive emotions and self-esteem are herein proposed for additional study. Investigations through auto-ethnology and narrative methodologies may best provide a deeper understanding of the interactions between teacher and child through shared musical experience.

# What is Important in Early-Onset Singing Acquisition???

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### Abstract

Results of experimental, historical, and anecdotal research indicate that infants are born with the ability to sing tunefully. Although daily, ongoing parental singing with infants is believed to nurture early-onset singing, little is known about parental philosophies regarding such singing, or the differences in singing acquisition and vocal learning seen in association with different philosophies and approaches. This research compares the singing acquisition of two infants from two families by means of semi-structured interviews (four parents).

In one family, parents hoped to develop tuneful singing from infancy onward: each day, the father sang tonal patterns/songs and the mother sang a repertoire of songs (daily exposure 90 minutes). In the second family, the father sang lullabies while the mother sang at other times (daily exposure 30 minutes). In both families, daily singing with the infant was regarded as a time to bond and to play – to nurture positive relationships between parents and infants. Both infants first sang tunefully at 8 months: one first imitated tonal patterns, while the other segmented the “song-stream” using domain-general pattern detection. During the second year of life, one infant sang three songs at 14 months, while the other sang a single (although more complex) song at 16 months. Both synchronized their singing with parents.

Both infants first sang tunefully at 8 months and sang intact songs by 14 - 16 months of age. However, marked differences in singing-performance in the second year of life indicated that both amount of exposure and specific parental philosophies/ approaches to singing acquisition had a dramatic impact on the repertoire of songs sung by the age of two. Moreover, tonal materials that scaffolded tuneful singing between 8 and 13-14 months of age seemed important for both singing and speech acquisition. Emotionally salient parental vocal timbres, social contexts, joint experience with parent(s), infants' active learning, pitch ranges used for singing, repetition of songs, and use of song-associated gestures supported singing acquisition in the first two years of life – an optimal period for vocal learning.

### Keywords

Early-onset singing, parental singing, singing exposure, singing acquisition, speech acquisition, perceptual narrowing, optimal period

### Introduction

Although we have known for many years that some young children learn to sing in infancy (Howe & Sloboda, 1991; Sloboda & Howe, 1991), a review of child-voice research gives little indication of that knowledge. Recently, however, there has been growing interest in early-onset singing (Barrett, 2011; McGraw 2017abcde; Stadler Elmer, 2011; Trehub & Gudmundsdottir, 2015), and that bodes well for the singing development of all children. For almost a decade, McGraw (2017abcde) has undertaken research into early-onset singing. Results confirm the following: (1) singing acquisition unfolds alongside language acquisition during an optimal period for vocal learning; (2) early-onset singing is grounded in significant, ongoing exposure to parental singing, and has characteristics of conspecific adult song (as in acquisition of

birdsong); (3) parents with intent to develop early-onset-singers (E-O-S) are successful; (4) parents of E-O-S preserve innate singing range; (5) the paths leading to tuneful and non-tuneful singing diverge early in development; (6) strategic approaches to singing acquisition impact early vocal learning; and (7) two indicators of enhanced speech acquisition co-occur with early singing acquisition.

## **Background**

An infant's brain is primed for vocal learning: the acquisition of language, and the acquisition of singing (Kessen, Levine & Wendrich, 1979; McGraw, 2017abcde; Stefanics, Haden, Sziller, Balazs, Beke & Winkler, 2009; Trehub et al. 2015; Van Puyvelde, Vanfleteren, Loots, Deschuyffeleer, Vinck, Jacquet & Verhelst, 2010; Wendrich, 1981). The vocal timbre an infant most wants to hear from birth is that of a mother (DeCasper & Fifer, 1980) or father (O'Neill et al., 2001).

## **Social context for learning**

Infants' singing acquisition (McGraw 2017abc) occurs when vocal learning is grounded in socially salient interactions with parents (Kuhl, 2007; Mehr, Song, & Spelke, 2016). As in language acquisition, early-onset singing requires active, multisensory (Lewkowicz, 2014) experience with parents (McGraw, 2017abcde) such that neural commitment (Zhang, Kuhl, Imada, Kotani, & Tohkura, 2005) is made to singing acquisition. Infants have an innate pitch-matching ability (Kessen et al., Van Puyvelde et al., 2010; Stefanics et al., 2009; Wendrich, 1981), and early-onset singing builds on that ability (McGraw, 2017abcde). Significant exposure to parental singing maintains/sharpens infants' innate pitch-matching ability (Kessen et al. 1979; Wendrich, 1981) – with ongoing exposure to a parent's vocal timbre supporting both robust formation of culturally salient perceptual categories for pitch (Patel, 2008) and an infant's ability to perceive similarities and differences in pitch relationships and melodies (Costa-Giomi, 2013).

## **Singing melodies and learning a “singing use” of the voice**

E-O-S learn intervallic-pitch-relationships and tonal schema early in life from exposure to parental singing (McGraw 2017abcde) - and sing complete melodies from 9-mos. onward, long before they sing whole songs with words (age 14-24 mos.). Infants can vocalize across a wide range (Fox, 1990), and parents who sing in extended ranges support infants' song-singing in such ranges (McGraw 2017abcde). E-O-S imitate a 'singing use' of the voice from listening to singing parents (McGraw 2017abc), and learn to switch between speaking and singing. When singing familiar songs experienced with parents, E-O-S sing using discrete-pitches, not melodic contours (McGraw 2017abce).

## **Vocal-motor challenges in emergent speech**

E-O-S are challenged (McGraw, 2017abc) by combinatorial-motor-transitions between syllables – i.e., song lyrics (Lipkind, Marcus, Bemis, Sasahara, Jacoby, Takahasi, Suzuki, Feher, Ravbar, Okanoya, & Tchernichovski, 2013). Infants

can sing vowel-only song lyrics (McGraw, 2017abcde) and toddlers sometimes sing whole melodies with words gradually filled in (Barrett, 2011; McGraw 2017abce). Most E-O-S singers, however, sing whole songs with words, from about 16 -18-months-of-age onward (McGraw2017abce)

### **Social contexts for joint experience**

Infants have robust memories for songs sung by parents, but NOT for songs experienced through audio-media (Mehr et al., 2016). Both songs sung by parents and parental singing itself have social meaning for infants (Mehr et al., 2016). By 8-months-of-age, infants view parental actions as 'intentional' and 'goal directed,' and can learn from joint experience (Carpenter, Nagell, Tomasello, Butterworth, & Moore, 1998). While infant-directed-speech elicits infants' attention, parental-song-singing maintains infants' attention for extended periods of time (Corbeil, Trehub, & Peretz, 2015). In McGraw (2017abcde), parents engaged infants (from 8-mos. onward) in joint-singing experiences: infants readily attended to and learned from parental singing. Parents sometimes used gestures as they sang to infants (McGraw 2017abc), increasing multisensory memory cues and making experiences more playful.

### **Exposure to parental singing and perceptual narrowing**

No one knows how much exposure to parental singing is required to support early-onset singing. In co-occurring language acquisition, an infant's native-language experience results in neural commitment to culturally relevant sounds (Zhang et al., 2005). Similarly, Infants need exposure to parental singing (McGraw 2017a-k) sufficient to ensure that neural commitment to singing acquisition maintains innate pitch-matching ability and culturally-relevant-tonal-schema during a period of perceptual narrowing (perhaps 8 – 10 mos. of age, but see Singh, 2017). E-O-S in McGraw (2017abcde) had command of culturally relevant perceptual categories for pitch (Patel, 2008) such that a co-occurring developmental emphasis on language acquisition did not interfere with their perception of song melodies sung by parents. For these infants, perceptual narrowing sharpened categorical learning of pitch and culturally – relevant tonal schema. Notably, E-O-S showed evidence of robust musical development throughout early childhood, with more adult-like auditory perception and processing by age 4-7 suggesting accelerated maturation of the auditory system (McGraw 2017abcd). Without ongoing exposure to parental singing in infancy, however, an infant's perceptual 'weighting' of a song is biased towards song lyrics rather than melody by 11-months-of-age (Lebedeva & Kuhl, 2010).

### **Synchronizing singing with parents**

Infants can perceive the beat from birth (Winkler, Háden, Ladinig, Sziller, & Honing, 2009) - and there is a strong link between tuneful singing (with lyrics) and synchronization abilities (Dalla Bella, Berkowski & Sowinski, 2015). Synchronous activities engage "perceptual, motor, and sensorimotor processes (Dalla Bella et al, 2015); are associated with increased attention in

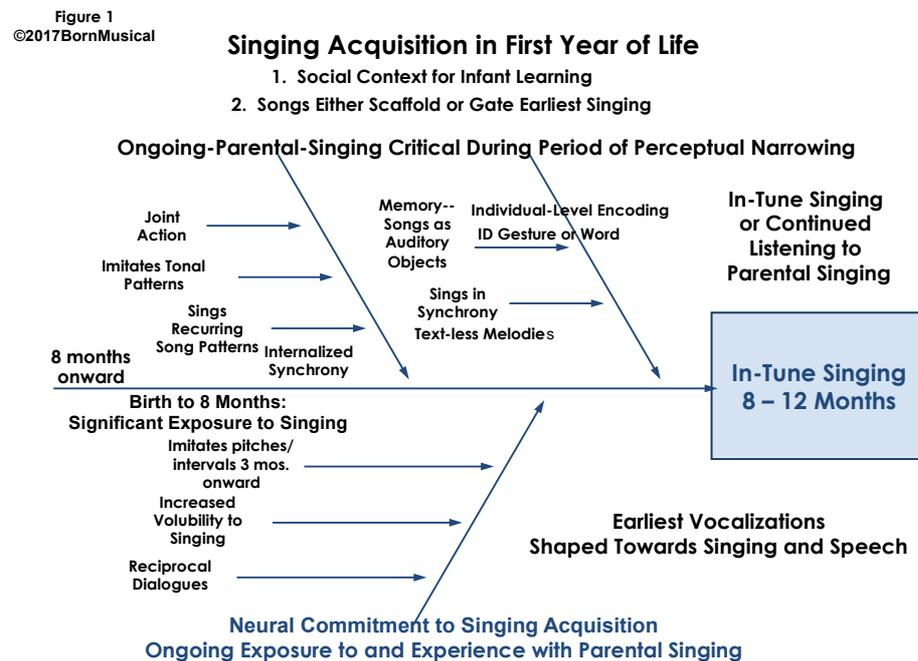
young children (Khalil, Mince & Chiba, 2013); and strengthen social bonding (Hove & Risen, 2009). Young children synchronize more successfully in social settings (Kirschner & Tomasello, 2009; Overy, 2012). To this point, McGraw (2017abcde) reported that from eight-months to two years of age, E-O-S synchronized both brief and extended episodes of singing with parent-singers.

### **Singing acquisition and enhanced speech acquisition**

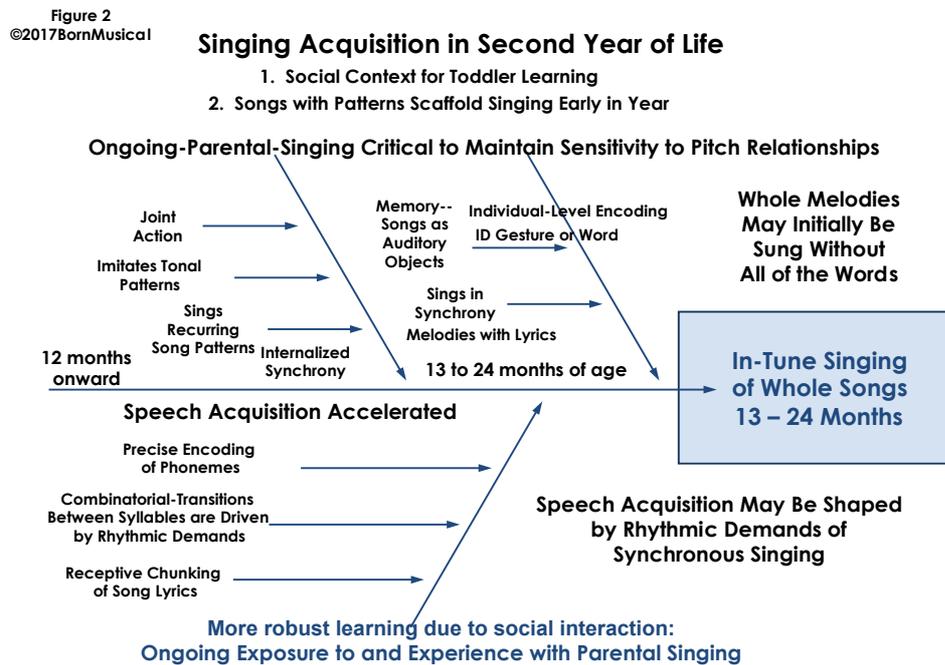
Importantly, McGraw (2017abc) observed that two indicators of enhanced speech acquisition co-occur with early-onset singing: (1) accelerated acquisition of speech, and (2) greater clarity of emergent speech. In McGraw (2017ab), 96% of monolingual parents of E-O-S reported “highly accelerated” or “accelerated” speech and “words easily understandable” or “precisely articulated.” Bilingual E-O-S were somewhat less accelerated and less precise in speech acquisition.

To give a clearer picture of singing acquisition from birth to age two, see diagrams (Figure 1) and (Figure 2) summarizing development (reprinted by permission from McGraw 2017abc).

**Figure 1.**



**Figure 2.**



## Research methodology

Subjects: Profiled infants and their parents are from a group (n = 46) of early-onset singers/families studied through semi-structured interviews and longitudinal observations. Selection criteria follows: (1) both mothers and fathers sang to infants; (2) mothers are early-childhood-music experts; (3) both infants are female -- and sang tunefully at 8-months-of-age; and (4) differences in singing exposure suggested observable differences in learning. In both families, singing with infants was a time to bond and share in vocal-music play. However, monolingual parents made strategic efforts to develop their first child's singing voice, while bilingual parents believed their second child would learn to sing given parental singing exposure. Nine topics were compared:

1. Daily exposure.
2. Parental approaches.
3. Year one: first episodes of singing.
4. Parental responses to first singing.
5. Songs/tonal materials.
6. Year two: whole songs.
7. Synchronous singing.
8. Song repertoire: age two.
9. Co-occurring speech acquisition.

One two-part research question was formulated: (1) Was infants' vocal learning different, given different exposures and philosophies/approaches to singing acquisition? (2) If so, how?

## Results

### Research Results: Differences

The research question asked if infants' vocal learning was different, and if so, how. From birth to age two, the vocal learning of the two infants differed markedly. In year one, the S-A infant imitated tonal patterns and sang text-less melodies in synchrony with her mother. The N-A infant sang only song-segments from two songs in two languages (but these song-segments were also sung in synchrony with parents).

In year two, marked differences were found between two indicators of singing acquisition – but, somewhat paradoxically, both differences were grounded in speech acquisition: (1) the S-A infant sang three whole songs with words at the 14-mos., while the N-A infant sang a single, more complex melody at 16-mos. with words gradually filled in. (2) the S-A infant sang four times as many whole songs as the N-A infant at the age of two. Previously (from 9-mos. onward), the S-A monolingual infant had sung many more whole songs in synchrony with parents as compared to the N-A infant.

From 12 months of age onward, indicators of enhanced speech acquisition were robust for the S-A monolingual infant – but less so for the N-A bilingual infant. The S-A infant's acquisition of both singing and speech was markedly accelerated as compared to that of the N-A infant. Thus, the vocal learning of the infant who experienced both greater exposure to parental singing and strategic approaches to learning was more advanced through age two.

Table 1 summarizes differences across families. *Natural Approach* (N-A) is the bilingual family. *Strategic Approach* (S-A) is the monolingual family.

**Table 1. Results: Contrasting Parental Approaches to Singing Acquisition**

N-A bilingual infant Songs – small repertoire In two languages	S-A monolingual infant Songs-large repertoire Tonal patterns Text-less songs
First tuneful singing – 8 mos. Song-segments of two songs Sang in two languages	First tuneful singing – 8 mos. Imitated tonal patterns Text-less songs- synchrony 9 mos.
First whole song - 16 mos. Melody sung first: words filled in	First whole songs – 14 mos. 3 whole songs: sung with words
Repetition: fixed repertoire	Repetition: changing repertoire
Synchronous singing before age one, 2 songs	Synchronous singing before age one: tonal patterns, many songs
Synchronous singing	Synchronous singing age 1-2:

age 1-2: Several songs	Many songs
Small song repertoire age two in two languages (20 songs)	Huge song repertoire age two in English (80+ songs). Some songs learned independently
Speech acquisition: met developmental guidelines	Speech acquisition: highly accelerated from 12 months onward; precise articulation
30 minutes exposure Shaping of linguistic tones Bilingual: greater auditory acuity	90 minutes exposure Includes singing-immersion: recitative-like speech

### **Summary of important strategic approaches**

Ways in which the strategic-approach differed from the natural-approach follow: (1) Learning strategies: The S-A mother sequenced early learning by changingt singing repertoire when her infant was successful at a task. At 8-months-of-age when the infant tunefully imitated tonal patterns, the mother next utilized text-less melodies. After singing text-less melodies for several months, the mother then incorporated songs with lyrics. In contrast, all repertoire for the N-A infant consisted of songs with words, and no changes in approach were observed from birth to age two. (2). The S-A mother sang many more songs in synchrony with her child, both before and after the age of one. (3). The S-A mother used an at-home singing immersion approach where communication was sung rather than spoken (i.e., like *recitative*). (4) Both repetition of a small group of songs over time and repetition of a larger, changing group of songs supported singing acquisition. However, a content-rich singing environment – i.e., experience with a greater number of songs as in the strategic-approach -- supported greater vocal learning (in both singing and speech).

### **Research results: Similarities**

Both infants learned to sing during the same timeframe that they learned to speak – and in similar social contexts with parents (McGraw 2017abcde). Infants had robust command of perceptual categories for pitch, both prior to age one when they sang tonal materials using vowel-only texts, and after age one when they sang whole songs. At 8-months-of-age, both infants seemingly regarded the song-singing of their parents as goal-directed. Although infants' earliest tuneful singing required different cognitive processes (i.e., statistical learning/pattern detection vs. imitation), both actively participated with parents.

Three similarities between parental approaches are important: (1) both used high pitch ranges (g to high g octave); (2) both occasionally used gestures with tonal materials and/or songs; and, (3) both sang songs in major keys that featured simple duple, triple, and compound (6/8) meters. (Importantly, had

there been greater differences in music content between the families [i.e., songs based on different modes and scales; greater metric complexity], greater differences in infants' singing acquisition might have been observed). In co-occurring speech acquisition, both had command of phonological categories and combinatorial-motor-transitions between phonemes – and ably used those in easily understandable speech. In sum, both infants sang and spoke with precision: singing was pitch-accurate and emergent speech had clarity such that it was “easily understood by strangers” (i.e., pediatric evidence-based criterion, Dosman, Andrews & Goulden, 2012).

## **Discussion**

There were dramatic differences between the vocal learning of these two infants at two years of age. Some of the behavioral differences can be attributed to the much more demanding speech-acquisition profile of the bilingual infant. However, the S-A infant also experienced much more exposure to parental singing as compared to the N-A infant, with many more opportunities for synchronous singing with parents throughout the first two years of life: thus, the S-A toddler sang prolifically at two years of age. The S-A infant's ‘first language’ was a music language – a finding noted by this researcher and echoed by her parents. The S-A infant sang before she spoke her first words, and sang fluently (on text-less melodies) at a time when she was first speaking only single words and two-word sentences. Moreover, this child experienced significant daily in-home immersion to *recitative* (i.e., as functional speech) from birth onwards. Thus, results strongly indicate that significant exposure to parental singing in conjunction with strategic approaches to singing acquisition can dramatically change the character of vocal learning in early life.

## **Speech-acquisition**

The speech acquisition of the S-A toddler was markedly advanced as compared to the N-A toddler. In this regard, the S-A toddler resembles a group of infants (McGraw 2017abcde) for whom very-early singing acquisition was predictive of highly accelerated speech acquisition. These infants had remarkably high exposure to parental singing -- and yet, it was in co-occurring speech acquisition that the most dramatic learning was observed. Notably, early clarity of speech is predictive of accelerated language acquisition from age 2 – 7 (Lyakso, Frolova, & Grigorev, 2015).

## **Implications**

Five areas of interest conclude this discussion.

First, both approaches have their benefits. The *natural approach* does not require expert parental knowledge: parents sing daily to provide significant exposure. Most parents in McGraw (2017abcde) used a natural-approach. The *strategic approach*, however, revealed critically important information regarding early singing acquisition – information that would be useful for some parents. Strategic approaches are likely candidates for researchers

investigating potential benefits associated with early-onset singing in neuro-rehabilitation for developmental language disorders (Cummings, Wilson, Leong, Colling, & Goswami, 2015; McGraw, 2013, 2014), or in accelerating the maturation of auditory cortex in young children with sound-in-noise processing challenges (White-Schwock, Carr, Thompson, Anderson, Nicol, Bradlow, Zecker, & Kraus, 2015).

Second, tuneful singing prior to age one indicated that infants can sing much earlier than previously thought: it is important to know that singing in infancy is 'gated' by song-lyrics that are too complex. Most E-O-S in McGraw (2017abc) first sang whole songs about 18-months-of-age – ten months later than these two infants. Thus, there is a timeframe when infants are capable of singing, but typically do not. Active singing during this period predicts benefits for all vocal learning – and this topic should be investigated further. Third, synchronized singing on both vowel-only texts and whole songs (with lyrics) may significantly impact the precision of co-emergent speech. A growing body of music-language neuroscience research suggests that precision-demands associated with rhythm/ synchronization have an impact on phonological learning (Tierney & Kraus, 2015; Cumming et al., 2015). Moreover, infants attach *social meaning* to both parental singing and to songs sung by parents (Mehr et al., 2016) – and it seems likely that an infant's ability to sing in synchrony with parents also has *social meaning*. Early facility with synchronous singing suggests that the ability is one that has been adaptive across the history of humankind (Mithen, 2007; Patel, 2006; Bowling, Herbst, and Fitch, 2013). Such "being-together-in-time" in infancy (Overy, 2012; Overy & Molnar-Szakacs, 2009; Trainor & Cirelli, 2015) is remarkable. Indeed, it is possible that neural commitment to adaptive, socially relevant song-singing might be sufficient to drive acquisition of speech needed for such singing with parents. Such an outcome would be consistent with a dynamic systems approach to singing acquisition (Stadler Elmer, 2012). Fourth, there is an optimal period for singing acquisition that is parallel to the acquisition of language (McGraw, 2017abcde). In an optimal period, an ability is more easily and rapidly acquired as compared to other times in development (Bailey & Penhune, 2013). Given significant ongoing exposure to parental singing, infants sing tunefully from 8-months onward: moreover, their singing acquisition is robust from the age of two onward (McGraw, abd). Following this early window-of-opportunity, it can take years for children to acquire the ability to sing tunefully (McGraw, 2007, 2002, 2000, 1999; Welch et al., 1998; Wurgler, 1990). Pitch-accuracy challenges associated with a *lyrics-biased-perceptual-trajectory* (i.e., speech-like, contour-based singing) are the most highly researched area in music education – this because learning to sing is so challenging for many later-onset singers. Fifth, the first two years of life are the most important for human vocal learning: the sum of what we know about early singing acquisition and associated speech acquisition is currently limited to a handful of publications. Research on this topic should be a high priority.

## **What is important in early-onset singing acquisition?**

What is really important? Without question, these six things:

(1) From 8-months onward, infants can engage in active singing with parents. Tuneful singing before age one experience predicts robust singing acquisition and speech acquisition in the second year of life.

(2) Significant exposure to parental singing is required for singing acquisition. Exposure is especially important early in life, when (a) neural commitment is made to specific types of vocal learning; (b) infants learn from salient, multisensory experiences with parents; (c) robust categories for pitch and tonal-systems are maintained/sharpened; and (d) pitch-accurate singing is strengthened in a period of perceptual narrowing.

(3) E-O-S learn from repetition of songs and/or tonal materials that scaffold singing acquisition, and benefit from a rich vocal music environment that includes both text-less melodies and songs with lyrics.

(4) Synchronized singing experiences are critical for vocal learning: such experiences may support enhanced acquisition of speech as well as more 'organized' and 'coordinated' neural development (Buzsaki, 2011).

(5) Singing in higher pitch ranges supports the acquisition of expanded ranges for singing, while gestures may reinforce infants' memories for specific songs.

(6) Strategic approaches may support accelerated acquisition of singing and speech.

## **Coda**

Human children are born musical. They have innate pitch-matching abilities that are maintained and sharpened by significant exposure to ongoing parental singing early in life. Their vocal signature is early, pitch-accurate singing.

Understanding that there are inter-relationships between singing acquisition and speech acquisition in infancy, however, challenges us to fully consider the implications. Does optimal vocal development in infancy mean co-development of both facets of one human vocal signal (Fitch, 2006) -- singing and speech? When we better understand the inter-twining of singing acquisition and speech acquisition in infancy (Brandt, Gebrian, & Slevc, 2012; Chen-Hafteck & Mang in McPherson and Welch, 2012; McGraw 2017abc), we may no longer have the luxury of considering one without the other. Results of this research suggest that when parents develop both facets of the vocal signal early in life, there are synergistic benefits that unfold throughout childhood.

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# The discovery of the Laws of Art in Early Musical Education

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## Abstract

The supreme function of music in early education is the educational one. Through music, children become acquainted with the world and with the phenomena around them, they are discovering themselves, developing their abilities in musical-artistic understanding and communication. Child development depends on some physiological, psychological, socio-cultural and spiritual aspects. By the age of three-six, children discover the action of music and explore its laws at an insightful level, artistically, in the form of games, based on their own sensitivity, during the activities of music audition, musical performance and elementary musical creation.

To work up a methodology of the communication between the child and music through *listening - performance - creation* means to bring out the mechanism of the action of music. As each individual is unique (physically, psychically, spiritually), the perception of musical expressiveness comes individually. In order to plan for musical education, there must be taken into account three levels of musical perception: (1) the physiological level (at the level of the body and primary feelings, at the fringes of psyche); (2) the psychological level (through other psychic processes: emotionalism, intellection, memory, imagination, etc.); (3) the spiritual level ("visible" in conscience related to the inner universe, when the spiritual level is manifest).

At the beginning of musical education, children explore the sonorous, expressive, imagistic and temporal characters of the musical art form. The learning of the laws of music as a form of art are dependent on the specific methodology of the musical activities; it contributes to the formation/development of the art consumer; it facilitates the formation/development of children's artistic abilities; it ensures proper integration of art in the act of early education; it stimulates the interest and positive attitude towards art. Exploring the laws of the art of music in early childhood education depends on compliance with the specifics of that artistic knowledge.

## Keywords

Early musical education, the laws of musical art, the mechanism of the musical action, the specific of the artistic learning (knowing)

## Introduction

To approach the laws of music from the early musical education perspective involves the combination of the efforts of parents, educators and musical masters in the process of the musical training of children. As the development of the child depends on physiological, psychological, socio-cultural and spiritual laws, so the laws of musical art depend on the methodology of the musical art process. In order to create a favourable environment for the generation and development of children's musicianship, it is important to understand the vocal-artistic phenomenon. In general, children discover the action of music and explore these laws at an intuitive level. The whole activity of the educator and musical master depends on their conforming to the laws of music and the characteristics of the artistic knowledge in all the phases of

the educational-artistic act: its design, achievements, evolution and assessment. We list, and shortly characterise some musical laws that reveal the vocal, eternal, temporal, imagistic and expressive characteristics of music.

The material of music is the sound. Music cannot exist in any other state than its vocal manifestation. Unlike noise sounds, musical sounds are pleasant to the ears, being produced by human voices and musical instruments. At the same time, the musical creation of sounds are arranged in a certain way and express a sound-artistic message. In order to understand this message, it is necessary to know the elements of musical language, and how they cooperate to create the musical image and how the musical ideas are organised. Thus, while studying the elements of the musical language, we discover what and how the musical creations “speak to us”.

To understand the artistic order of the sounds in a musical creation, the following tasks can be completed:

- Following the “life” of the melody from the beginning till the end of the creation (the sense of motion, character, mood, the melody outline, intonation, tempo, with comments on the mood and tempo markings of the piece, e.g. cantabile, dancing or march music).
- Discovering a new sound moment event (that manifests itself by the change of the melody and its musical expression);
- Crooning the melody in order to observe the changes in its character, the evolution, transformations etc.;
- Creating a graphical representation of the sound events (of the organizational modality of the musical form);
- Characterising the musical language elements, that give expression to the musical creation;
- Creating a “listener’s score” through repeated active listening episodes.

For children, any musical work represents a “fairy tale in sounds”. Its content is composed of one or more sound events. The transition from one sound event to another is felt by the change in the music expressiveness. The expressiveness of the sound event is created by the musical language.

To develop a relationship with music, there must be a first moment encounter: this contact, via the auditive sensations, is followed by the listening itself (a complex experience including: reflexivity, understanding and performance). The sound character of the musical art imposes the compliance with some requirements to the educational-artistic process: (1) the appropriate volume of the musical sounds is selected during the listening or interpretation; (2) a favourable environment is created for the musical-didactic activities, where there is fresh air (aired room), noise sounds; (3) during the day, a favourable time of day and amount of time for the musical activity is chosen; (4) all musical activities start with sensitizing to sound, to the expressiveness of the musical sonority heard/interpreted/created; (5) we suggest listening to the

music with closed eyes, in order to enhance the quality of the auditive sensations and challenge the imagination; (6) we carefully select the words used about music in the process of acquiring knowledge; (7) we aim to keep a triple silence during the act of listening to music (silence before listening in order to concentrate and detach from any problems that are foreign to music; silence during the listening itself, to engage with the silence flowing and passing through the sound flow; silence immediately at the end of the music to allow the state of sound to permeate our spirit).

### **Music is a Temporal Art**

The temporality of music reveals the processual and unique character of a musical creation. The content of the musical creation, entitled 'the musical image', is built gradually, discursively. From an extract of a musical creation, we cannot perceive its whole, but each element of the creation contributes to the entire image. What appears to be merely initially a sound immediately, in a few moments, develops, changes, transforms and evolves. Sometimes, while perceiving the message of the musical creation, we cannot conceive of everything that music contains in itself. Following an expression cannot allow for catching the global, integral image of music. For this reason, by re-auditions we return to the same musical creation. With each audition, we manage to discover the depths of the musical expression.

The temporal character of music is manifested in totally different ways through these three expression modalities of this art: (1) at the level of the score, in its written form; (2) in the live act of the interpretation; (3) at the level of the listener. We should accept that at all three levels of sound-existence of music there is an imposition of a subjective element to the codification-decodification process by taking the music in the score and vice-versa, passing from the interpreted music to that perceived by the public. In this regard, it is very important for good organisation of preschool music education so as not to impoverish the message of music via the modality of presentation/interpretation, analysis-characteristics, artistic/value appreciation of the creations studied.

In order to perceive the temporal nature of music, we should pay attention to the selected repertoire for listening to music. Each educator shall seek an answer to the question: what is the best music for the child's development? (with reference to style, musical genre). There are a number of rules likely to bring the child into the world of music. In psychologists' opinion, there are classical musical creations which should not be listened to by children under the age of two years for example: (a)opera, opera arias, romances. The voices of the mother, grandmother and father are beyond competition; (b) the creations interpreted by a symphony orchestra (the big structure of the orchestra is perceived by the child not as music, but as noise, and the child gets scared of the sounds of the tambourines and cymbals).

It is important to inform parents that it is dangerous to put headphones on children up to three years old to hear music. The distance between the child and the source of sound should not be less than one meter and a half. The pieces for listening should be selected according to the child's mood and expectations: playing, movement, falling asleep/waking up, activation/soothing, etc. The music for listening may be used in different contexts: (1) as background for another activity (game, reading, eating, sleep, sports, etc.); (2) as a syncretic element of an artistic activity (dramatizing, dance, instrumental improvisations); (3) the listening to music itself (for educational, didactic purpose).

In order to raise awareness of the temporal character of music, we recommend approaching the following aspects within musical education:

- Discovering the character of the sound message (gradual organization – sound by sound) ⇒ via listening/ re-listening humming the melody on successive renditions;
- Listening to the musical creation from the beginning to the end (with careful concentration);
- Noticing the sound events in a musical creation (identification, perception, description, association, characterisation);
- Discovering the rhythmic-melodic nucleus, following its development (expressing with hand gestures the ascending, descending movement, by jumping, undulatory, etc.);
- Identifying the development (move), culmination (the strongest emotional moment) of the musical idea.

### **Music is an Imagistic Art**

The musical image is a representation in the conscience of the content of the musical work (based on imagination). Music cannot be received through sight, but it does not mean that it has no image. In reality, the musical image belongs to the composer, and the process and result of experiencing music by the listener is already an artistic image and constitutes a subjective feature. The artistic image often brings into the structure of the musical creation external or extra-aesthetic elements, which refer to the soul and destiny of the person, from their life pulses. Co-existence of the extra-aesthetic elements (subsumed to other values) with the aesthetic values in a work of opera contributes to its connection with the vibrations of the authentic life and protects it from reductionism. In this regard, we can capitalise with maximum efficiency on the pieces of art while developing those aspects that exceed the limits of the pure musical aesthetic, i.e. the moral, civic and spiritual values. The image of a musical creation becomes a means of education of any extra-aesthetic value.

Image is a representation of the surrounding reality, built in our mind based on the impressions created through senses. In order to discover the musical image, the children shall answer the question: What does music tell us about? Conditionally, we may group the content of the musical creations into three

big areas: (1) the individual (experience, feelings, ideas, facts, dreams, fantasies, etc.); (2) the human society (history, events, traditions, holidays, etc.); (3) Nature (seasons, phenomena, animals, birds, insects, etc.).

There are two types of musical image: (1) pure, absolute image (the images from the instruments music, orchestra or vocality); (2) mixed image through more manifestations. For the musical listening with children starting from three to five years old, the pure instrumental music is recommended (pieces with a single instrument), the music with a programme (the image of which is accessible to children: represents scenes from the children's life, natural phenomena, expresses a mood, describes animals), with a duration from 30 seconds up to one minute and a half.

At the age of six to seven years, children may listen to orchestral creations, opera and ballet scenes from (for children), musical plays, symphony fairytales, up to 3 minutes. In order for children to engage with the musical image from the music with a programme, the title of the musical work may be announced, then, prior to the listening exercise, a discussion is held about the character of the musical work (phenomenon, action, object, being, etc.). It is not recommended to explain the musical image. The educator may describe how the sound event starts at the beginning of the creation, to orient the children's attention to certain means of musical expression, to stimulate and/or trigger curiosity of communicating with music.

In order to raise awareness of the imagistic character of music, within music education, we recommend approaching the following aspects:

- The length of the pieces for listening (as part of the music education activities) should correspond to the psycho-mental concentration capacities of the children: up to one minute at the age of two to three years one minute and a half at the age of three to four years and up to two minutes at the age of five to seven years;
- The musical image of the listening pieces for children up to three years old may be described/explained before the listening exercise itself, and at the age of four to seven years the listening may be organised (by announcing the title and partial description of some sound events; by announcing the title of the work without describing the musical image; by announcing the title of the work and associating the musical image with the pictographic images displayed in front of the children);
- The musical image from a piece of work shall be researched/learnt through multiple listenings, by sensitizing the children to: (1) the mood/feelings of music; (2) the event/events of sound expressed; (3) the development of music (beginning, culmination, end); (4) expressiveness of the music/melody (by identifying/characterising the elements of musical language, which give expressiveness to the musical image); (5) artistic appreciation (personal, of the group of children, of the educator).

## **Music is an Expressive Art**

The art of music is a language, as its function is communication. In music, the message is transmitted not only via sounds, but, especially via the sound ensemble, as a result of the connections established between sounds. The artistic language, in general, and namely the musical one, creates the “appearance”, reveals and transmits some truths reached by philosophy, science and activity of the spirit. The expressiveness of the musical-artistic language, unlike the scientific one, always gives possibility to a new vision, and limiting allows pluralism of image decodification perspectives. In this regard, each receiver of music has the autonomy of conquering the image of music based on their own sensitivity to the expressiveness of the sound message, based on an individual process of giving sense to the musical image. The role of the educator and the teacher-musician is to guide the process of learning music according to the specifics of the legitimacies of the musical art and developmental legitimacies of the child's personality.

At the age of two to four years in the musical-pedagogical activities, the principles of imitation, reproduction, repetition after the model of the teacher-musician dominates. At the age of five to seven years, the children become actively involve in activities of creativity and get familiarized with some means of musical expression. Due to reduced vocabulary, the definition of the elements of language may be metaphorical, for example: melody, the sound of music, rhythm, the heart of music, tempo, the speed/velocity of music, intensity, the power of music, timbre, the colour of music, modality, the mood of music, etc.

In order to facilitate the analysis-characterisation of music, it is recommended that criteria be established based on the specifics of musical expression. For example, we enumerate some criteria based on the melody of the composition : (1) mood (joyful, sad, solemn, funny, etc.); (2) the melodic outline (may be represented with the hand gesture in space – curve, arch, ornament, etc.); (3) the meaning of the move (ascending, descending, linear, jumping); (4) type of music (song, dance, march); (5) tempo (fast, appropriate, slow); (6) the performers (on one or more instruments, or with one or more voices); (7) any means of musical expression (specifies the expression of music). Here, we specify that, during the listening activity of a musical creation, not all elements are emphasised, but only those which express the musical image (reasonably, for those aged one to two or two to three, depending on the level of the children's musical-artistic experience).

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

For an appropriate methodological realisation of the forms of the children's initiation into the world of music respect is required for the legitimacies of art and the legitimacies of the physiological, psychological and spiritual development of young children. In conclusion, the child involved in the musical-artistic activities is the subject of a triple conditioning: value (given by the quality of musical work, including the spiritual one), social (implies the formative institutional and opinions of methods that the child comes in

contact with), psychological (where the whole cognitive, affective and motivational system is engaged). The learning of the laws of musical art:

- Determines adherence to the specific methodology of musical activities;
- Contributes to the formation/development of the consumer of art;
- Facilitates the formation/development of artistic abilities of the preschooler/parents;
- Provides the adequate integration of art into the education of the preschooler;
- Stimulates an interest and positive attitude towards art.

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# Music Education in Early Years Education settings in Ireland: Glimpses of Provision and Practice

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## Abstract

Curriculum and pedagogy in early years education in Ireland is informed by a holistic curriculum framework, *Aistear, The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2009), which identifies “what and how children should learn” as well as “the types of experiences that can support this” (p. 6) through four interrelated themes: Well-being; Identity and belonging; Communicating; and Exploring and thinking. While discrete subject areas are not made explicit, the Framework allows scope for a broad range of creative and artistic activities, including music education, to develop in various ways as early years educators deem appropriate.

The purpose of the current study was two-fold: (i) to support student educators in an early years degree course to adopt a proactive stance in engaging with music education in the diverse settings in which their placements take place, and (ii) to generate qualitative understandings of the extant music education activity – its curriculum, pedagogies and resources within *Aistear* – in a range of settings in the Greater Dublin Area. Data was collected from over 60 naturalistic settings and recorded in student notebooks using given observation schedules. Interviews were also conducted with two focus groups comprising 5 students in each group. Data was analysed both quantitatively through content analysis, noting the number, frequency and duration of musical encounters in the setting, and qualitatively, using a grounded approach, to ascertain the nature of the encounter, the musical features, musical intentions, and the children's engagement with the musical experience.

Findings are multifaceted and point to important issues: first, for early years teacher-educators, notably in nurturing musical agency among early years student educators such that they can generate insightful understandings and musical experiences with the very young; and second, for providers and policy makers charged with envisaging provision in music education for early years and the consequent responsibility to resource such provision.

## Keywords

Curriculum, pedagogy, resources

# The influence of two song-teaching strategies on vocal performance in 6 to 7 year-old children and its relationship with their use of voice registers

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## Abstract

Research on the influence of teaching songs with melody and words or with the melody sung with a neutral syllable, adding the words later, on children's vocal performances has not been addressed in depth (Jacobi-Karna, 1996). Furthermore, research on vocal development has shown that singing is also affected by children's ability to access their full voice (Rutkowski, 2015; Welch, 2006). However, even when the full register is accessed, singing accuracy may be compromised due to a vocal-motor deficit.

This study aims to determine (a) if children sing better depending on the teaching strategy, (b) if the inaccurate first pitches for both songs fall into the registers of the children's Singing Voice Development Measure (SVDM) classification, and (c) if there is a relationship between the tonal dimension scores for both songs and SVDM classification.

Children aged 6 to 7 (N=49) attending a private school in an urban area participated in a two-phase study. Phase one occurred over a period of eight weeks in regular music sessions presenting a song A with melody and words and a song B with a neutral syllable, adding the words after five sessions. Phase two consisted of individual singing of both songs with the teacher providing an auditory cue.

Inter-judge reliabilities on rating scales were high (song A: ICC(3, k) = .928; song B ICC(3, k) = .885). Results showed no significant differences between the mean of ratings on both songs ( $t_{(48)} = -.563$ ;  $p = .288$ ). A closer comparison revealed different singing achievements: better on song A (22.4%), better on song B (24.5%) and no relevant differences (53.1%). 89.8% of the inaccurate first pitches fell into the range measured by SVDM, with 30.4% of the children classified as singers. There was a positive correlation between the tonal dimension scores and SVDM classification (song A:  $\rho_{(49)} = .558$ ,  $p < .001$ ; song B:  $\rho_{(49)} = .385$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

The song-teaching strategy is relevant when considering individual differences, suggesting that vocal performance can be improved depending on it. Results suggest that children can be more accurate if they sing in their usable voice register. Tonal achievement on song B is less related to SVDM classification.

## Keywords

Children's vocal performance, performance rating scales, Singing Voice Development Measure, song-teaching strategies, vocal-motor deficit

## Background

In music education, numerous studies have focused on children's ability to sing in tune, investigating the influence of a wide variety of factors (for a

literature review, see Hedden, 2012). Research on the influence of teaching songs with melody and words or with the melody sung with a neutral syllable, adding the words later, on children's vocal performances has not been addressed in depth (Goetze as cited in Phillips, 1989; Jacobi-Karna, 1996; Levinowitz, 1989; Welch, Sergeant, & White, 1998). Findings are inconclusive and, in some cases, contradictory. However, presentation and response variables vary substantially between studies. For example, Levinowitz (1989) presents a song with words and a song without words, asking kindergarten children to sing the songs as taught in music sessions. On other hand, Goetze (as cited in Phillips, 1989) presents 2 songs with words, asking the participants (kindergarten, first-, and third-graders) to sing those songs first with words and after without words. In both cases, results were similar: children sing more accurately without words (using a neutral syllable) than with words.

For the purpose of this study and in order to provide more insight into the influence of teaching songs with or without words, children will be asked to sing songs as it were presented in classroom.

However, research on vocal development has shown that singing is also affected by children's ability to access their full voice range (Rutkowski, 2015; Welch, 2006). In the past decades, two independent measures of children's singing development were developed and have been widely used: the Singing Voice Development Measure (SVDM) by Joanne Rutkowski and the Vocal Pitch-matching Development (VPMD) by Graham Welch (e.g., Rutkowski & Chen-Hafteck, 2001; Welch *et al.*, 2008). So, as in Welch *et al.* (2008), the present study intended to create an initial baseline profile for each participant, measuring their use of voice registers using the SVDM.

Nonetheless, even if children access all their voice registers, singing accuracy may be compromised due to different sources, namely the motor and sensorimotor, memory, imitative, motivation, or perceptual, referred to as models for poor-pitch singing (Hutchins & Peretz, 2012; Pfordresher & Brown, 2007).

One of the explanations for the vocal motor deficit is related to the inability to control one's vocal tract apparatus, despite their ability to use the vocal register of the pitches to imitate or produce (Hutchins & Peretz, 2012). Yet, if a child is not able to use all the voice registers, it is possible that she has a good-pitch singing in her comfortable singing range. On the other hand, singing inaccuracy can also be observed if there is has a lack of detail in the representation of the song musical structure in memory (Pfordresher & Brown, 2007). To this matter, it is interesting to investigate the influence of two song-teaching strategies, where the interaction between words and melody is taken into account. Therefore, this study will focus on the motor and memory deficit, crossing over children's ratings on two songs and their SVDM classification.

## **Aims**

The purpose of this investigation was twofold. First, this study examined if first and second graders' vocal performance of two songs was influenced by two different teaching strategies. Second, to investigate the relationship between children's tonal achievement in both songs and the use of their singing voice as measured by the Singing Voice Development Measure (SVDM).

The specific goals of this study were (a) to determine if children sing better depending on the teaching strategy, (b) to find out if the inaccurate first pitches for both songs fall into the registers of the children's Singing Voice Development Measure (SVDM) classification, (c) to determine if there is a relationship between singing (in)accuracy for the first pitch and the tonal dimension scores for both performance rating scales, and (d) to find out if the tonal scores for both songs are related to the SVDM classifications.

## Method

### Participants

Forty-nine children aged six to seven attending a private school in an urban area (Lisbon) and belonging to families with medium/high income levels participated in this two-phase study.

### Materials

The songs used in this investigation were song A (always taught with words and melody) and song B (taught with neutral syllable, words added later).

Figure 1. Song A.

Doug Nichol

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Figure 2. Song B.

Ana Isabel Pereira

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The Singing Voice Development Measure is described in Rutkowski (2015).

## **Procedure**

Phase one (instruction phase) occurred over a period of eight weeks in regular music sessions presenting two unfamiliar songs. Two teaching strategies were used: song A was taught with melody and words during the eight sessions and song B was taught with a neutral syllable, adding the words after five sessions. The instruction of both songs took 15 minutes of each session. Songs were similar in tonality (major), meter (duple), length and range (C#<sub>3</sub>–A<sub>3</sub>; A<sub>3</sub> = 440 Hz).

In phase two (test phase), participants were individually asked to perform two singing tasks: (a) to sing both songs with the teacher providing an auditory cue and (b) to echo eight three-tone patterns, one pattern at a time, sang by the music teacher. As recommended by Joanne Rutkowski, the author of the tool to measure children's use of singing voice (not vocal accuracy), those patterns were echoed with the text and with the neutral syllable "bá" (half of the children echoed all patterns with text first, the others with the neutral syllable first). For the purpose of this study, only the results of the assessment for the text patterns were considered.

Children's singing voices were audio recorded as each sang individually, after being escorted to a private room at their school. Three independent judges—music educators who work regularly with these grades—rated children's performances using a researcher-developed performance rating scale for each song. Each scale comprised tonal and rhythmic dimensions with five criteria each. They also rated the children's use of their singing voice (voice registrations) using the SVDM.

## **Results**

### **(a) Do children sing better depending on the teaching strategy?**

Inter-judge reliabilities were high for both rating scales (song A: ICC(3,k)= .928; song B: ICC(3,k)= .885). T-test results for paired samples revealed no significant differences between the mean scores of song A and B (song A: M = 7.04, SD = 2.52; song B: M = 7.19, SD = 2.37) [ $t_{(48)} = -.563$ ;  $p = .288$ ].

Nevertheless, the means for each song reveal that there is a tendency for this age group to perform better on song B (the song first taught with neutral syllable, adding the words later).

To find out if there were individual differences between vocal performances of song A and B, we calculated the difference between both mean scores (M = -.15, SD = 1.86) for each child. Since possible scores ranged from -4.33 and 4.33 and SD was high, we considered the scale unit (= 1.00) to define three groups when analyzing the difference between means. Criteria established were: a better performance for song B if  $\bar{C}_A - \bar{C}_B \leq -1.00$ ; no relevant differences if  $-1.00 < \bar{C}_A - \bar{C}_B < 1.00$ ; and better performance for song A if  $\bar{C}_A - \bar{C}_B \geq 1.00$ . Results revealed that 22.4% of the participants (N = 11)

performed better on song A, 24.5% performed better on song B (N = 12) and 53.1% showed no relevant differences between both songs (N = 26).

**(b) Do inaccurate first pitches for both songs fall into the registers of the children’s Singing Voice Development Measure (SVDM) classification?**

Inter-judge reliabilities for the SVDM classifications were high (ICC(3,k)= .942), indicating that the judges used the measure in a consistent manner. An index was computed based on the mean of the three judges scores (M = 4.26, SD = 0.85). Table 1 shows the distribution of children according to their SVDM classification (the index was recoded in order to maintain the same classification levels).

Table 1. SVDM Classification.

SVDM classification	N	Percent (%)
1.5 (Inconsistent speaking range singer)	1	2.0
2.5 (Inconsistent limited range singer)	3	6.1
3 (Limited range singer)	1	2.0
3.5 (Inconsistent initial range singer)	7	14.3
4 (Initial range singer)	8	16.3
4.5 (Inconsistent singer)	6	12.2
5 (Singer)	23	46.9
Total	49	100.0

According to the SVDM classification only four children (8.2%) would not be able to sing the first pitch of song B, which falls into a register that they cannot access yet (SVDM  $\leq$  3) and one child (2.0%) would not be able to sing both pitches (SVDM  $\leq$  1.5). All the other participants (89.8%) have access to the register of both first pitches ( $D_3$  for song A and  $A_3$  for song B).

Nevertheless, the scores on the first criteria of the tonal dimension for both rating scales revealed that 13 children (26.5%) did not sing  $D_3$  accurately (song A) and that 21 children (42.9%) did not sing  $A_3$  accurately (song B). Table 2 shows the inaccurate pitches sang by children, even after an auditory cue was provided, and their SVDM classification. If the pitch was accurate it is not mentioned on the table.

Table 2. First pitch sang for song A and B and the SVDM classification.

Participant	song A pitch	song B pitch		SVDM classification
#5	A <sub>2</sub>	E <sub>3</sub>	2.5	Inconsistent limited range singer
#6	-	G <sub>3</sub>	4	Initial range singer
#7	Bb <sub>2</sub>	D <sub>3</sub>	1.5	Inconsistent speaking range singer
#8	Eb <sub>3</sub>	E <sub>3</sub>	2.5	Inconsistent limited range singer
#10	-	G# <sub>3</sub>	5	Singer
#11	A <sub>2</sub>	D <sub>3</sub>	3.5	Inconsistent initial range singer
#13	B <sub>2</sub>	F# <sub>3</sub>	3.5	Inconsistent initial range singer
#14	C <sub>3</sub>	F# <sub>3</sub>	5	Singer
#15	C <sub>3</sub>	G <sub>3</sub>	3	Limited range singer
#16	-	F <sub>3</sub>	5	Singer
#17	C <sub>3</sub>	-	4.5	Inconsistent singer
#18	-	G# <sub>3</sub>	4.5	Inconsistent singer
#21	-	G <sub>3</sub>	3.5	Inconsistent initial range singer
#24	Bb <sub>2</sub>	D <sub>3</sub>	2.5	Inconsistent limited range singer
#25	C <sub>3</sub>	C# <sub>3</sub>	5	Singer
#27	-	G# <sub>3</sub>	4	Initial range singer
#28	C <sub>3</sub>	G <sub>3</sub>	4	Initial range singer
#36	C <sub>3</sub>	G# <sub>3</sub>	4	Initial range singer
#39	-	F <sub>3</sub>	5	Singer
#42	C <sub>3</sub>	-	5	Singer
#45	-	G# <sub>3</sub>	4	Initial range singer
#47	-	G <sub>3</sub>	4	Initial range singer
#48	-	G <sub>3</sub>	5	Singer

As shown in table 2, 11 children did not sing accurately both pitches, two children did not sing accurately the first pitch on song A and 10 children did not sing accurately the first pitch on song B. Results also show that 30.4% (N = 7) of the children who sang inaccurately were classified as singers by SVDM, 8.7% (N = 2) as inconsistent singers, 26.1% (N = 6) as initial range singers, 13.1% (N = 3) as inconsistent initial range singers, 4.3% (N = 1) as limited range singers, 13.1% (N = 3) as inconsistent limited range singers, 4.3% (N = 1) as inconsistent speaking range singer.

In order to further investigate the relationship between singing the first pitch accurately and the use of children's voice registers (as measured by the SVDM), the means and standard deviations were also calculated for the SVDM classification on both songs, as shown in Table 3 (0 = first pitch is not

accurate; 1 = first pitch is accurate).

Table 3. Means and standard deviations for the SVDM classification related to first pitch accuracy.

	First pitch	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Song A	0	13	3.57	1.13
	1	36	4.56	.57
Song B	0	21	3.83	.99
	1	28	4.64	.56

Results showed that for both songs, singing the first pitch accurately is related to higher means in the SVDM classification. Also, results revealed a moderate association between the accuracy on first pitch and the SVDM classification for both songs (song A:  $\eta_{(49)} = .577$ ; song B:  $\eta_{(49)} = .543$ ).

**(c) Is there a relationship between singing (in) accuracy on the first pitch and the tonal dimension scores for both performance rating scales?**

In order to investigate the relationship between the accuracy on the first pitch and the other criteria established in the tonal dimension of the performing rating scales (criteria 2 to 5 as shown in figures 3 and 4), we first analyzed the means (and standard deviations) for each song (song A:  $M = 2.52$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ ; song B:  $M = 2.84$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ). Results show that tonal achievement in song B is slightly higher. Table 4 shows the distribution of the mean scores on tonal dimension along each song for the first pitch accuracy.

Table 4. Means and standard deviations for the scores on tonal dimension related to first pitch accuracy.

	First pitch	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Song A	0	13	1.08	1.21
	1	36	3.05	1.33
Song B	0	21	1.87	1.20
	1	28	3.56	0.75

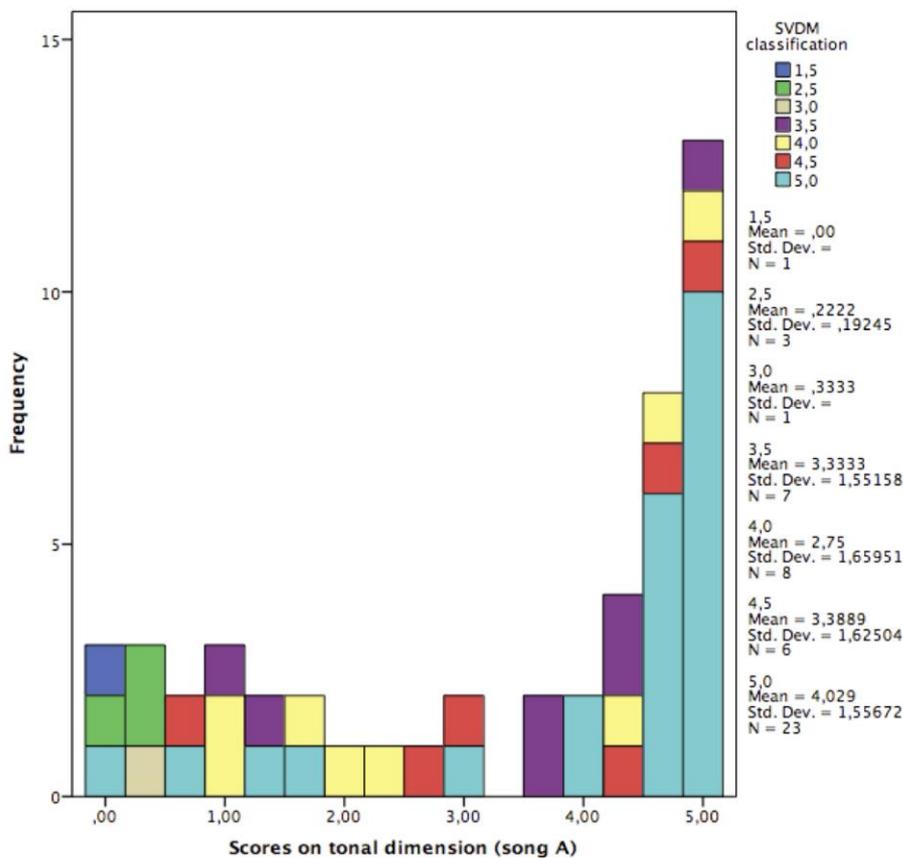
Following the results shown in table 3, also here the means for song B are higher and standard deviations are lower, regardless of the accuracy on the first pitch. Results also indicate a moderate association between the accuracy on first pitch and the tonal scores (criteria 2 to 5) for both songs, and higher for song B (song A:  $\eta_{(49)} = .565$ ; song B:  $\eta_{(49)} = .662$ ).

**(d) Are the tonal scores for both songs related to SVDM**

### classifications?

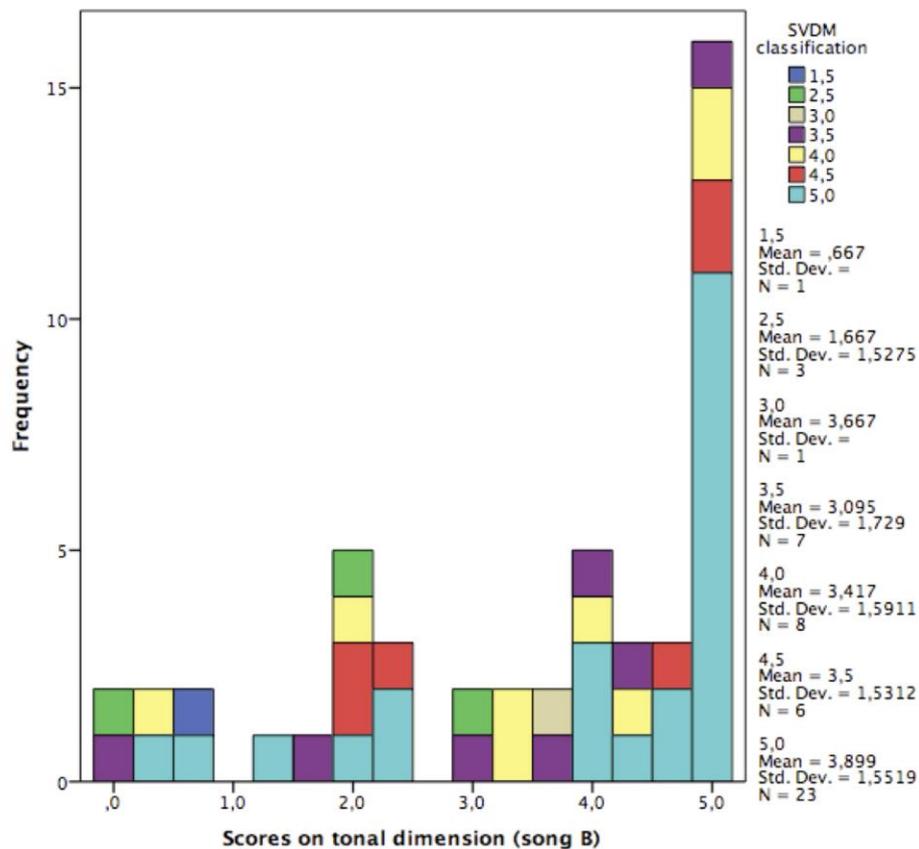
Correlation measures were also calculated to determine the nature of the relationship between children's tonal scores on each song (song A:  $M = 3.25$ ,  $SD = 1.84$ ; song B:  $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ ) and their SVDM classification (song A:  $\rho_{(49)} = .558$ ,  $p < .001$ ; song B:  $\rho_{(49)} = .385$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Correlations were positive and statistically significant indicating a moderate relationship for song A and a weak relationship for song B. Figure 5 and 6 show the distribution of SVDM classification according to the tonal scores on each song.

Figure 5. Distribution of SVDM classification according to the tonal dimension scores for song A.



Results show that the lower SVDM classifications [inconsistent speaking range singer (1.5); inconsistent limited range singer (2.5); and limited range singer (3)] achieved the lowest scores on tonal dimension for song A. We also observe that children classified as singers (5) show scores within a wider range.

Figure 6. Distribution of SVDM classification according to the tonal dimension scores for song B.



For song B, results reveal that children with higher SVDM classifications [inconsistent initial range singer (3.5), initial range singer (4), and singer (5)] are distributed all across the x-axis. To further investigate this relationship, correlation measures were also calculated according to the first pitch accuracy. Thus, measures were calculated for all possible combinations: first pitch accuracy for song A and B = 0 (N = 11); first pitch accuracy for song A and B = 1 (N = 26); first pitch accuracy for song A = 0 and for song B = 1 (N = 2); and first pitch accuracy for song A = 1 and for song B = 0 (N = 10).

Results showed correlations statistically significant in two cases: when children are accurate in both first pitches, and for song A ( $\rho_{(11)} = .415, p < .05$ ); and when children are accurate in the first pitch of song A but not in the other song, and for song B ( $\rho_{(10)} = -.644, p < .05$ ). So, in the first case, results indicate that there is a positive and moderate relationship between the SVDM classification and tonal achievement on song B. On the other hand, when children are not accurate in the first pitch of song B but accurate for song A, the relationship between those two variables is negative and moderate, meaning that there is a moderate tendency to get lower scores on the tonal dimension when the SDVM gets higher.

## Conclusions

This study revealed that for this population (6 to 7 –years old) there is no significant relationship between vocal performance on two songs and its

teaching strategy. Yet, findings indicate that individual differences should be accounted for, since there are children who can perform better according to the song. Therefore, it is important to consider teaching songs using both methods, perhaps in a counterbalanced way.

Still, when considering vocal accuracy it is advisable also to measure children's use of their vocal registers (Rutkowski, 2015; Welch, 2006). The results of this study showed that although both songs' pitches fall into the voice registers of 89.8% of the participants, not all of them score high in the tonal dimension. In fact, for both songs, there are children classified as singers (using SVDM) who scored approximately zero in both songs. The opposite is also found, meaning that some children score high in the tonal dimension although classified in a middle SVDM ranking, for example. This suggests that it is possible to be accurate when singing in a comfortable voice register.

On the other hand, results pointed out that there is a moderate association between the singing accuracy in the first pitch and the other criteria on the tonal dimension for both songs. So, there is a tendency to have higher ratings if the first pitch is accurate.

At this point, it should be mentioned that only the first criterion in the tonal dimension of the performance rating scales was designed to take into account the register in which the song was taught.

Nevertheless, there is a tendency to get higher scores in both songs if the SVDM classification is higher, as suggested by the positive and significant correlation measures. Yet, this correlation is weak for song B. This result is reinforced when considering the relationship between the first pitch accuracy and the SVDM classification. For instance, if children did not sing accurately both first pitches or vice versa there was no significant correlation found. So, perhaps there is a slightly different vocal behaviour in song B, meaning that teaching the melody first may help those children who still do not access all their voice registers.

In conclusion, measuring the use of voice registers and vocal accuracy should be used in parallel in order to provide a singing profile for each child. Based on this profile, it should be possible to contribute to more effective singing in terms of individual differences. Further studies should replicate these procedures with different ages. In addition, longitudinal case studies should also be most valuable to further deepen our understanding on these issues.

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# **Time to raise the bar: Exploring realities and improving musical engagement practices of early childhood professionals in the infant and toddler room of childcare centres in Australia**

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## **Abstract**

The use of musical engagement such as singing and musical play are long established practices with infants and toddlers. All children are born wired for music so there is little wonder that these sensitive, responsive and reciprocal musical episodes have considerable impact on the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of the child. These first musical encounters play an important role in building relationships and contribute towards the child's sense of wellbeing and belonging. Traditionally introduced by the child's parents, early childhood professionals now find themselves in this position due to the increasing number of children in childcare in Australia. There is little prior research concerning the musical practices of professionals in the infant and toddler room and research in preschool settings reveal occasional and limited musical engagements due to inexperience or lack of confidence or training.

This paper will present findings from a case study research which reviewed musical practices of professionals in an infant and toddler room in a long day care setting. It looked at what the existing musical engagement practices of early childhood professionals were, the issues they faced in delivering these practices and what support they needed to increase the quality of these practices. Direct observations and semi-structured interviews were conducted and the researcher kept a reflective journal. The analysis revealed the heavy demands of care, issues about the continuity of care and the presence of spontaneous musical episodes that were more instinctive rather than informed in nature and a push down from practices with older children. Based on these findings, the researcher then tested elements of an in-service collaborative professional development program and found that one of the key contributors to transforming practice, was watching the children's reactions to the researcher's modelling of musical engagement practices throughout the day. These findings provide insights that will contribute towards developing effective professional development programs and refine pre-service teacher training that will empower and transform musical engagement practices of professionals in the infant and toddler room.

## **Keywords**

Infant and Toddler, musical engagement, childcare, professional development

## **Introduction**

Experiences in early childhood affect and set neurological and biological pathways of the child and have life-long implications for health, learning and behavior (Council of Australian Governments, 2008). The first few years of life are prime times as they have great influence on the person the child becomes, shapes their sense of security, and how they view the world (Greenman, Stonehouse, & Schweikert, 2008). It has been suggested that experiences with very young children should be personal, intense, and family-centred while retaining an understanding of the continuity of learning (Cataldo, 1984). Relationships that are contingent, responsive, and reciprocal, formed during these early years between the carer and the child,

provide the stable and safe environment for the child to absorb and understand the world around them and support infant development (Raikes & Edwards, 2009).

This reciprocal responsiveness between the carer and the child has been likened to a 'dance' by infant psychologists (Raikes & Edwards, 2009) and being musical as these back-and-forth communications involve turn-taking on a shared pulse, different qualities of vocal and body expressiveness, and narratives in jointly created sequences (Trevarthen & Malloch, 2002). Infants are born wired for music and instinctively look for and start musical interactions with objects and people (Custodero, 2002). Shared musical episodes offer invaluable opportunities to develop attachment (Mazokopaki & Kugiumutzakis, 2009) and provide sensory experiences such as exploration and discovery, self-expression and communication, with an overall sense of well-being and belonging.

The use of musical engagement such as singing and musical play are long established practices in infants and toddlers care-taking (Trainor, 2002). These first musical encounters are traditionally introduced by the child's parents but due to the increasing number of children in childcare, early childhood professionals now find themselves in this position. Looking at available literature regarding musical engagement in early childhood settings, we can see that professionals in these settings offer occasional and limited musical engagements due to inexperience or lack of confidence or training (Gharavi, 1993; Hildebrandt, 1998; Scott-Kassner, 1999). In Australia, there is an average of 14 hours music training provided for preservice early childhood teachers to cover music education from birth to 8 or 12 years (Pestana, 2015). Research has shown that the music capabilities of very young children are enhanced by musically trained adults who are able to facilitate an enabling environment (Custodero, 2005; Suthers, 2004; Young, 2005). With inadequate training, the provision for rich, reciprocal and attuned musical episodes needed to support young children is under threat. General impressions from my visits to the infant and toddler rooms of childcare centres to assess preservice teachers on Practicum, indicate a superficial musical involvement which lacked the quality engagement needed.

The literature also revealed that there is limited research available about musical practices of professionals in the infant and toddler room (Niland, 2015). Educators in this room also face challenges of balancing both the caring and learning aspects in their pedagogical work. In most cases, the focus is on the care aspect rather than engaging the child and supporting their learning (Suthers, 2004). In Australia, early childhood educators' practices are guided by the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) which outlines learning outcomes, principles and practices (DEEWR, 2009). These outcomes are broad guidelines and are subject to interpretation. There is little mention of musical practices - mostly involves singing songs and

chanting rhymes.

The inclusion of musical engagement practices is very much left to the choice of the educator. Coupled with inadequate training and the choice to leave out what the educator is not comfortable with, it seems inevitable that music engagement practices are not widely included.

## **Research Aims**

These research questions drove my research:

- What types of musical experiences are enacted by early childhood professionals in the infants and toddlers room?
- What issues do early childhood professional face that prevent their engagement with “Quality” or rich music experiences?
- What can be done to support the early childhood professional to enhance their musical engagement practices in the infant and toddler room?

From this analysis, a model of collaborative professional development within the class context was developed and tested with the aim of transforming current musical engagement practices of professionals working in the infant and toddler room.

## **Methodology**

For this research, a phenomenological case study was selected to provide relevant quality data to enable a deeper understanding of the “lived” experiences of the educators in the infant and toddler room. Data collection was obtained through semi-structured interviews – pre and post interventions, direct observations, reflective journal and documentation. During this process, the researcher adopted the role of the “expert” in both the data gathering and in acting as the mentor/trainer in the collaborative professional development program.

Semi-structured interviews conducted at the start with the two key educators provided the foundation to understand their musical background, views and attitudes towards music practices, and their professional development. This was followed by 118 direct observations of musical episodes taken over a two-month period to capture the reality of their musical practices. These musical episodes captured any occurrence of musical engagement that happened throughout the day. An event sampling procedure was utilized and data collected included the time, place, those involved and a brief narrative of what occurred. Each episode was coded using a music categorisation schema based on the typology that emerged from the data. The type of activity – use of voice, musical instruments, movement or listening – was first examined and then the data was further coded to find out the reasons, contexts, and motivations behind the musical episodes. The episodes were coded by Category (formal, informal or incidental); Initiator (Educator or Child); Grouping (One-to-one, small or bigger group); and Role (pedagogical - supporting concept development, e.g. counting; developmental - physical, cognitive, social and emotional; cultural - passing

on cultural knowledge; instructional - signaling transitions or giving instructions; and as a filler -something to do). The researcher also kept a reflective journal to provide a richer context and insights into a day in the life of an educator.

The data generated from the interviews, observations and reflective journal helped towards developing a collaborative professional development program. This consisted of modelling musical practices throughout the day including one-to-one reciprocal episodes and group music time; provision of supporting literature outlining the “how to” and reasons behind the different musical engagement practices; informal discussions throughout the day and regular debriefing after musical episodes. Feedback regarding the professional development program was then sought via the post-intervention interviews.

## **Results**

From the initial interviews, the educators revealed strong support towards music education in the early years citing its many intrinsic and extrinsic benefits, and expressed belief in the transferable benefits of music into other domains as evidenced from working with older children. Both the educators came from multi-cultural backgrounds, and had rich musical experiences in their childhood and school days despite not having formal music training. Their pre-service teacher training did not provide specific music training. They were satisfied with their level of musical practices with the children in their room but cited some difficulties of not having enough time to prepare or conduct activities in the room as well as being constantly interrupted with care practices. Both were receptive towards receiving professional development for musical engagement with the expectation that they would learn how to get a better response from children, learn new activities, and felt that watching someone demonstrate these activities with the children would benefit them more. They both also stated that they were very busy and did not have time during and after working hours to learn more about their music practice.

The observations showed that the educators did engage in musical practices. There was a predominance of voice-related episodes followed by playing musical instruments, moving to recorded music, and listening to recorded music or electronic devices. The “Wiggles” Cd, a popular children’s recording group, was played almost every day.

The musical episodes were mostly spontaneous, incidental, opportunistic and not planned. There was no evidence of planning for musical episodes, and the choice of song and musical activity and when it was conducted was linked closely to the ‘role’ it played and its perceived transferable benefits. The use of action songs, familiar children’s songs and nursery rhymes were used in their sing-a-longs and to soothe unsettled children.

The musical episodes observed appeared to be more instinctive and intuitive rather than informed in nature, with a strong indication of push-down practices from working with older children. When asked about their choice of songs and activities, both educators cited that these ‘worked’ successfully

before with other children, and 'that's what you do with children'. They were hesitant to include new repertoire as they believed that the children would not be so familiar with the songs.

The musical episodes were mostly teacher initiated and driven by their understanding of what was suitable for the child. When a child initiated a musical episode, the reaction from the educator was responsive but the interaction rarely went further. For example, a child gave a car to the educator and said "car, car". The educator asked if the child wanted her to sing the song about the car, then after getting the confirmation, sang the song and stopped after that. What was clearly not evident was the presence of intersubjectivity between the educator and the children. After the collaborative professional development was conducted, the educators noted obvious differences in the children's behaviour. The children were calmer, settled faster and were more responsive. They demonstrated a higher level of concentration, the ability to listen and respond to instructions, and seemed to have better memories. They were more open to listen and respond playfully to new and different music and there was a higher rate of participation, especially from children who had previously never participated. The children seemed more receptive in responding as a group. More children were actually singing the words rather than just doing the actions. The educators also realised that the children were more capable than they thought, in using their imagination and having creative responses.

These results challenged and changed their practices. They began to take on board and practice the different musical activities demonstrated for them. They were more confident in using music in a 'different way' and including a wide variety of music types. They expanded on the ways in which they used props and instruments, and found that there were more opportunities to engage children with music and invite reciprocity rather than just do actions to music.

### **Implications for practice**

It was evident that a key turning point for the educators in transforming their practice was witnessing the effects of attuned, interactive and reciprocal musical experiences with the children in their room. Watching the children respond to the simple strategies used empowered them and boosted their confidence to try it out for themselves. The frequent informal discussions about the activities helped to unpack and support understanding about the purpose of the activity. Coupled with recognizing the capacity and potential of the child helped them to develop more meaningful musical experiences.

This calls for a need to review and refine current pre-service teacher training and professional development programs for existing teachers to improve the quality of musical engagement with infants and toddlers. Trying to include the understanding and practices in the already marginalized music education module might be futile and further perpetuate the push-down problem. Pre-service teachers might be better prepared if the understanding

and practices be included as part of learning of the pedagogical practices or 'pedagogy of care' – involving theorising how routines for infants and toddlers are able to actualize learning within the curriculum (Rockel, 2009) – in the infant and toddler module and practicum experiences of a preservice teacher course.

This small-scale study highlights the issues and reality of what happens in the infant and toddler room and possible opportunities to improve practices. How to translate and transfer the knowledge gained into a wider reaching program needs further consideration and is currently being explored by the researcher.

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# **SALTmusic - Speech and Language Therapy & Music Practice: Emerging findings from action research**

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## **Abstract**

This paper presents findings from an on-going action research project with speech and language therapists and early childhood music practitioners and children aged 24 to 36 months with communication difficulties and their parents/carers. This age is critical for increasing vocabulary and word use (Sharma and Cockerill, 2014) and presents a ripe moment for interventions that might improve the outlook for children prior to entering formal education settings. The informal, community-based, family music group activities offered by the resident music team at a children's centre provided a means for overstretched speech and language services to engage with young children and their families in ways that had hitherto been less successful for them. There were many shared and similar practices found amongst the two teams that came to light from interdisciplinary practices that characterises the work of children's centres.

At the mid-point in this project this paper explores the evolution of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) through working together on a programme of co-constructed SALTmusic sessions (Speech And Language Therapy and Music).

The data collected for this project are both quantitative and qualitative. Qualitative, tentative findings will be reported here. New models of early childhood music education practice for young children with communication difficulties, as well as some preliminary indications of the benefits for children and families through this innovative collaboration will be outlined. These include: the benefits of music for children's communication and expression; the impact of different environments on the children's expressive behaviours; the community of practice and the growth of the partnership; strategies and activities that are emerging as a result of SALTmusic practice.

Implications from this joint working project include models of work for speech and language therapists to integrate into their working practices with young children. Additionally early childhood music educators extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding of the most effective ways to work with music to improve young children's communicative skills and self-expression at this critical stage of development.

## **Keywords**

Communication, communication difficulties, parents, early childhood music, communities of practice, interdisciplinary working, two year olds, speech and language therapy

## **Introduction**

In this paper we present work-in-progress of an action research project involving two teams of professional practitioners: from speech and language

therapy, positioned in the health context; and from early childhood music education, positioned in the education and care context. The unfolding story of building a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) together is one strand of the research and the joint team's work together with families and children with communication difficulties is the other important element. The team is developing a data collection tool for recording individual children's levels of wellbeing and involvement, social interaction and communication. The children's musical behaviours are also observed using the Sounds of Intent for the Early Years Framework (Ockelford, et al., 2005; Welch, et al., 2008). Much of the work is experimental and evolving as the team begins to understand each other's practice and methods. This paper begins with a brief overview of some relevant literature followed by a description of the action research process and preliminary findings.

The Millennium Cohort study has provided data about 12, 644 children born in UK between 2000-01. Using this dataset Waldfogel and Washbrook (2010) argue that poverty and cognitive development have statistical associations. By the time they were four-five years old those children in the lowest income band were about 11 months behind those children in the middle-income band in terms of expressive vocabulary. Parenting and the home environment was one of the factors suggested by the researchers to contribute to these findings.

*I Can talk*<sup>4</sup>'s report (2009) found that in some areas of England as many as 50% of children are starting school without solid foundations in language and literacy, this can have a devastating impact on children's life chances. The report highlights the importance of early intervention and the need for a skilled childhood workforce to address the severe deficit in effective oral language skills that become the building blocks for literacy and numeracy development.

Pitt (2009); Knight, Bowmer & Welch (2016) suggest that early childhood music educators and speech and language therapists benefit in several ways from joint working by developing a 'shared repertoire' as they work together. Pitt's vignette described how the two professionals became more skilled in their practice as a result of talking, reflecting, planning and working together. The action research reported here brings together professionals to work similarly. The project offers early intervention for young children aged 24 - 36 months with communication difficulties and their families. The settings chosen for the project are in what many would consider to be economically disadvantaged locations in the east of England. The participation of the children's parents/caregivers as part of the project is considered to be of vital importance. When parents attend with their child to a music group activity it is found that there are more musical links to home as a result (Pitt & Hargreaves, 2016), it may be that any communicative behaviours

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<sup>4</sup> ICan - children's communication charity (UK)

demonstrated during musical play can be experienced together and perhaps rehearsed at home.

The music group context for collaboration between professional disciplines can assist the dyad in several ways. Findings from research indicate that music is of fundamental importance in emotional bonding between parent and infant (Dissanayake, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2010). Babies prefer the human voice to other sounds (Fernald, 1992) and adults have been found to vary the tonal quality of their speech (elevated pitch and a melodic quality) when interacting with infants and seem to do this intuitively (see for example Dunn and Kendrick, 1982; M. Papoušek and H. Papoušek, 1981). Trevarthen and Malloch whose studies of infant's early communication with her parent/caregiver found characteristics of intricate coordinated vocal narrative between the pair with musical-type features of rise and fall pitch patterns, rhythm, building up to a climax followed by release, termed by them as 'communicative musicality' (2000).

The prosodic quality of speech and music: that is the rhythm, intonation, stress and phrasing are thought to be the dominant components in both domains (McMullen and Saffran, 2004) and caregivers maximize these aspects when interacting with infants. Lullabies have been found cross-culturally to have certain specific qualities: simple, repeated pitch contours, descending melodies (Trehub & Trainor, 1998) and are preferred by infants to other music. Most significantly perhaps is that caregivers have been found to accurately repeat melodies time and again at the same pitch when interacting with their infant (Bergeson and Trehub, 2002). Prosodic cues may help with understanding the shape of phrases in both spoken and sung domains; the ends of clauses in speech tend to drop in pitch and syllables lengthen (McMullen and Saffran, 2004).

Music is similar in some respects to speech in that they both combine a series of individual elements – phonemes, pitches - in accordance with established rules (grammar in speech or music theoretical ideas) to generate meaningful utterances (see Jackendoff & Lerdahl, 1982; Anvari, Trainor, Woodside & Levy, 2002). Because of its rhythmic characteristics music may help young children to segment, rhyme and blend sounds (Degé & Schwarzer, 2011). Music also benefits verbal intelligence, pre-reading skills and social-cultural (Gerry, Unrau & Trainor, 2012) and emotional behaviours (Kirschner & Tomasello, 2009, 2010; Rabinowitch, Cross & Burnard, 2013). Infants have demonstrated early abilities to differentiate the rhythms and distinguish pitch contours of different language speech patterns (Nazzi, Bertoncini, & Mehler, 1998). It would seem that the skills necessary to identify language are musical in nature (i.e. pitch and rhythm).

### ***Music and acquiring language***

In the realm of speech perception and language acquisition, specifically in the perception, comprehension and imitation of sound segments within speech, music has been found to have a positive influence. Longitudinal studies with young children aged eight years showed that those that

attended music training were significantly better able to identify speech segments than those who attended a painting group (Chobert, François, Velay, & Besson, 2014; Francois & Schön, 2011; François, Chobert, Besson, & Schön, 2012). Gromko (2005) found that music instruction over four months improved phonemic segmentation fluency (i.e. the ability to break words down into individual sound components) in a group of kindergarten children as compared to a control group. Music training was found to improve auditory processing for specific tasks - as was second language training (Moreno & Lee, 2015). Musical perception skills were found to be advantageous for reading ability in pre-school children and have also been found to be beneficial for early word use and social and emotional development (Anvari, Trainor, Woodside, & Levy, 2002; Bolduc, 2008). A study conducted by Bolduc & Montésinos-Gelet (2005) investigated the effects of a music programme on phonological awareness, word recognition and invented spelling with kindergarten children. The findings suggest that musical activities develop three components that are important to linguistic development too: auditory perception, phonological memory and metacognitive knowledge (for more information see Bolduc, 2008). The latter skill (self-awareness of one's intellectual function, i.e. Thinking about one's thinking) has been found to be useful in children's development of thinking and understanding across all learning (Robson, 2012) and may be a vital skill in language acquisition.

## **Methodology**

Influencing change in practice characterises the aims of this Youth Music<sup>5</sup> funded project therefore action research was the most suitable methodological approach. At the heart of the project are collaboration and the establishment of a self-critical community of practice (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2008). Ideologically there is an epistemological root in critical theory; communication is seen as an intrinsic element in building a community of equals (Grundy and Kemmis, 1988, p.87). Action research is conducted in real world circumstances and ethical considerations are important as the project is built upon open and in-depth communication between all participants. Parents and children have been included in the cycles of action research. The children and their parents/caregivers watch edited film data collected through one cycle of 'intervention' and their reactions are observed as evidence of their 'voice'. The parents' views are sought throughout the process and the data they provide helps triangulate data from the team of their observations of the children.

## **Participants**

The professional participants comprise four speech and language therapists (SLT), two SLT assistants, two early childhood music practitioners, two trainee early childhood music practitioners, strategic project lead, researcher and a project manager. The SALTmusic Programme of activity takes place in three

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<sup>5</sup> Youth Music is an English charity that funds music projects in out of school contexts.

different group sessions per week in term-time. Each group includes up to ten children with communication difficulties and their parents/caregivers and any young siblings. Participants attend for one term of sessions (8-weeks). One of the groups is for children with speech and language disorders and the other two groups are for those children who have social interaction and communication difficulties. As these children are between 24-36 months of age few of them have a diagnosis at this stage.

### *Cycles of Action Research*

At the time of writing the project is in the middle of the third cycle of action research. Using Schön's Reflective Cycle (1983) the team reflects, evaluates, analyzes and then concludes with an action plan for the next cycle of activity. Figure 1 shows the various stages of the cyclical process of SALTmusic action research.

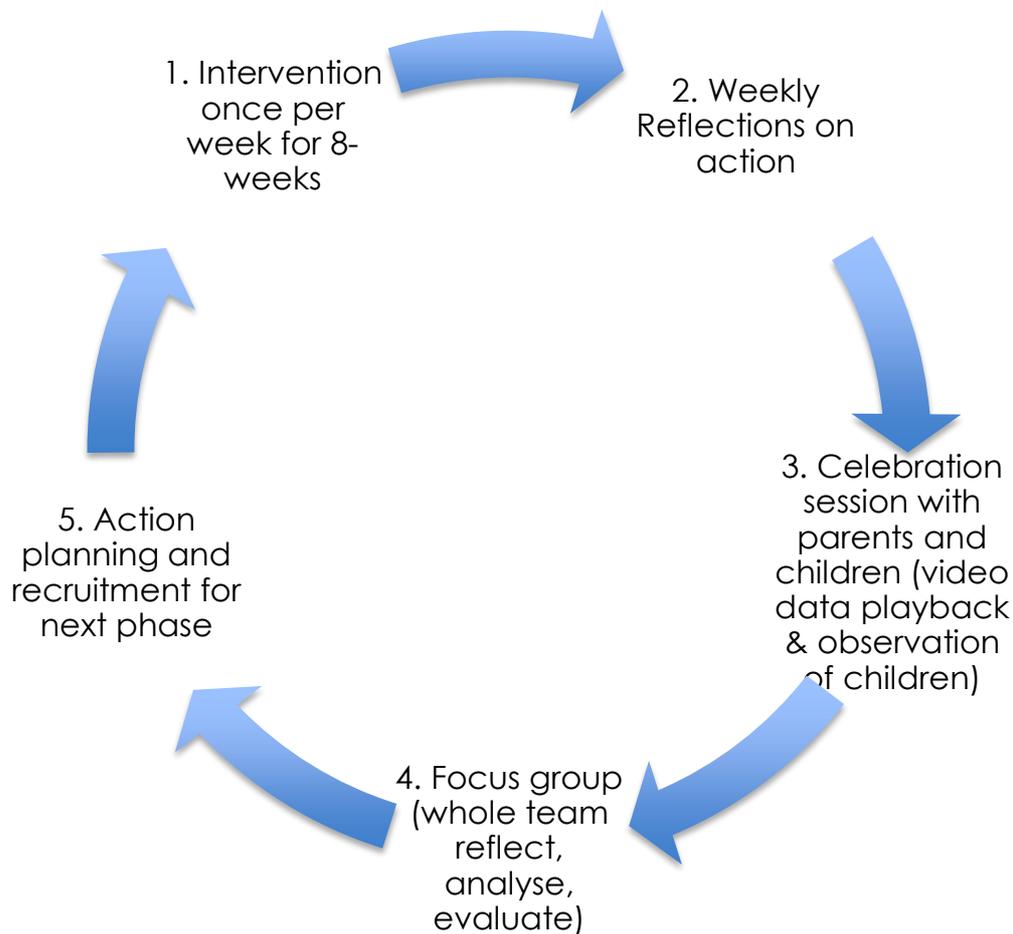


Figure 1 – Salt music cycle of action research based on Schön (1983)

### **Data Collection**

A data collection tool is in formation as part of the project and is completed for each child at the end of every session by the team members who facilitate that group session through discussions and observation notes. They score for wellbeing and involvement (Laevers, 1998), social interaction and

expression. The codes and the tool has been developed by team members through 'joint enterprise' to achieve 'a shared repertoire' (Wenger, 1998). Eraut (2008) speaks about blending theory and practice knowledge from different disciplines, in this case with a codified document to represent the expansion through the amalgamated professional practice. It is expected that over the lifetime of the project these data will show in what ways the children are benefitting from the SALTmusic group activity. It is too early in the project to provide any significant findings at this stage.

### **The SALTmusic sessions – emerging models of work**

The sessions have been based on the EY music/arts-pedagogy that has been established since 2003 at Great Yarmouth Community Trust where the early years music team has pioneered innovative approaches to musical playfulness over many years (see Pitt, 2009; Arculus, 2015). The creation of an enabling playful environment is one of the key pedagogical actions. The room is set up with tuned and un-tuned percussion instruments, objects to encourage speech (such as toy animals, plastic food, vehicles), construction materials and abstract items such as large, floaty pieces of materials pinned on washing lines, with many large foil blankets -which can be inviting sound makers- strewn on the floor (see image 1). The first part of the activity is free play with the practitioners (SLT and music) focused on interacting with individual children's musical/sound play, copying, extending and demonstrating that they have 'heard' the children's sounds. Parents are encouraged to 'play' with their children, pointing out that asking questions that demand 'right' answers from the children are not needed in this session. The children, and the parents/caregivers gradually build their confidence in this playful atmosphere and when the time is right, a slightly more 'led' music group-time ensues. The musical material for this section is a work-in-progress; at the moment there are choices of key word objects that are offered in a playful manner. These words are practised many times through simple songs and rhymes. The use of *Lycra* has been successful and enjoyed by all the children. The format of the sessions is kept simple and repetitive. The use of a visual timetable, found to be very effective for children to understand what is happening in nursery settings was used in the pilot sessions but was found to be redundant as the music seems to act as its own auditory timetable. It seems that music orders and structures the time so that the framework for the session is guided by the ebb and flow of the songs and their place in the session.

The 'Makaton'<sup>6</sup> signs for 'more' and 'finished' are used throughout the activity and the signs for the key words to be practised in the particular session are added.

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<sup>6</sup> Makaton is a simplified sign language system <https://www.makaton.org/aboutMakaton/>



Image 1 enabling playful environment

### **Findings - professionals**

At the outset there was a taster session to recruit families for the project. At the focus group thereafter the following comments came from the speech and language team:

*"...the only thing was establishing the speech and language roles within that very well established group....what would you like us to feed into that?" (SLT)*

*"We wondered about planning time before the group. Whether we could have a set collaborative planning?" SLT*

It appears from these comments that the SLTs have identified that the music team uses an established structure and format into which they are perhaps negotiating a means to contribute their expertise. They take the lead in suggesting a practical solution.

At the end of the first cycle of intervention sessions the group met together to discuss what we called the 'pilot' series of 8-week SALTmusic sessions from October-December 2016 -

### **Findings - joint working**

*"We've built a really nice relationship with the therapists and the therapy assistants as well" Musician.*

The joint-team appears to be building good working relationships. The wider SLT service is reported to be under tremendous pressure, therapists are required to see many referrals. Some SLT's find it difficult to do more than 'signposting' to other services at times. This project has offered a different sort

of intervention for families:

*"Previously I often felt as though I had to rely on the wider workforce around the child to effect the change, often only seeing children for one-off assessments and giving recommendations to home and nursery..."*

Of her involvement in the music project she says:

*"Personally I found it to be very meaningful to feel as though I was directly involved with effecting positive change to the families" SLT (case study data.)*

## **Findings - music practice**

*"The music team...enabled children to explore, build confidence and inspired a sense of musical playfulness. The music team already had the basis for creating a good communicative environment for children" SLT (case study data).*

Talking about the most effective practice musicians said:

*"...it's about stripping it right down..."*

*"following a similar routine and for that to becoming established..." (focus group).*

This music practitioner acknowledges learning through the process about the most effective practice for these groups of children and parents. It seems that simplicity, clarity, structured routine and repetition are emerging as key elements that work.

## **Findings - children**

*"...she [SLT assistant] was visiting that school where [Child's Name] was at nursery and she popped in to feed back what had worked really well for him. He is now just a couple of hours short of his full 15 hours place." SLT*

This child had been almost completely excluded from the setting as they had found it difficult to meet his needs. He was attending nursery for just a couple of hours per week when he started the SALTmusic sessions. The SLT assistant's visit to the setting allowed transfer of practical tools and ideas from the SALTmusic sessions for the nursery to integrate into their practice making it possible for the child to manage better in the setting as his communication needs were addressed more effectively.

There are benefits to other children as a result of the growing knowledge within the team:

*"...and we have been able to cross over quite well: the signs and things that we've been doing in the SALTmusic sessions we've been doing in our bridge to music groups [young children and parent music activity groups] as well. A parent said her little boy had been very frustrated as his language has been quite slow and she had been considering whether she needed a referral [to speech and language services], she felt he had already picked up on the signs and that had lessened his frustration." Musician*

## **Findings - parents/caregivers**

When asked if parents had benefitted from attending the music group sessions a frequent response was about having time together with their child:

*"Having fun with [Child]."*

*"Spending quality time with [Child] in a completely child-focused environment."*

*"Spending more time with my child, I have learned a lot more signs."*

*"It has helped to encourage positive behaviours in my son."*

Parents were asked in what ways, if any, their child's communication had improved. Responses show that there are increases in interaction efforts: *"More attempts to communicate/interact."* *"Although [Child] still isn't speaking, he is using sounds a lot more."* Also increases in word use: *"Vocab. [Child] is using 3-4 word sentences now it was single words before."*

Musical behaviours and signing have increased too: *"He has started to sing more. He has also taken on "finished", "more" and putting toys back in the bag."*

## **Discussion**

This project has two strands: To explore how two professional teams can work together and develop a community of practice and to study the ways that musical activities may be beneficial for children with communication difficulties and their families.

Already there are examples of the community of practice's evolution. Negotiability (Wenger, 1998, pp.197-206) involves a process of developing an 'ownership of meaning' (p.200). The meaning has to be socially negotiated and the ownership relates to the ability to be responsible for negotiating meaning. The initial findings suggest that the speech and language therapists are perhaps negotiating ways through the established music group practice, by suggesting collaboration through joint planning meetings; thereby encouraging mutual engagement, pursuing joint enterprise towards producing and adopting a new meaning (ibid., p.202). There is mutual appreciation of the other's expertise and a willingness to learn. The team reports working well together although there is still a sense of two different professional groups.

The parents are enjoying what they regard as 'quality time' with their children. Pitt & Hargreaves (2016) found that the parent-child music group activity offers a 'multi-layered', socialisation space where intimate one-to-one interaction is possible, as well as peer-to-peer and group interaction and this one-to-one interaction time (between parent and child) was felt to be very beneficial to both parent and child (Pitt & Hargreaves, in Press).

It would appear that there are benefits for children arising from the musical playful environment. There is no pressure to get things right and this encourages freedom to vocalise. Moving the focus away from word-use encourages more attempts to communicate and use sounds more readily. These are preliminary findings. The rules of music (Jackendoff & Lerdahl, 1982; McMullen & Saffron, 2014) seem to offer the children rehearsal time for their sounds and vocalisations that, in turn, appear to build confidence for speaking. The use of simple signs is proving helpful at home and in education settings.

There are emerging implications for music practice including using signs in other music group contexts for young children to also benefit those with no recognised communication difficulty. The joint working has allowed sharing across professional disciplines of practical ideas that support children's effective communication to improve access to education and care for those with communication difficulties.

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# The “musical” day-care centre: A model for training the educators

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## **Abstract**

In an ideal world, the professional education of educators of young children would include musical training targeted to the benefit of the young children. Yet, research knowledge on the role of musical activities – e.g., song singing – is only slowly applied in the practical fields of early education. In order to contribute to knowledge transfer, our research project aims at designing a model for the musical training of early childhood educators as a team within their professional context. Ideally, this model should be communicated in such a way that it allows to be transferred to new contexts. Hence, we strive for identifying and generalizing didactic elements for providing young children daily experiences of enjoyable and playful song singing and other musical activities in day-care centres. Our main task as project leaders is to guide the team in the day-care centre to appreciate their already existing musical culture by increasing their awareness and knowledge, and to help them improve their abilities and skills. By musical culture we mean shared values and goals such as a shared musical repertoire that is practised daily and that follows pedagogical criteria. A musical culture also means mutual support in the team, and involving parents and other actors in the environment. One of the key elements is the educators' ability and skill to practise song singing and to enrich the singing setting as an enjoyable and playful social scenario by narratives, movements, pictures, objects, and accompaniments. Another key element is a shared repertoire of songs and musical games that is child-oriented and suitable for including children. In workshops and in the working place, we train the educators in various ways. We demonstrate musical practices, introduce criteria, support individuals and the team in their own daily practice, and we assist the setting up of routines that help to sustain achievements. By the end of the implementation process, the team should have established its own daily routines and a procedure to ensure quality and sustainability. In our presentation we give an overview of the model's current state, and we illustrate aspects of the implementation process with video films.

## **Keywords**

professional training, music pedagogy, early education, implementation research

## **Introduction**

The literature on early childhood education provides strong incentives for policy-makers to maintain optimum ratios of adults to infants, on-going training including in the specialist area of infant and child pedagogy, and environments with good leadership which facilitate low levels of stress (e.g., Dalli et al., 2011). These conditions are recognized to have a marked impact on the development and learning of infants and children, since they allow building up and maintaining mutual attunement between adults and children. Mutual attunement has to do with multimodal communication including qualities like shared attention, shared intentions, and shared

playfulness. These are mainly manifested in eye contact, reciprocal vocal imitation, and interactive synchronization. Moreover, mutual attunement, taken literally, can be interpreted as musical. This “musical” view on early communication goes back to Papousek and Papousek (1981, 1987) who identified acoustically musical features in the intuitive caregiving that they summarised with the concept of “intuitive parenting”. Similarly, while studying early communication, Dissanayake (e.g., 2008, 2011) discovered the same features, yet called them proto-aesthetic. Her idea is to view early communicative as events to make something ordinary into something special, and she created the concept of “artifying” by means of repetition, variation, simplification (formalisation), surprise, and exaggeration. She conceptualizes early communication as the very original experience of the temporal arts. In this domain of temporal arts, song singing for and with children is prominent as the traditional means to regulate emotional states of the singer as well as the listener. In a broad sense, music or song singing can be said to be one of the earliest cultural domains children from early on are capable of participating by listening and by vocally joining in. Studies show (e.g., Longhi, 2009) that mothers use songs to structure the interaction with infants, and that children are capable of reproducing identifiable tunes even before they are able to form and articulate bi-syllabic words (e.g., Stadler Elmer, 2012, 2015). Early song singing not only indicates how a child adapts to the cultural environment, but also – and maybe even more importantly – how she or he acquires the skill to reproduce the collectively shared emotional state related to this activity. Apart from being involved in the production of knowledge on learning and teaching music through research, we aim at transferring knowledge into practice.

### **Designing, improving, and formalizing an implementation model**

Together with the leaders of a large day-care centre in Germany, we designed a model for implementing music pedagogical knowledge into early education. The two leading questions have been: 1. What kind of knowledge and skills do educators need to provide children a musically stimulating environment on a daily basis and to foster children's basic musical learning potential? 2. How can the implementation process be organized in an efficient and effective way? The aim of this project is to enable the team to establish its own musical culture by functional daily routines and to agree common values, goals, and a procedure that ensures quality and sustainability such as a shared musical repertoire that is practised daily and that follows pedagogical criteria. In addition, from our viewpoint as researchers, we aim at documenting and formalizing the model and process in order to allow the transmission and multiplication to other contexts.

### **Content knowledge and skills**

To a large extent, the nature of answers to the first question about the educators' necessary musical qualifications is normative. Therefore, issues around norms or standards need from time to time negotiations, adjustments, and agreements. They may also need to be individually adjusted. To some

extent, standards can be claimed to concern the elementary musical competences with which each human being is normally biologically equipped. These basic musical activities are sound perception, vocalization, and movements (e.g., Stadler Elmer, 2000), and they are interrelated. Apparently, vocalization and movements adapt to the surrounding culture, and this process is manifested in the organization of these activities. Musical learning and development can be understood as a gradual differentiation and integration of cultural rules into the organization of these elementary musical activities. Educators learn to understand and observe the emergent musical features and rules in the child's organization of his or her vocalisation and movements. Moreover, educators are trained to practise sensorimotor games with the children that include voice, movements, sound sources, story telling, pictures etc. They learn to understand the basic musical and language rules concerning pitch, time (duration, accents, phrases), syllable and word formation, their generative nature (Merker, 2002; Stadler Elmer, 2015), and how these are expressed while singing and playing musical games. The educators are specifically trained in-service to practise song singing, enrich this practice with various scenarios, and to observe and engage the children.

With the focus on practising song singing scenarios, we emphasize vocal learning. It is as a specific human capacity to adjust vocally to an external or internal sound source, and to use feedback for modifying the vocalization. During the first two or three years, vocal learning leads to speech and song that reciprocally influence each other. Ultimately, vocalization is sensorimotor, and moreover, movements of other body parts usually accompany it. Key words are self-synchronisation and interactive synchronization as deeply biologically rooted propensities to join in oscillating stimulations.

### **Organisational requirements**

An expert model of music education typically commissions the professional musicians to visit day-care centres once a week for teaching the children, and it does not aim at empowering the educators. Yet, our model focuses the educators as a team with a leader and invests into an in-service training of the day-care centre staff by an outside expert and/or mentor during a limited period. The aim of this training is to assist the staff team and leader in improving the actual musical culture, increase awareness and introduce new knowledge, and train to integrate additional criteria. The first and foremost organizational requirement is the leader's commitment to the project goal. The leader is the key figure to manage the communication between the project leader, mentor and the staff, parents, and stakeholders. Together with the project leader, she or he monitors the entire process. Good leadership facilitates change processes and encourages staff members to comply with the agreed commitment, values, and goals (e.g., Penuel, Fishman, Haugan Cheng, & Sabelli, 2011; Peters et al., 2013).

An important step for developing a common vision on how to set up a music

culture within a day-care centre, begins by becoming aware and by appreciating existing functional resources in the staff, e.g., habitually deserved time slots for gathering and music making, individual expertise, collections of songs and musical material. Our experiences show that this process is not easy, since a common language to communicate about musical practices and its quality has to be found. For instance, at the beginning staff members believed the quantity of songs sung for the children to be most important and sufficient. Indeed, their protocols of the songs sung during five working days yielded a large number and a large variety of songs. We had to find ways to introduce new criteria, and to convince the staff to decrease the number of songs, to avoid songs with complex rules, and instead increase the quality of working with a limited set of children's songs. We asked them to collect their favourite songs and to agree among themselves on a shared song repertoire. Further, we introduced new and simple musical games that target basic musical competences. We also introduced new criteria for playfully staging song singing for and with children, and demonstrated how to gain children's active engagement and learning. The educators learned to understand that children profit more when the songs are simple and easily accessible to them, when they are repeated, shared and enriched with stories or combined with further activities, than from their own and individual favourite songs with complex and advanced rules. The coaching of the educators – individually, pairwise, and small groups – is organized within their working environment with children actually involved. This practical training includes demonstrations, observations at the basis of criteria, video recordings and analyses. Intermediate, we organize workshops with the entire staff team and also meetings with the leader. The requirements – e.g., the pedagogical criteria for the song singing practice, instructions on how to observe the children – need to be adjusted iteratively in order to find a level that avoids over- or under-challenging the individual. Throughout the entire process, we strive to convey to the educators the experience that their music pedagogical work with children, especially with the very young ones, is beneficial for all, and we teach them to apply criteria and to observe the effects of their interventions such as learning progress, shared attention, interest, and enjoyment. A sustainable change towards a lively and daily music culture can only be reached when the target group – the educators – feel supported, valued, and respected as professionals, and when they gain positive inspiration from their work in the interests of the children.

## **Research and Evaluation**

From the research perspective, we are interested in how the implementation process works, and how the theoretical model could be improved that encompasses assumptions about musical pedagogical knowledge and skills and about process management of knowledge transfer (cf., Stadler Elmer, 2014; Stadler Elmer & Wyrsh, 2017). Currently, we are devising a questionnaire for evaluating the process. We are also analysing videos and make a film to demonstrate best practice.

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# Parental awareness and activity concerning prenatal acoustic intake and after-birth music stimulation of babies

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## Abstract

Research findings of the last few decades underline the importance of the acoustic environment of the fetus and the newborn baby as a major source of stimulation influencing growth. While developments in scientific fields dealing with prenatal and neonatal development are ample, there is little research on the degree of awareness possessed by the individuals involved with pre- and neonatal care, such as parents, obstetricians, caregivers, etc. The present study aimed at investigating (a) parents' degree of awareness concerning the importance of the fetus' acoustic intake during the prenatal period; (b) the sources of this information, and (c) the parental activity during pregnancy and after birth aiming at enriching the acoustic environment of the unborn and born child. The sample consisted of 129 women in a major urban area who had given birth to their child no more than eight months before the beginning of the study. Data was selected via the *New Mother Questionnaire* (NMQ), an author-constructed 33-item measure of satisfactory reliability (ranging from  $r = 0.777$ ,  $p < 0.05$  to  $r = 0.955$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Analysis revealed interesting findings on the degree and origin of parental knowledge on the importance of the acoustic environment on their unborn/born babies' growth, and shed light on the similarities between pre- and post-natal stimulation provided by parents, as well as the criteria for parental choices. Of special interest are the findings on fathers' awareness and activity to reinforce prenatal acoustic intake as compared to mothers', as well as on the use of parental speech versus singing for the baby's acoustic stimulation before and after birth. Findings of the present study have several implications for the role of music educators as advocates of the importance of the baby's prenatal and postnatal acoustic/music stimulation and for the implementation of music programmes for the unborn baby.

## Keywords

Prenatal, neonatal, music, acoustic, stimulation, baby, growth, parent, awareness, fetus, womb, sound.

## Introduction

Arguments presenting the womb as a tank, empty of any sensory stimuli (Preyer, 1885), into which the fetus is sleeping as if it lies in a coma, untouched by the external environment and uninfluenced by sensory impressions (Seitz, 1951), belong to the distant past. Developments in technology and progress in medical fields have produced impressive knowledge on what happens in the womb (Honemeyer & Saling, 2013). External sounds merge with sounds in the womb to form the acoustic environment of the fetus, which supported by the senses of touch, taste and smell, connect the fetus with the external environment (Federico, 2000). This sound environment belongs to our primordial, pre-birth wealth of experience

(Hüther, Krens and Weser, 2008). Research studies have shown acoustic stimulation during prenatal period to influence the fetus' bodily functions, the development of perception, personality development, as well as the development of musicality (Arabin, 2002; Arya et al., 2012; Birnholz & Benacerraf, 1983; D'Elia et al., 2004; Hepper, 2005; IFREPmla. n.d.; Lagercrantz & Ringstedt, 2001; Shahidullah & Hepper, 1994; Ullal-Gupta et al., 2013; Wilkin, 1995). Every newborn child coming to this world, brings a number of experiences which he/she gathered in the womb and can now recall as respective 'memory' schemata (Hüther, Krens and Weser, 2008). Infants and young children are predisposed to speech and musical development (Stadler Elmer, 2012; Trehub, 2001).

While developments in scientific fields dealing with prenatal and neonatal development are ample, there is little research on the degree of awareness possessed by individuals involved with pre- and neonatal care, such as parents, caregivers, etc. The present study aimed at investigating (a) parents' degree of awareness concerning the importance of the fetus' acoustic intake during the prenatal period; (b) the sources of this information, and (c) the parental activity during pregnancy and after birth aiming at enriching the acoustic environment of the unborn and born child.

## **Method**

Convenient sampling in a population of 3,011 women who had given birth in the period of September 01, 2014 to June 30, 2015 in a major city in southern Greece, led to a sample of 129 women who agreed to participate in the present study. One hundred of them had given birth at a public hospital, while 29 women had delivered their babies in other private maternity clinics. All mothers had given birth to their baby no more than eight months before the beginning of the study.

The author-constructed *New Mother Questionnaire* (NMQ), consisting of 33 items, 21 closed and 12 open-ended questions, was administered to gather data on the research questions mentioned above along with demographic data. The NMQ had been pilot-tested for its clarity and ease in completion before the actual beginning of the study and was modified accordingly, leading up to the NMQ used in the present study. Test-retest reliability of the modified NMQ ranged from  $r= 0.777$ ,  $p<0.05$  to  $r=0.955$ ,  $p<0.001$ , and was therefore considered satisfactory.

## **Findings**

Analysis of the demographic data showed that 97,7% of the women participating in the study were of Greek nationality. Most of them (58,1%) ranged in age between 31 – 40 years old, 35,7% between 21 and 30 years old, while very small percentages of women were below 20 (4,7%) and above 40 (1,6%) years of age. Almost half of them (49,6%) were mothers of only one child, 38,8% mothers of two children, 9,3% mothers of three children, and 2,3% had four children or more. Almost half of them (48,8%) were

university graduates holding bachelor degrees, 38% high school graduates, and 13,2% middle school graduates. The sample of mothers was almost equally divided among the five categories of degree of involvement in music, with slightly more women (29,5%) having moderate involvement with music and less women out of the sample (20,2%) having no involvement with music. In most cases (97,7%), the mothers' involvement with music was not professional.

Concerning mothers' awareness of the importance of the acoustic intake of the fetus, it emerged that 43,4% considered themselves highly or very highly informed, 33,3% moderately informed, 19,4% slightly informed and 3,9% not informed at all. The basic sources of information were reported by the mothers to be the Internet (65,1%), scientific journals and books (23%), journals and books for the general public (21,4%), gynecologists (20,6%), relatives and friends (13,5%), personal experience (7,9%), courses and seminars (5,6%), and education (3,2%). The mothers who considered themselves highly or very highly informed were graduates of middle school (58,8%) and high school (44,95), while university graduates mostly considered themselves moderately informed (42,9%) and to a less extent highly – very highly informed (38,1%). The majority of mothers considered the acoustic intake of the fetus to be highly or very highly important for its future development (45% and 37,2% respectively).

Analysis showed that stimulation provided by mothers during pregnancy in order to reinforce the fetus' acoustic environment, involved listening to recorded music (58,7%), singing (56,3%), reciting (11,9%), speaking to the fetus (4%), and reading children's books (2,4%). As far as singing was concerned, analysis showed that 38,8% of mothers sang daily for the unborn baby, while 31% sang 2-3 times a week. Concerning listening to music during pregnancy, this happened daily in 69% of mothers, while 63,6% of them did it intentionally in order to have the fetus 'listen' to the music. The greatest percentage of mothers (82,9%) did not play any musical instrument during pregnancy. The styles of music to which mothers chose to expose their unborn babies to, were Greek pop music (77,5%), any choice of music (31%), classical music (24,8%), foreign pop (24%), rock (20,9%), traditional Greek music (16,3%), children's music (10,9%), jazz (7,8%) and folk music from other countries (3,9%).

Mothers also reported their spouses' degree of information/awareness, about the importance of the fetus' acoustic intake, as being moderate (33,3%), low (22,5%), high (19,4%), none (16,3%) and very high (8,5%). According to mothers, fathers participated in activities to reinforce the fetus' acoustic environment daily (29,7%) two or three times a week (24,2%), once a week (11,7%), 2-3 times a month (10,2%) and once a month (9,4%). These activities included mostly talking to the fetus (73,6%), singing (20,2%), playing a musical instrument (10,1%) and playing recorded music (3,1%). A percentage of

14,8% of fathers did not at all participate in reinforcing the acoustic environment for the unborn baby.

Concerning the period after birth, it was found that mothers' singing in order to reinforce the acoustic environment of their babies was mostly daily (83,6%), while 12,5% of mothers sang for the baby 2-3 times per week, and only 3,9% sang to the baby no more than once a week. Mothers had noticed that the baby recognized the mother's voice to a very high degree (84,4%) and to a high degree (15,6%), as well as the father's voice to a very high degree (74,2%), and to a high degree (18,8%). Analysis showed that when mothers wanted to calm down their baby, they sang to the baby (78,9%), they put music on for the baby to listen (47,7%), they shook the baby's rattle (48,4%), they used a musical toy (9,4%), and spoke to the baby (2,3%).

As far as exposing the baby to recorded music, results showed that in the majority of cases (66,4%) this happened daily, in 29,7% of cases this happened 2-3 times a week, while once a week was the frequency for only 3,9% of the sample. It was also found that the music which mothers chose to expose their baby to, was not different from the one they chose during pregnancy in 40,6% of cases, a little different in 29,7% of the cases, moderately different in 21,1%, much different in 7%, and very different in 1,6% of cases. Exposing the baby to recorded music happened daily (25%), 2-3 times a week (30,5%), once a week (16,4%), 2-3 times a month (10,2%) and less than once a month (18%). The music which mothers used to expose their babies to, after birth, was reported to be Greek pop music (50%), several kinds (37,5%), children's songs (27,3%), any music (26,6%), traditional Greek music (25%), classical music (22%), rock (14,8%), foreign pop (14,8%), jazz (7,8%), and other countries' folk music (5,5%). Mothers reported the criteria for choosing this music to be their own music preferences (71,9%), the baby's reactions (17,2%), their views based on what they had read on the internet (16,4%), the older siblings' music preferences (9,4%), their readings from books and magazines (8,6%), and the paediatrician's recommendations (5,5%). Mothers characterized the baby's acoustic environment mostly as "noisy" (46,9%) and "musical" (42,2%).

Mothers reported that, when babies were exposed to acoustic stimuli to which they had also been exposed while in the womb, they had the following reactions: turning their head toward the sound source (46,9%), calming down (39,1%), vocalizing (35,9%), body movements (31,3%), stopping crying (15,6%), smiling (9,4%), falling asleep (2,3%) and crying (0,8%).

## **Discussion**

Findings from the present study show that mothers are knowledgeable of the importance of the fetus' acoustic intake, while the sources of this information are mostly the internet, and much less books, magazines and gynecologists. The educational system is not reported as a source of information to a considerable degree. This verifies older research findings (Stamou, 2006;

Stamou, 2001) according to which, even early childhood teachers and carers ignore the importance of the acoustic environment in first years of life for the child's musical development. It also underlines the gap often existing between the scientific community, education and society also reported in other studies (Cole & Knowles, 2000; Joram & Gabriele, 1998; Korthagen, 2007; Leglar & Collay, 2002; Stamou, 2006; Stamou, 2001; Stamou & Mouchtaroglou, 2012), as well as the need for bridging this gap (Custodero & Stamou, 2006; Scott, 2004). This is imperative if the importance of the acoustic environment before and after birth for baby's growth is to be effectively communicated to the people who are mostly dealing with the unborn and born baby; parents, carers and educators.

Findings showed no significant relationship between a mother's degree of information on the importance of the fetus' acoustic intake with either her age or degree of involvement with music. These findings could be indications that this awareness is mostly by instinct or by what is considered as "common knowledge". The very high and high degree of awareness that mothers report (43,4% and 33,3% respectively) may have been affected by the testing procedure itself, as mothers probably get a feeling about the significance of the fetus' acoustic intake, just by reading the questionnaire.

While mother's educational level does not seem to relate to the degree of her awareness of the importance of the fetus' acoustic intake, it does however seem to relate to the frequency of activities done to reinforce this intake. This shows that the mothers who actually realize their responsibility for building a rich environment for their unborn baby and act in order to reinforce acoustic intake, are the ones who possess high educational level. Similarly, while the number of children does not seem to relate to the degree of information, it does seem to relate to activities done by mothers to reinforce acoustic stimulation for the fetus. The above findings may be indications that regardless of the fact that mothers present themselves as aware of the importance of the fetus' acoustic intake, it is only few of them who actually realize their role in that or act to that end. The activities that these mothers employ are mostly singing and exposing the baby to recorded music. It seems that older siblings do make a difference to the amount of musical stimulation available.

Interesting are the findings concerning what mothers report on fathers. According to these, fathers' participation in the reinforcement of the fetus acoustic intake, involves talking to the baby in a vast majority of cases and much less singing or listening to recorded music. A considerable number of fathers do not get involved at all in any process for enriching the unborn baby's acoustic environment. The degree of fathers' information on the importance of the fetus' acoustic intake is also reported by mothers to be much lower than that which they report for themselves. The above findings may be indicative of fathers being less informed and involved with the unborn baby, which however could be a natural consequence of the fact

that it is the mother who carries and feels the baby into her body, and therefore the fetus' senses are mostly turned to the mother (Righetti, 1996). It will be interesting however to investigate whether the above findings for fathers hold true, when fathers are asked directly to talk for themselves.

What is of interest also, is the fact that the frequency with which mothers sing to their babies is impressively increased from the prenatal to the postnatal period. This is probably due to the fact that after the baby is born, singing is used to accompany the baby's daily routines, such as putting the baby to sleep, diaper change, feeding, bathing and playing with the baby, through lullabies, games, giggles, etc.) (Barrett, 2009; Bergeson & Trehub, 1999; Custodero, 2006; Custodero, Britto, & Xin, 2002; Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; Dionyssiou, 2009; Mehr, 2014). Findings of the present study verify previous research findings according to which most mothers sing to their babies and/or put on recorded music for the baby for listening and distressing. The utmost importance of such activities, not only for accompanying the baby's daily routines but also for the emotional exchange and feelings of security and calmness created for the baby, are underlined by a plethora of research studies (Barrett, 2009, Dionyssiou, 2009; Custodero, Britto, & Xin, 2002, Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003, Custodero, 2006; Ilari, Moura, & Bourscheidt, 2011).

The mother's music preferences are the basic criterion for what she chooses to sing to/for the baby or what she chooses to listen to/expose the baby to, both in the prenatal and postnatal period. This finding has important implications for the music which is chosen by researchers when they intend to investigate the influence of music on the relationship between parent and child, in home, educational or music therapy settings or on other factors involved in family situations. Music chosen by the parent based on her/his own mood and preference, may hold significant emotional power and may, therefore, function with greater efficacy towards specific ends. The fact that mothers of the present study use singing to their babies vastly more than they use talking to the baby, is probably an indication that mothers, instinctively or not, are aware of the power of their singing to their little ones.

The limitations of the study included the relatively small sample, the nature of the questionnaire as a research instrument and its limited capabilities for revealing the essence of parental views and actions concerning the reinforcement of the fetus' and baby's acoustic environment. Future research studies employing larger samples and additional research instruments, such as in-depth interviews as well as observational tools, may significantly add to this body of research and allow for verification of findings and greater generalizability.

Findings of the present study have several implications for the role of carers, gynecologists and, early childhood and music educators as advocates of the importance of the baby's prenatal and postnatal acoustic/music

stimulation for the child's growth. Such findings may lead to several ideas for the development and implementation of music programmes for the unborn and newly born baby, as well as the development and implementation of parental education programmes on music, which take into account the educational, social and emotional aspects of the parental role (Pitt, 2011), so that better 'soundscapes' are created around the unborn and born babies and better conditions for growth.

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# Musical experiences in the play of a 16-month-old child

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## Abstract

This small study was undertaken as part of an MA in Early Childhood Music Education. A case study of a 16-month-old child's musical experiences through play in the home, it is informed by theoretical perspectives on child development and learning, musical learning and musical childhoods. The data were gathered through naturalistic observations of the child in his home and recorded in the form of video snapshots in time. Information about the child's background was gained through a short conversation with his parents. Of the video taken over five visits with the family, three short vignettes were chosen for analysis. These vignettes were then transcribed as illustrative detailed descriptions. Vignette 1 examines the affordances of sound makers and how these influence a child's music making. Vignette 2 considers the aural and physical environment and the role recorded music can play in affect regulation. Vignette 3 shows an episode with a musical toy and discusses the affordances of such toys, their capacity for multimodal use, and their role in parent-child interaction. The study identified implications for practice, some of the limitations of working in the home, and areas of interest for future research.

## Keywords

Musical childhoods, parents, play, affect regulation, technology, interaction,

## Introduction

This small-scale, qualitative case study investigated the musical experiences in the play of a 16-month-old child, George.

Research with young children has more usually been focused on laboratory studies with younger infants or studies in nursery settings with children from three years old and accordingly there is less research with children of George's age. This study aims to make a small contribution to the research on music in daily life (see, for example, Young and Gillen, 2007 and Young, 2008).

George's parents are Lola and Joe. George attends nursery Monday to Wednesday and is at home with Joe on Thursdays and Lola on Fridays. George's mobility has developed rapidly over the last few months and the family increasingly spend time in the park and the garden where George can enjoy the space and permission to move around. They still attend certain parent and child classes, including a music group that Lola takes George to on Fridays. Musical toys as well as drums and a recorder are available to George at home. The radio is often on at home and in the car, usually BBC Radio 1 or BBC Radio 2.

This paper is based on an assignment carried out as part an MA in Early Childhood Music Education and includes some selected perspectives from the original paper.

## **Research design**

The data were collected through naturalistic observations of the child in his home over five visits in the spring of 2016 and recorded in video form. The footage collected was edited and three short vignettes selected for analysis. These vignettes were then transcribed as illustrative detailed descriptions.

The video was recorded on a mobile phone. George is used to adults in his home using mobile phones and it was hoped this would minimise any tendency to 'perform' for the camera, compared with a video camera. An additional consideration was whether George's parents might try to set up specific musical situations in the home and it was made clear to them this was neither necessary nor desirable for the study. George was too young to sign a consent form and so the written consent of his parents was gained. George's body language and facial expressions were monitored throughout however for indications of his ongoing assent or signs of distress. See Street (2007) for an exploration of ethical issues and the rights of young children in research in naturalistic settings.

All names have been changed to protect the family's identity.

### **Vignette 1**

*George is sitting on the floor holding a spoon in his left hand. He puts it inside the cup next to him and strikes the base eight times. He looks inside the cup and strikes again six times. He picks up the cup and tries to drink from it. The spoon falls out. He puts it back inside and strikes eight more times, this time moving the spoon between two opposite sides of the inside of the cup. He makes a scooping motion and puts the spoon in his mouth. He hits the floor with the spoon 10 times singing 'da da' with the first two strikes, the two notes at the same pitch. He lifts the cup to his mouth and sings an open vowel sound. Holding the spoon between thumb and index finger he returns it to the cup, singing 'mmm' through a rising interval and striking the back of the spoon against the inner surface of the cup, this time with a wiping, slightly swinging motion. He places his hands on the floor and sings another rising vowel sound. He kicks his right leg three times to shuffle forward towards the step and sings 'eek eek eek'. He positions himself on the step singing 'mm-mm', the second note slightly lower than the first, then repeats this while he stands up and walks off towards the bin.*

A Piagetian view of George's play points to the sensorimotor, exploratory nature of his striking gestures (Pound, 2012) and musical developmental models such as the Spiral of Musical Development (Swanwick & Tillman, 1986) have also pointed to the sensory, experimental nature of music-making in children of this age. The sensorimotor moments in George's play seem to

alternate with units of pretend play, solitary play (Parten, 1932 cited in Tarnowski, 1999) or object play (Hughes & Melville, 2002). Marsh and Young (2006) however argue that such categories of play do not recognise the social aspects or real-life contexts of play and that far from being random and exploratory, children's music-making is complex and structured.

In a study with older children in a preschool, Young (2003) showed how structures in space relating to instrumental affordances and structures in time work generatively and organizationally in young children's music-making. One such structure of time is clustering (Young, 2003, p. 54), where identical movements are repeated in a group followed by a pause, characteristically four to ten repetitions; such a pattern provides a fitting description of George's rhythmic groupings. With regards to space and the shape of the cup, George's initial striking motif with the spoon reoccurs, now moving back and forth in a straight line between the opposite faces of the inside of the cup, and then another time, going back & forth by swinging around the curve of the cup and wiping the inner surface. In this way the motif is transformed, creating a sequence. Does the swinging action dictate the pathway round the curve of the cup or does following that pathway give rise to the swinging action? In this particular example they seem inextricably linked.

Young (2012) also suggests that the physical environment gives structure to children's music and George incorporates other parts of his physical environment into his music-making, striking the floor and later the washing machine. For the adults of the house, only the soles of their feet are in contact with the floor; George however spends much time lying and sitting on the floor, it is much closer to him, and features more in his field of vision. After the clip finished, George extended his striking motif further, using the spoon in the larger circular space of the washing machine drum in what could be interpreted as a sound-gesture transfer (Delalande & Cornara, 2010) or potential schema (Pound, 2012)

## **Vignette 2**

*It is morning and the family are preparing to leave for a holiday. Lola tells me that George 'has been a bit fractious today'. They are in the kitchen and George starts slamming a cupboard door. Lola puts a song on. When George hears the music he turns his face away from the cupboard, listens and starts to bounce, bending his legs with his left arm out in front of him. He looks at Lola, who asks 'are you having a boogie?' in an encouraging tone. He lifts his left arm higher and continues to bounce, legs and arm moving together. He claps his hands together then returns his left arm to the air. He bounces for a few bars before again clapping his hands together then returning his left arm to the air. He starts to rock from left to right and then moves to the other side of the kitchen. Here he puts his left arm in the air again and tilts from left to right. He pauses to look at another adult in the room, a friend of his parents, who is watching and smiling. He lifts his arm*

*back up, and rocks again. He approaches the other adult and then returns to his space. He turns to look at me and then at Lola. He walks towards the door, pauses and rocks back and forth for a few seconds, before turning back into the kitchen.*

Music had been playing all morning via an online streaming service; Lola deliberately selected this song and she told me afterwards that it is a song that Joe loves and which he has danced to with George since he was born. In choosing this song deliberately to try to change George's mood, we see how Lola uses the recorded music as a form of affect regulation. Much of the research on the use of music for affect regulation in infants has focused on parental singing (See Dissanayake, 2000, Trehub, 2004; and Trevarthen, 1999). The predetermined nature of recorded music of course limits opportunities for the parent-child dyad to dictate the pace of turn-taking and for the sonic content to be shaped in response to the infant, but other factors mentioned by Trehub, Ghazban, and Corbeil (2015) as being important in affect regulation, such as moving, smiling and touching need not be precluded when using recorded music.

Young and Gillen (2007) describe different levels of involvement by family members in listening to recorded music as parents guide and support their children's participation. In George's family, Joe has previously supported George's participation by dancing with him in his arms, and now that George is older and dances independently, Lola continues to support his participation by noticing his dancing and commenting on it encouragingly. The music may also act as a form of affect regulation for Lola herself, possibly relaxing her to see George happy or reminding her of meaningful moments for her family.

George moves through the room, alternating between dancing on the spot and walking to a new place. This pattern concludes when he reaches the end of the kitchen at the start of the hallway. Here, instead of continuing on the same trajectory, he turns back into the kitchen. Hancock and Gillen (2007) in their study of two-and-a-half-year-old girls in the home found that the shape and quality of space elicited different movements from children. The hallway here is darker, narrower, a transitional space and perhaps is not as attractive an option to George for dancing.

### **Vignette 3**

*George is sitting on Lola's lap while she talks to a friend. He is playing with a toy with a number of buttons, each of which plays a different animal noise. He presses the 'wolf' button and hearing the howl that is played, copies it with his voice, lifting his right arm as he does so. This gains Lola's attention and she asks 'Did you do the wolf noise? Can you do it again?', pressing the button for him. He copies the sound again, this time lifting the toy into the air with both hands as he does it. Lola laughs and imitates him, and so George presses the button again, making his own sound immediately rather than*

waiting for the toy to finish its sound first. Lola presses more of the buttons. When she presses the duck sound, George lifts his arm into the air and starts to sing a falling melodic pattern, two long notes during which he holds his hand in the air and three short notes accompanied by waves of his arm. Lola presses more of the buttons. When she presses the dog button George replies with a 'he he he', bouncing himself on each sound he makes. Lola presses the wolf button and again George replies with a howl, this time lifting his left arm into the air. Lola comments that she thinks the arm action is George's representation of an elephant. They press more buttons. On pressing the lion button, Lola comments 'that one's from Row, Row, Row, Your Boat. Do you want to do Row, Row, Row?'. George replies by singing three long notes, vowel sounds with a soft 'r' at the beginning, the melody falling in pitch over the three notes. Lola sings Row, Row, Row, and George turns to face her on the last line. She sings a second verse, and after the final words 'don't forget to roar' plays the lion sound from the toy and makes a roaring sound herself, to which George turns and laughs. She starts a third verse. On the second line George turns to look at her, smiling. After the words 'don't forget to squeak' she presses the mouse button and makes a squeaking sound, moving her face towards his neck. She sings another verse, this time with the final word 'shiver'. She wraps her arm round him, making a shivering motion that shakes them both.

Lola's view was that George had listened to the howling wolf sound and, as the two sounds have similar contours, interpreted it as an elephant's trumpeting, George's arm movement representing the elephant's trunk. She noted that George had recently seen an elephant statue in a shop and made the same noise and gesture. George's interpretation of the wolf howl as an elephant trumpet may also be related to the sound quality of the toy. Young and Gillen note the prevalence of "anodyne, thin, neutral timbres" (2007, p.24) in toys and the lack of a distinctive timbre may make this sound more open to interpretation.

In a study on the affordances of early childhood technological activities Carr (2000) suggests three factors: transparency, challenge, and accessibility, the last of which refers to the toy's potential for social participation and collaboration. An initial reading might suggest this toy's accessibility is low; only one person can press a button and only one button can be pressed at a time. Social participation in technology-enhanced toys is a matter of some debate and Young (2007) notes the polarization of opinion regarding childhood use of technology.

Bergen et al. (2010) suggest that play with technology-enhanced toys in fact presents favourable conditions for adults to scaffold language, as the context is one of the child's interests. Tamis-LeMonda, Kuchirko, and Tafuro (2013) propose that in a dyadic process of object exploration parents are more likely to use referential than regulatory language, providing the input multimodally to facilitate word learning. In naming the various animals, Lola

provides referential language input and this is indeed presented multimodally, including also sound, facial expression and gesture.

Young and Gillen (2007) suggest that technology-enhanced toys do not displace parents' musical participation with their children but supplement it. This toy encourages Lola and George's object exploration and shared attention and inspires their musical participation; the lion sound acts as a trigger, a reminder of a song they have shared together. Lola asks George if he wants to sing it and he responds positively by singing the song.

Each verse of Row, Row, Row is melodically identical, the repetition of verses creating a sense of expectation. Dissanayake (2012) describes how as infants get older they enjoy fun, silliness and divergence from expectation; in this song the divergence, and therein the fun, comes from the lyrical substitutions of place (shore, river and so on) animal (lion, mouse and so on), and accompanying noise. These noises represent the climax of each verse, in contrast with the original 'life is but a dream' verse which ends with a *dimuendo* and/or *rallentando*, more in line with Papoušek's (1996) description of common structural features of early interactional games.

The multimodality of these interactional games is important as it allows for songs to be repeated or varied depending on the infant's signals of interest (Papoušek, 1996) and for non-verbal participants to contribute to the building up of an interaction (Fantasia et al., 2014). As Lola sings she also makes eye contact with George, strokes his hair and kisses him, and creates actions to represent the different animals. Each verse includes more physical contact than the last, starting with just singing the first verse, then adding the sound effect in the second verse, adding an 'eeek' and nuzzling George's neck in the third verse, and in the fourth verse adding a shivering sound and enveloping George in the hug it appears the song has been working towards.

## **Conclusion**

The study presented some methodological challenges. Some of the more interesting episodes were captured when George was left to play freely without any adult encouragement; these most frequently occurred when the adults were distracted and engaged in conversation, though this made those same videos difficult to use as the conversation obscured the audio recording of George's music.

In vignette 2, George turns around to face each of the adults in the open kitchen space; I would tentatively suggest that he may have been seeking or expecting some further interaction from one of them and that had this been forthcoming he may have demonstrated more extended engagement. It is possible that my presence was a factor in why this didn't happen; perhaps Lola felt unable to intrude on what was being recorded or had unconsciously also taken on a role as 'observer'.

Despite these challenges this study has provided an opportunity to examine the rich and varied musical world in which George lives. His music-making is structurally complex, he listens to a range of music for which he has tastes and preferences, and spends time with adults in musical interactions where he is an active agent.

An understanding of these competencies and experiences is important for practice with such young children. The song to which George dances is perhaps not one that might be typically considered 'music for children' but it has a special meaning for Joe and for George who, through his smiles and dancing and apparent change in mood, seems to enjoy the song. On the basis of his play with the cup and washing machine George's interests could lead him to, for example, find new ways of playing with a drum that exploit its internal cylindrical space; ways of playing which would risk being extinguished by a focus on an adult-constructed 'correct' way to play the drum.

From this study a number of areas emerge where further research would be of interest, particularly around the effect of developments in technology on musical life in the home and more specifically how musical affect regulation works beyond parental singing and what the role of recorded music is in that, and how technological devices play a role in participation in parent-child interactions.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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# Musical creativity in Israel's "junkyard" playgrounds

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## Abstract

Children's spontaneous music making is said to be a central, driving force of their play, filled with an expressive mixture of known and invented material. Yet, preliminary observations of children's play in Israel revealed surprisingly few examples of creative musical expression, despite their playful and musically rich culture. The aim of this study was to formally investigate young children's musical experiences and music making in Israel, thereby expanding, and providing validity for these preliminary data. Thirty locations were purposively selected for maximum variation. Settings included ten public spaces (such as the zoo, parks, malls, bookstores, and museums), ten private preschool/kindergartens (indoor and outdoor play spaces), and ten playgrounds (modern, old, sand-based, water-based, and "Junkyard"). Observed participants ranged in age from approximately 2-6 years and included religious and secular, Hebrew and Arab-speaking populations. Interviews with teachers and local residents, as well as ethnographic field notes were compiled and analyzed for recurrent themes.

Results reveal that classroom and music teachers used CDs as a primary tool for musical instruction and engagement. Teachers rarely sang to students. Children's spontaneous music making existed primarily in short blips and bursts of known material, with very few examples of introverted, free-flowing, creative songs. Surprisingly, however, the "Junkyard" playgrounds on *kibbutz* preschools provided an exception to these findings. In the "Junkyard," real-life, discarded materials such as broken microwaves, radios, cribs, tires, and dishwashers provide a playscape, wherein children create their own microworlds according to a democratic decision-making process. Creative play and inventive, introverted free-flowing music flourished in these settings.

Several conclusions emerged from these findings. Since children's music making is a reflection of local cultural norms, teachers must nurture children's propensity to invent songs, rather than rely solely on recordings. Furthermore, the clear influence that playground structure and materials have on children's spontaneous music making calls into question the use of "toys" versus "real-life" objects (including "toy" instruments versus "real" instruments) for children's use. Lastly, it is suggested that creativity in children's music making is strengthened when children are given agency to co-construct their play space.

## Keywords

spontaneous music; playground construction; creativity; musical agency

## Introduction

The ever-growing body of research on young children's spontaneous music making demonstrates the importance of their musical expressions as a vital, central aspect of their playful world (for example, Custodero, Chen & Lee, 2006; Custodero, Cali & Diaz-Donoso, 2016; Gluschankof, 2005 & 2011; Littleton, 1991; Pond, 1992; Marsh, 2008; Young, 2002, 2005). I was therefore surprised, when I began observing young children in Israel, at what seemed to be a very limited display of spontaneous music making. Questions regarding Israeli children's ability to create spontaneous music seemed irrelevant—creativity, playfulness, and self-expression being strong traits of Israeli children and Israeli culture in general. My instinct was to avoid the question of *why* young children in Israel might exhibit little spontaneous

musical expression, and instead ask *where* and under what circumstances their spontaneous music flourished.

## **Background**

From home and classroom settings, to public spaces, how children are influenced by their school and local cultures, and how they conceptualize issues in their world, can be gleaned by looking at their play (Boehm & Weinberg, 1997). As Bowman (2004) so eloquently stated, children's music making is a cultural embodiment of their play—a way for them to fully experience their world. Campbell's (2010) highly regarded research on children's spontaneous music making in American schools highlights the personally meaningful and vital nature of their musical expressions. The feeling of timelessness that allows children's playful music making to flourish is largely influenced by the boundaries and rules that adults impose (or refrain from imposing) on children (Zur, 2007). As Young (2009) explains, certain environments more naturally elicit spontaneous music making than others. Harmer's (2011) study of children's music making in "dens" exemplifies this—private spaces can offer children just the boundary they need to relax into free-flowing, inventive music making.

Access to these types of private spaces, however, is not a given in many early childhood settings. In American schools, for example, the trend towards over-protectiveness in the last half century, alongside threats of litigation have led schools and communities to adhere to tidy, safe, open spaces using standardized materials (Solomon, 2005). Speaking specifically of playgrounds, Solomon explains that, "Today's playgrounds guide kids in how to perform and leave little room for fantasy or spontaneity." (p. 207). She describes modern plastic playground structures as "...overly safe and terminally boring..." (p. 210).

Though playgrounds are clearly not the only place where children might spontaneously sing, dance, chant, or hum, they certainly offer compelling glimpses into environmental influences on spontaneous music making. In Israel, one type of play environment stood out as being unique in its design and use of materials. The "Junkyard" playgrounds on *kibbutzim* throughout Israel, have been in existence since the 1960s. Malka Haas (1996) who created and defined the "Junkyard" as a pedagogical practice, explains that the goals are for children to explore, play, create and destroy using real-life local materials with minimal supervision. Objects such as broken stoves, farm crates, hoses, fax machines, teapots, and CD players are intentionally placed in the (usually sandy) yard according to a democratic class discussion of where and how the space should be used. In contrast to indoor play spaces, where children play with toy phones, toy cribs, or toy tools, everything about the Junkyard is real. Consequently real-life objects which are usually out-of-bounds to children, allow children to enter into an adult-sphere where they are trusted to create child-centered play themes. Children's concepts of reality become intensely intertwined with their

fantasies and feelings (Haas, 1996). The teacher's role in this environment is to remain in the background, occasionally offering an idea or helping hand. Children are free to create private spaces with wood, mattresses, cloth, or other materials in the setting. Several times a year, the entire space is cleared and cleaned, and new decisions are made.



Junkyard playground in northern Israel

Upon conducting preliminary observations, the “Junkyard” seemed to offer unparalleled opportunities for creative play and spontaneous music making. Aiming to gain insight into the musical lives of children in Israel, I knew that “Junkyards” must be included among the settings in which I planned to observe. Would the quality or quantity of spontaneous music making be higher than in other settings?

### **Research questions**

Echoing Pond's (1992) research, Marsh and Young (2016) describe two basic types of spontaneous singing among young children: (1) socially communicative, short musical ideas or chants that tend to be repetitive, and (2) solitary, introverted, free-flowing songs, often on open syllables. Similarities across cultures and geographical distances have been clearly observed. In trying to determine how Israeli children's spontaneous music fit into these two seemingly universal types of expression, I designed my study based on the following questions:

1. What are the salient characteristics of children's play in Israel?
2. What types of musical gestures are seen and heard in schools, community settings, parks, and playgrounds around Israel?
3. What influences do these observed places and spaces have on children's spontaneous music making?

4. What can these findings tell us about children's musical cultures and musical needs that align with or differ from what we know from previous studies?

## **Method**

Given that children express themselves musically throughout their daily lives, as they work, play, wander, and interact (Campbell, 2010), I purposively selected settings in Israel that would allow for maximum variation. Thirty locations were chosen, included ten public spaces (such as the zoo, parks, malls, food markets, museums, and fountains), ten private preschool/kindergarten settings (indoor, outdoor, and "junkyard" play spaces), and ten playgrounds (modern, old, sand-based, and water-based). Religious and secular Jewish populations both wealthy and low-income were included, as were Israeli Arab, Christian, and Bedouin populations. Observations took place between October 2015 and May 2016. Each observation lasted between 20-40 minutes, during which time interaction with children was kept to a minimum and thick-description field notes were recorded. Care was taken during observations not to intrude (or appear intrusive) on children's natural playtime. The exception was in the Bedouin village, where being a passive observer seemed more intrusive than joining in. In this case, no field notes were written until I had left the village--I participated fully in the activities at hand, and even sang songs with the children at their request. Observations spanned across the country, including coastal and desert areas, rural and urban settings, and *kibbutzim*. In addition to these thirty observations, personal ethnographic field notes, interviews with teachers, a local child psychologist, and an Israeli member of Music without Borders contributed to the data. All field notes, observations, and interviews were subsequently typed and reviewed for emergent themes, categories, and codes. Findings were reviewed by an Israeli colleague in music education who helped in validating the results.

## **Findings**

### ***Young children's play culture in Israel***

Children in Israel seem to be treasured, prized, and celebrated. From supermarkets, to buses, religious services, and restaurants, they were rarely hushed by adults. Baskets of toys and small play areas could be found in government offices, and other "adult" settings. There seems to be a strong sentiment among adults to care for children who were not theirs and to trust other adults, even strangers, to care for their own children. This type of communal caring dates back to the earliest days of Israel's political existence, when children were reared in a socialistic manner on the *kibbutzim*.

Children's playtime seemed to be deeply valued. Though classes were large (containing up to 35 students), long play sessions with low-levels of adult supervision (demonstrating a level of trust in children's ability to play and

solve problems) existed in preschool and kindergarten settings. Their play was focused and intentional, with mostly long, uninterrupted sessions. In many instances, groups of children were seen playing in a single area on a single theme for up to 30 minutes. This was especially the case in “Junkyard” playgrounds of *kibbutzim*.

Parents seemed to highly value play as well—not only for children, but for themselves as well. They were often seen playing on the playground equipment or kicking balls around the park with each other and with their children. Both children and adults demonstrated a high propensity toward conversation and verbal communication. Skipping “small talk,” and delving into politics or life-events seemed typical. Children showed no hesitation to begin long conversations with adults, including myself (a stranger) as I attempted to passively observe within preschool settings. Children’s capacity for verbal expression was also noted by Rutkowski, Chen-Haften and Gluschkof (2002) in their cultural comparison of children’s vocal qualities in the US, China, and Israel.

### ***Music in the lives of young children in Israel***

Music appeared to be central to Israeli culture. Teachers and music teachers played CDs of children’s songs and holiday songs as a regular part of the curriculum, and were even expected to do so (M. Hefer, personal communication, May 26, 2016). In each classroom observed, a “*Rhythmica*” teacher visited weekly and taught dances and songs using recorded material. The recordings were played quite loudly, and children were encouraged to move, clap, or stomp to this music. Movement seemed to take precedence over singing. Recorded music of popular Israeli songs and holiday music could also be heard from loudspeakers in public spaces such as malls, parks, and even swimming pools. A guitar or music player often accompanied family picnics and birthday parties. Large groups of upper-school children were seen walking down the street arm-in-arm singing national songs, and groups of young children often linked arms to sing parts of popular songs. On playgrounds, parents were often seen pushing babies or toddlers on swings while singing the well-known “*Nad-ned*” song.

Though long and focused play occurred in the school settings, spontaneous musical output happened primarily in small blips and bursts. These “musickings” (Small, 2011) mainly occurred as sound effects, rhythmic chants, or as a melodic accompaniment to scenes of play. It is also worth noting that most songs consisted of known material (pop songs from the radio, holiday songs, or Israeli children’s songs). While small “blips” of humming or singing could be heard frequently, rarely did the content seem to contain the solitary, introverted, free-flowing material described by Young and Marsh (2016). Only four incidents of solitary, introverted singing or humming were observed that lasted more than a moment and that contained invented material. Interestingly, one of these four children who sang at length had just moved to Israel from the US; another was being raised by parents from Italy

and the US. Looking across the data from the 30 observations selected for this study, the settings where greater amounts of spontaneous music, and greater amounts of invented material could be heard were in the Junkyard playgrounds of *kibbutzim*, and on playground material that moved (such as swings or riding toys). The spaces where very few examples of spontaneous music could be heard were around “typical,” plastic/metal playground structures.

## Discussion

The plethora of known material that emerged in short blips and bursts clearly reflected the classroom culture, where CDs and recorded music were the primary source of adult-introduced music. Spontaneous music of the solitary, introverted and free-flowing style was seldom heard. Young (2006) reminds us, however, that researchers may not hear all the music that children produce, especially in a loud classroom. It is also possible that some children had musical soundtracks in their heads, silently accompanying them. Longer episodes of spontaneous singing were heard on swings and riding toys, reflective of Custodero, Cali, and Diaz-Donoso’s (2016) findings--being moved, rather than moving, created a natural backdrop for song. Junkyard playgrounds seemed to act as catalyst for spontaneous music making with a greater propensity towards invented, free-flowing material. The trust placed on children to create, manage, and navigate within their democratically-designed play space, was, I believe, a crucial factor in their creative play and music making. The importance of agency, along with the materials at hand, and the many nooks and crannies available for privacy, allowed children to express their inner worlds more freely.

This study was limited in that it excluded the musical and developmental influences of families in their home settings. Was recorded music used in such abundance among families? If asked, would parents report hearing spontaneous music from their children in the more private “den”-like places of their homes? Furthermore, spontaneous music in this study was documented solely according to vocal, rhythmic, or kinesthetic output. I question what qualities of spontaneous music would emerge if musical instruments had been present. Known material would likely not be replicable, and children’s inventiveness would take on other qualities. Gluschkof’s (2005) research on Arab and Jewish children as they played on small percussion instruments clearly shows culturally-influenced improvisation on a profound level.

What seems clear from this study, is that environment and agency each have a powerful impact on the qualities of children’s spontaneous music making. As we continuously search for ways to encourage musical creativity in young children, our trust in children’s ability to organize their own musically playful landscapes is crucial. Balancing risk factors against children’s need for private (and perhaps slightly risky spaces) poses a challenge that must be met head-on. Are our small, plastic “baby percussion” instruments too safe?

Too much like toys? Perhaps it is worth discussing how music educators might incorporate more “real-life” materials into our teaching? Currently in Israel, many teachers of young children have collected pots, pans, spoons, and buckets to create a “music playground” in their yards, conjuring the sentiment of the “Junkyard.” Is this enough of a shift in materials and environment to elicit quality musical inventions? Or is it adding to the noise of the large group, banging and bashing until the novelty fades? These questions invite further investigation and discussion.

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# **Singing alone or singing in companion: Co-designing lessons to support in-service early childhood teachers**

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## **Abstract**

Those involved in curriculum reform agree that curriculum development is not something done to teachers but through and within them. Thus, teachers must be involved in curriculum development whereas an ongoing professional development is necessary. Accordingly, teacher learning in schools is as important as children learning. From previous research was identified that early childhood teachers in Cyprus reported their insecurities to plan and teach music. Therefore in this research project I created space for them to co-design lessons in an attempt to identify their needs. I worked with 10 teachers designing three teaching units. While designing these units I noted areas in which they needed support. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to create understanding through collaborative conversations among early childhood teachers and music teacher educators, and the extent to which such conversations can function as professional development for those teachers. The question that guided this study was: What happens when a group of early childhood music teachers engage in collaborative professional development? In addition several sub questions guided me to narrow the focus of this research: What do the teachers need to know? Are these linked to particular contexts, skills, or materials? Do teachers believe that collaborative conversations change their music teaching practices, and if so, in what ways? Using constant comparable method I analysed the data, trying to identify patterns in in-service teachers needs. This analysis suggested two main areas for improvement a) musical abilities and knowledge, b) beliefs regarding their comfort level with teaching music as a subject. Finally, I discuss the findings by drawing implications for in-service teachers' professional development.

## **Keywords**

in-service teachers, professional development, teacher learning, early childhood music

# Constructing musical spaces on screen: Discourses of “childhood”, “music” and “childhood music” in educational television programmes for young children

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## Abstract

This paper reports on a study on television music, more specifically on the music of an educational children's programme of the 1970s. In Norway the 70s were the decade of *Lekestue*, a co-production of BBC Play School broadcast by the NRK (Norsk Rikskringkasting). These programmes were about learning in a fun way and they aimed at inspiring children to play [children's play] to learn. Musical spaces were constructed on screen so that the child audience could recreate the spaces at home.

The paper presents and discusses the diachronic and synchronic “routes” of ideologies of “childhood”, “music” and “childhood music” of *Lekestue* and the resulting musical spaces. The presentation draws on other cases from the same study: Norwegian children's radio programmes of the 1950s, *Sesam Stasjon* broadcast in the 1990s (the Norwegian co-production of the American Children's Television Workshop's *Sesame Street*), and the contemporary Junior Eurovision Song Contest, which is popular among Norwegian pre-schoolers today.

The study is based on archival research/document analysis, analysis of broadcast programmes and qualitative interviews with people who participated in the productions, on screen and behind the scenes. Discourse analysis (Potter & Wetherell) is applied in order to bring out the available interpretative repertoires of “childhood”, “music” and “childhood music” and the subject positions ascribed to the child audience, which are closely connected to the musical spaces provided.

Overall, *Lekestue* and its musical space emerge as a glocal, transcultural space of the 1970s. The ideas of “childhood”, “music” and “childhood music” behind the series at the time of its production result in a type of musical learning space on screen, which is different from the musical spaces constructed in the other programmes: The aesthetic space (1950s), a fuller and “real” musical space of a competent child (1990s), and a space of the child artist (contemporary).

## Keywords

Children's music – children's television – interpretative repertoires – children's subject positions – discourses of musical space – transculturality – music education

## Introduction

It is likely that many people “*can trace their first experiences of music and screen media back to television*” (Deaville, 2011, p. 1), and television has been a medium for children's music listening for years (cf. Lury, 2002). Nevertheless, music in children's television is rarely addressed in research, whether by popular music scholars, researchers in children's media or music education researchers. This paper reports on a study in progress, which is about the history of children's music in Norway from WWII to the present. By “children's music” here I mean music broadcast to (an imagined) child audience through radio or television. In this presentation I concentrate on

one case, Lekestue/Play School, but other cases will be drawn on for analytical purposes. The main question discussed is: What is conveyed about music in a music educational perspective? The aim is to bring out taken-for-granted thinking around “childhood”, “music” and “childhood music”, especially what kind of musical knowledge that is presented, how it is presented and what the child audience is expected to need, know and have the capacities to understand etc., i.e. how they are positioned within the discourse. Discourse analysis is applied in order to tease out the thinking in terms of interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 2007; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), which here it means ways of thinking about and presenting music in children’s programmes. These interpretative repertoires, in turn, regulate which subject positions that are made available to the children in the audience, that is, the positions from which children can think about and “do” music. The broadcast programmes are here regarded as spaces for dispersions of discourses of broadcast music for children, and it is the dispersion itself that is the principle of unity (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 105).

The study is based on archival research/document analysis, analysis of broadcast programmes and qualitative interviews with people who participated in the productions, on screen and behind the scenes. In this paper I will draw in particular on two broadcast programmes: one episode of the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation’s [NRK] Lekestue produced in 1972<sup>7</sup> and one episode of BBC’s programme Play School produced in 1979<sup>8</sup>. Both episodes are included because of their focus on sound and music. Due to the limited space of this paper, I will concentrate on Lekestue.

### **Lekestue/Play School and prominent discourses**

The children’s television series, Lekestue, produced by Grethe Høyen and later Vibeke Sæther, first aired in 1967 and was broadcast until 1980. It was based on BBC Play School (released in 1964 and running until 1988, created by Joy Whitby), and represents the beginning of edutainment television, which stresses learning in a fun way, in Norway (Hake, 2006). Lekestue was later followed by other infotainment or edutainment-oriented shows, such as Sesam Stasjon launched in the 1990s, which was a coproduction of the American Children Television Workshop’s programme series Sesame Street. Lekestue belongs to a tradition of broadcasting aimed at a child audience, starting with the radio programme Children’s Hour, broadcast first in 1924 (Dahl, 1999), and it represents a beginning shift towards a larger focus on learning skills in broadcasting for children in a Norwegian context.

A discussion of whether children’s programmes should be about entertainment or education (or both) is prominent throughout the history of NRK’s broadcasting for children. The pendulum has swung between a focus on mere entertainment, on education and their merging in the concept of edutainment. Also, what constitutes “entertainment” and “education”,

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<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, this episode is not available online.

<sup>8</sup> This episode is found here:

respectively, (i.e. how each of them looks and sounds on screen) is changing through time.

Another prominent discourse in NRK's broadcasting for children is about children's active engagement; children should be inspired to play (and learn) from the programmes. It is also stated clearly in BBC's information to the NRK that "[p]lay is the first and most important school for children and all young creatures" (Quayle, 1970). But the subject position of the active child is evident already in the 1950s, when it was voiced by Åsa Gruda Skard, who was responsible for the Children's Hour at the time (Skard, 1954). This discourse has shifted in recent years, and programmes such as the Junior Eurovision Song Contest (JESC) offers children a subject position as artist (which may or may not be considered as play like involvement), which allows (some) children to be actively engaged on screen.

### **Music in television and the constitution of space**

The close connection between visuals and the music in children's programmes (cf. Lury, 2002) makes it fruitful here to draw on previous research in popular music/music video. Berland (2000) stresses that music television transports the viewer into simulated spaces. I argue here that children's television programmes constitute a discursive space for the child audience, which regulates what is possible to think and do with music, as mentioned above.

Spatial concepts are not unfamiliar to musicians and music educators, as it is often used to describe music:

[...] it would seem to be impossible to talk about music at all without invoking spatial notions of one kind or another. Thus in discussing even the most elementary aspects of pitch organization [...] one finds it necessary to rely upon such spatially oriented oppositions as "up and down," "high and low," "small and large" (in regard to intervallic "distances"), and so on. Space, then, [...] apparently forms an inseparable part of the musical experience. (Morgan, 1980, p. 527)

The object of investigation of this paper, however, is the television space, that is, the musical space offered in and by children's television programmes. According to Lefebvre (1991), space is a complex social construction, based on values. For analytical purposes I apply here an adaptation of the triad described by Lefebvre and later developed further by Soja (1996): I will investigate the first space (the physical/perceived) in terms of artefacts in the studios; the second space (the mental/conceived space) by investigating available interpretative repertoires, as described above, which regulate the content of the television programmes; and finally, the third space (the social and lived space), which according to Soja (1996) involves several social categories. Although the important endpoint of children's television programmes is the child audience, the third space will not be explored here by applying ethnographically oriented approaches to the children's viewings of the programmes (i.e. how children in fact are involved in the television

space, c.f. Berland, 2000). The third space, the lived space, will instead be addressed as the hosts' ways of actually living in the space in the studio ("on screen").

### **The perceived, conceptualised and lived space of Lekestue/Play School of the 1970s**

The following description of the physical space of the studio is from the documents provided by the BBC for the Norwegian producers: "*There is a large cupboard, a clock, a calendar, a blackboard, book shelves, clothes pegs, windows, a useful box containing the sort of bits and pieces found in most homes and stylised furniture e.g. blocks which can be used as seats or working levels*" ("Mother & Child", p.1). The programmes themselves generally confirm this description. The British producers underscored that they would not convey that the space on screen was to be conceptualised by the viewers as someone's home, and it was therefore designed more as a school-like setting. The document further refers to a discussion of whether the lived space on screen should be inhabited by children. It was decided not to, and the main reason given was that it was not desirable to establish a sense of the on-screen as a space that the child audience was excluded from. Instead dolls and puppets are involved as conversation partners for the hosts. Big Ted, Little Ted, Jemima (the rag doll) and Humpty were included in the Norwegian co-production, but Hamble the doll was substituted for the doll Victoria, who always wore a beautiful gown.<sup>9</sup> There were two hosts at a time; one male and one female.

For children, musical instruments are important symbols of music (Campbell, 2010). Although musical instruments are generally absent from the visuals of Lekestue, music is present in several ways. For one, it clearly supports the structure of the programmes: There is an opening vignette and a closing vignette, and for other fixed segments the music functions as signals and as bridges between the segments (cf. Lissa, 1965; Tagg, 2014). Moreover, the music is used as underscore (the music playing quietly during dialogue or visual scene) and to set moods (cf. Gorbman, 1980). While the opening and closing vignettes vary slightly between the two programmes, the musical vignette introducing and supporting the clock segment is identical, and also the vignette introducing the segment with the windows. The visual artefact of the clock (used for demonstrating how to tell time) and the windows of three different shapes (through which the audience is invited to watch film segments) are important. As the visuals of the clock segment allows for the viewer to move closer and around to the clock the music is playing. The ticking sound of the clock blends in with the music and provides a clock-glockenspiel-clarinet soundscape. There are extremely close relations between the sounds/music and visuals of the clock, particularly in the Norwegian episode where the circular movements of the parts of the clock suggest that it is a music box. The music appears to originate in a source

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<sup>9</sup> For an example, see

within the narrative, and can thus be described as diegetic (Gorbman, 1980). The relationship between the visuals of the clock and the sound/music is so strong that “clock music” might eventually be elicited to the audiences’ inner ear at the mere sight of the particular clock on screen; the clock becomes a symbol of music as well as a symbol of time. The music of the windows may be described in a similar way.

Regarding the content of *Lekestue*, Hake (2006) asserts that it consisted of traditional songs, rhymes and literature. Overall, music based in classical genres and orchestral instruments forms a core in both *Play School* and *Lekestue*. More jazzy sounds are nevertheless not unusual, as featured in the opening and closing vignettes. The repertoire of children’s songs, however, varies between the respective series, and represents each of the countries’ musical traditions of children’s songs and rhymes. Some children’s songs from “abroad” are seen in *Lekestue*, for instance *Old Mac Donald had a Farm*, but generally songs and rhymes described as belonging to the treasure of Norwegian children’s music (Vestad, 2013) and pedagogical songs relating to the themes of the various programmes make up most of the repertoire performed (sung) by the hosts.

In the two particular programmes the connection between sounds of everyday artefacts and music is brought out. Ashcroft, one of the *Play School* hosts, invites the child audience to listen to the sound of pulling out a drawer from a wooden cupboard and slamming it harder back into place. She illustrates the contrasting sounds with her voice in an onomatopoeic manner. While playing on boxes, pots and pans she introduces the spatial metaphors of “high” and “low” about pitch (cf. Morgan, 1980). The philosophical question of “how did the music of the world begin?” is raised, but not given a definite answer.

Sæther and Skolmen, the hosts of *Lekestue*, provide a guessing game involving auditory discrimination by inviting children to guess the sounds of chewing crisp bread and more. The episode by BBC, however, connects the sounds of domestic items closer to music than appears in the episode by NRK. Derek Griffiths, also one of the *Play School* hosts, provides a transition from domestic sounds to music when he plays on a typewriter along with *The Typewriter music* (Anderson, 1950). Moreover, in the *Play School* episode at hand percussionist Jimmy Blades is featured, and the instruments he plays are part of the visuals. Blades tells a story about a Chinese boy, who loves to listen to the xylophone, and who plays on a xylophone made of sticks he found, which makes different sounds. Blade demonstrates this kind of wood stick instrument as an integral part of the story, underscoring verbally that the instrument was made by the young boy himself clearly intended as an inspiration for the child audience for identification and active engagement at home. Further, the story involves Blades playing “fast music” on the marimba, and he shows the audience – also integral to the story telling – how the little boy copies and plays the rhythm of the fast music with his hands on

his chest. Then Blades asserts that the little boy practices hard on the stick xylophone for a long time before he enters a competition of playing a “slow tune”. He wins the competition, receives a real xylophone as his prize, practices even more and then, finally, he is able to play a fast tune on the marimba, a tune that Blades plays on the xylophone in the studio. The Norwegian episode at hand offers a more scientific approach to music, i.e. introduce the physics of sound. Sæther plays on drinking glasses filled with water and demonstrates as well as explains verbally to the child audience about the relationship between volume and sound. The metaphors of “high” and “low” pitch are introduced as in the mentioned episode by the BBC, and the child audience is encouraged also verbally to play with sounds in a similar manner at home. In both episodes the concept of silence is introduced and the hosts invite the child audience to be quiet and listen carefully to the sounds of their surroundings.

### **Concluding remarks (preliminary)**

*“The attribution of nationality is not a simple matter in children’s television,”* Bignell argues (2011, p. 180). Regarding Lekestue it is clear that the concept has its origins in BBC Play School and, consequently, Lekestue has many of the same features as Play School, such as solid artefacts, vignettes and learning content. Children are exposed to music such as film music, as diegetic music (from the clock) and as music from real music instruments. In the BBC episode the instruments, by the invited professional percussionist Blades, become part of the lived musical space, offering the child audience through his presence, and the story, a subject position of active musicianship in another manner, i.e. to build a stick xylophone from sticks they find and practise long and hard to be able to play slow music first and then fast music. Similarly, when Sæther presents the physics of volume/sound it becomes part of the lived space in such a manner that the child audience is explicitly encouraged to try it at home, to play on glasses filled with water (carefully, so that they do not break) and make a glass orchestra. The musicianship is blended here with the subject position of a (young) scientist.

The way in which Blades conveys the story and the music educational messages resemble the style of the hosts of the 1950s of NRK’s programme Children’s Hour; it involves a warm, grandfather like tone of address, and the aesthetic aspects of experience is weighted. But its music educational message is nevertheless more advanced than in the Children’s Hour, and resembles more the learning content of the physics of sound as in Lekestue. The largest difference between the two episodes analysed here is the great musical, aesthetic and performative professionalism that guides the music making of Blades and Griffiths. By its richness the quality of the episode is lifted from ordinary educational children’s television programmes to something more. Childhood as a space of experiencing quality and aesthetics is brought out.

The fact that the programmes are so much alike points in the direction that

childhood and children's needs are understood as similar across national borders. On the other hand, the inclusion of Norwegian children's songs and literature in *Lekestue* probably has to do with serving "Norwegian" children and re-constituting "Norwegian" culture. The nation is thereby re-constituted as a "natural" category, and overall "British" and "Norwegian" childhoods, respectively, are constituted as both similar and different.

Regarding the competing discourses of broadcasting for children as education or entertainment, respectively, it is clear that *Play School* and *Lekestue* cut across this dichotomy, with their focus on playful learning. In that respect, *Lekestue* positions itself between the pre-war *Children's Hour* (with its strong argumentation that it should be purely about entertainment, because children needed to rest after schoolwork, Dahl, (1999) and *Sesam Stasjon* (designed to even out differences between privileged and less privileged children and to raise the production potential, Tønnessen, 2000).

Overall, *Lekestue* emerges as a glocal, transcultural space of the 1970s. The ideas of "childhood" as a space of active engagement and playful learning in a sense draws on and supports the best of two worlds; the child in the present and her needs for the future (i.e. as beings and becomings, James & Prout, 2007). As far as children's subject positions go, the most important offered seem to be that children are capable of doing advanced music, if they practise. The subject position of talent is downplayed; what counts is to love music and work. A similar subject position is made available for young researchers in the NRK episode, as it is conveyed that children are capable of beginning to test out and understand the physics of sound. The seriousness with which music is put out as educational content makes the 1970s programmes analysed here stand out as different from, for instance, *Sesam Stasjon* of the 1990s (see also Vestad, 2016). Moreover, the subject position as child artist available in the *Play School* episode is different from the child artist's role in the *JESC* of the 2000s, where the position of "natural talent" is more dominant. There are good reasons to ask what these subject positions, the hard working learner and the natural talent, respectively, constitute possibilities and constraints for child audiences' engagement with music. This question is left for the project's further research efforts.

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## Why evaluate the teaching materials we use?

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### Abstract

The main problem addressed in this paper is the issue of dependency that textbooks can generate with respect to certain aspects of teaching such as curricular planning, the development of didactic units and/or their sequencing, the carrying out of projects or workshops, and evaluation. Publishers provide the standard didactic guidelines, projects, programming and didactic units which teachers can use more or less intelligently. The consequent contextualization bias that this entails can be a difficult problem to overcome. Hence, the interest in understanding didactic materials and being able to choose them with knowledge of what they can contribute to our teaching strategy.

On the one hand, we analyze the methodological formulation of published materials. We aim to find out if the materials that we use offer varied teaching strategies, if they are based on active musical methodologies, and so on. Here we analyze the learning process with respect to external determiners (specific goals, challenges, feedback or distractions) and internal determiners (the relationship between skills and the opportunity to develop them, concentration or distraction of the resource itself and its ability to lead us to an optimal learning state). We wish to know the difficulties or facilitating aspects of the curricular planning, development and evaluation of textbooks.

The evaluation of teaching materials involves the analysis of the final product; a didactic program which is usually subject to a curriculum established by the competent government. In general terms, evaluation guidelines for didactic materials are rare. A program for evaluating material provides an evaluation of the strengths and limitations of the educational system and its teachers.

Implications include the publishing market, economic interests and proposals of the majority publishers represent a matter of little scientific study, although they have an important influence on the selection and use of music and teaching materials.

The knowledge, use and evaluation of teaching and music materials is directly related to teacher training. The type of material used in music is conditioned by the teachers' professionalism in their choice ability.

### Keywords

music teaching materials, evaluation, knowledge

### Theoretical framework

There has been a proliferation of didactic<sup>10</sup> and music materials by educational, literary and cultural publishers over the last 25 to 30 years in Spain. Furthermore, the materials published by education companies have the largest share of the education market and, therefore, are used by the largest number of schools. These materials are used by 70% of music teachers for students between 6 and 12 years of age (Gillanders, 2011) and 49% of preschool teachers who teach music lessons for children between 3 and 6 years of age (Rodríguez and Vicente, R. M., 2015) in Galicia (Autonomous Community of Spain). There is less use of finished published materials (print or

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<sup>10</sup> Didactic material: Teaching material, for the use of knowledge and learning a subject or content. In this sense, it refers to those edited materials and those created for educating, for profit or not.

digital) in preschool than in later stages, but the use of these materials is growing. Nevertheless, the study of these didactic materials seems to be of little interest to the teachers who use them. One of the reasons may be that materials are seen as being ephemeral, changing, boring and undervalued. Several of the authors who have studied the foundations, structure and purpose of textbooks are convinced that this artifact or mediator of knowledge is what finally prescribes and closes curricular content in the classroom. In recent decades, the research on didactic materials for music has become increasingly interesting. In part, this is due to the increased production of this resource and the subsequent interest in its scientific analysis. There are numerous examples in Spain (Paredes, 1998; Romero, 2003; Pérez and Malagarriga, 2010).

Certain studies stand out, such as García and Arredondo (2006 and 2007), which reveal that art curriculum materials (music) are based on a technical-professional paradigm, literacy learning and exclusively musical abilities; furthermore, they portray an impoverished, distorted and unrealistic image of traditional music. The ideological nature of textbooks has been studied by many specialists such as Parcerisa (1996; 2001), Cantarero (2000; 2001) and Martínez (1991; 2003) who pointed out a centralist national bias as well as Eurocentric, racist, homophobic, mono-linguist, anthropocentric, anti-rural and pro-industrialist views.

At present, evaluation of school music resources is not a matter often discussed at schools. Only 31% of Galician teachers support the subject in school plans, with the least experienced teachers showing the most concern (Rodríguez and Vicente, R. M., 2015). Moreover, teachers are unaware of the mechanisms for choosing materials, so evaluation is often intuitive and teachers base their choices on their own experience, the experience of others or on publisher sales visits to schools (Rodríguez, 2009).

In any case, published material is a choice that influences teacher development, the adaptability of teaching, classroom dynamics, task enrichment and students' creative potential.

### ***Analysis of formal aspects***

In Spain, Paredes (1998), Romero (2003) and G. Vicente (2009) conducted specific research to learn about music materials for primary education. Paredes studied the formal aspects of printed materials. Romero analysed didactic and music resources, not just those in printed format. G. Vicente analysed the treatment of movement in music lessons through the contents in music textbooks. All of these authors based their analysis on the understanding of the formal aspects of textbooks.

### ***Guidelines for analysis and evaluation of materials***

The main problem is the issue of dependency that textbooks can generate with respect to certain aspects of teaching such as curricular planning, the development of didactic units and/or their sequencing, the carrying out of projects or workshops, and evaluation. Publishers provide the standard

didactic guideline, projects, programming and didactic units which teachers can use more or less intelligently. The consequent contextualization bias that this entails can be a difficult problem to overcome. Hence, the interest in understanding didactic materials and being able to choose them with knowledge of what they can contribute to our teaching strategy.

### **Materials used for analyzing**

The publishing market, economic interests and proposals by the major publishers are having an important influence on the selection and use of music and teaching materials. Some materials are examples of the songs and activities, something like songbooks edited and published by the Early Childhood Education. Other examples are materials with teaching units (didactic units) with worksheets interconnected, for rhythmic tasks, for learning conventional music, for learning to play instruments, for melodic dictations or for learning how to notate music on the music stave, for learning how to follow written music compositions, and similar materials.

The examples of materials that I have analysed are from Cyprus, Israel, Italy, Greece and Spain. They are materials for school, from major publishers from each country. They are materials designed for teaching 5 year-olds in a common class (in preschool education). The last two years I have been a researcher for MusiChild, Erasmus+ coordinated by Avra Pieridou. It was a wonderful experience for me where I was able to analyze different materials from each country to contribute to the project.

### **Practical framework**

At this point the question arises: do we reflect on the action of evaluating the didactic materials we use? This question leads to other meta-reflections: what considerations lead us to choose between one resource or another, and how can a teacher like you use a resource like this? The first consideration is usually to choose the resource that is most familiar, or, on the other hand, the one that is most novel but easy to use.

But what can we find among published music materials? It is not feasible to analyse all the didactic materials in existence, but we can work on a sample to help us learn more about the educational resources available. We started out with a sample from the most important school publishers in Spain as well as some publishers who have chosen to give an informative format to preschool music material.

Once the content of activities has been isolated, it is possible to determine the material's potential for producing optimal learning experiences (defined as *flow* by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). This author defined optimal learning experiences as a state in which people are intensely involved in what they are doing and, furthermore, find it fun to do (1990, 1997).

### **Evaluation of didactic materials**

The evaluation of teaching materials involves the analysis of the final product; a didactic program which is usually subject to a curriculum established by the

competent government. In general terms, evaluation guidelines for didactic materials are rare. In Spain we can highlight those by Parcerisa (1996; 2001) and Martinez (1991) among others.

A program for evaluating material provides an evaluation of the strengths and limitations of the educational system and its teachers. The success of the evaluation involves:

- Observing and improving what is done.
- Knowing the background, tasks and results.
- Checking the expected effects and accidental achievements.
- Determining broad and clear conclusions.

In this paper, materials are mentioned as examples that will help us to evaluate the development of optimal learning experiences. To carry out this analysis we must take into account the characteristic factors of flow such as perceived achievement, cognitive activation and affective quality.

In the second part of the study, we will delve into the evaluation of music materials and present examples to help us, as teachers, perceive the methodological, design, development and evaluation difficulties. The analysis will continue from our own line of research anchored in the analysis of teacher thought and practice for the purpose of showing didactic materials evaluation practices that are professional and well thought out. To do so, we will consider two strategies.

On the one hand, we analyze the methodological formulation of published materials. We aim to find out if the materials that we use offer varied teaching strategies, if they are based on active musical methodologies, and so on. Here we analyze the learning process with respect to external determiners (specific goals, challenges, feedback or distractions) and internal determiners (the relationship between skills and the opportunity to develop them, concentration or distraction of the resource itself and its ability to lead us to an optimal learning state).

On the other hand, we wish to know the difficulties or facilitating aspects of the curricular planning, development and evaluation of textbooks. The quality of a material must connect musical content and the tasks to be carried out. In addition, it should consider the appropriateness and viability of the resource.

This paper focuses on the analysis of conditions that affect learning success by fulfilling expectations, enabling self-control and producing well-being in the learning process.

Examples	Cyprus	Israel	Italy	Greece	Spain
Presentation	There is no context, nor does it offer a clear or dynamic strategy.	It is cared for and presents a development connected with the musical, social and historical contents of music.	It is neat and concrete. It is developed through a method.	It is contextualized through a children's story but not always interesting.	It is contextualized through a children's story but not always interesting.
Didactic sequence	It is clear and repetitive. Although unknown. It offers a unique way to accomplish the task. It presents 4 or 5 in each didactic sequence very similar to each other.	It is orderly and clear, constituting a complete work for the teacher. The variation and development of very different games is allowed depending on the group and the children.	Presents a sequence prepared and experienced through didactic work. It sets out broad and flexible objectives that allow continuous experimentation.	It presents the methodology and the way forward. The materials are based on the musical writing and the material that is presented. Does not pose the use of others.	They present a didactic sequence that is sometimes based on active methodologies but collect ideas in isolation and disconnected.
Exercises	They do not have sequencing and are offline. The relationship is that they are presented with the same characters. There is no structure. They are closed. They do not allow variations. It raises a type of exercise based on its realization on paper	They are varied. They are creative. They use a variety of support materials. They take into account the inclusion of different contents creating possibilities of exercises more than the obligation to perform all exercises.	It proposes alternatives to motivate and surprise the child and develops children's games in a concrete way.	They are not sequenced and do not establish a relationship with each other regarding the difficulty they pose, being in some cases very complicated.	The presentation is poor, it is based on musical writing exercises. It raises some to sing or to dance, always under the direction of the teacher.
Materials	It does not present a complete score. It is based on rhythmic exercises of stereotyped character, and sounds. Expositive or based on writing.	It presents scores, the use of diverse resources, the use of the body as a material proposal, etc.	It has an introduction of the method. It features sheet music and support material that can be used during classes.	It proposes the use of the score in a rather complex way for the child's age.	They are based on learning to read and write music. In some cases they pose the use of different materials.

Table 1 Examples of teaching strategies according to country

## Conclusions

Teachers are free to choose didactic and music materials, but their limited knowledge of music and curricular content development restricts their options. Moreover, the cost of materials means that didactic development is constrained to what publishers offer in their global printed materials for preschool education. Specific music materials for early childhood education tend to be reduced to certain auditory aspects and easy exercises that do not require musical instruments.

Some studies suggest the need to develop specific music materials for the preschool stage. This would help develop teachers' autonomous work and build the pedagogical foundations of their practice (Arús, 2010).

One model for analysing the music materials usually found in our schools from preschool to secondary education provides for capacity to adapt to what the teacher encounters. The examples presented here are meant to be no more than that; examples that help us to understand the scope of analysis. They are examples taken from a specific course (5-year-olds), as each teacher needs to focus on one course at a time when it comes to choosing

the materials to be used in the coming years. Also, political considerations regarding free textbooks (Spain) mean that while each school is free to choose their own printed resources, these must remain for several years, thus ensuring some stability in format and type of teaching as well as providing savings to the government. In this sense, teachers must be mindful of the resources available for addressing their working style and carrying out their teaching.

The materials chosen here have also responded to a specific interest: the desire to present textbooks published to comply with the various education laws that have regulated the regular system in recent years. We have chosen materials based on each country's educational system. The differences between them is minimal, which demonstrates that the changes produced by each education law are not significant enough to justify the extra spending on textbooks in recent years. It also shows the commercial aspect that textbooks have acquired and the poor management of educational resources which benefits large publishing companies. The observed changes are more in terms of audiovisual quality such as the materials by generalist publishers.

Textbooks and other printed materials influence our teaching style and foster different types of learning among students. Over the years, this can define the kind of teacher we become. We would like to present some final ideas that stand out in all the materials analyzed.

Firstly, we have observed the importance given to individual tasks over group tasks. Activities are proposed without regard to students, their characteristics, and much less the development of the class group.

Secondly, relevance is not given to prior skills. What children already know is assumed and no consideration is given to different capacity levels.

Furthermore, tasks are presented in an unnatural manner, regardless of what students know or want to learn about the topic.

Thirdly, the challenge posed by the activities is coincidental, the relation among activities is unclear, and only in certain conceptual tasks does there seem to be any continuity. Some activities are even disconnected from music itself or else the use made of it bears no relation to musical reality. No metacognition is posed through questions like "Why do I play music/ dance / play games? What do I play music/ dance / play games for?"

Finally, music learning is not transferred to other realities in which there is music. Most of the musical performances that are presented by the materials under analysis show only students and teachers in the classroom. The contexts in which music occurs are confined to a theatre or a classical music concert, and sometimes a pop music venue. Other contexts are absent (streets, popular feasts or even video games).

The point is not to abandon printed materials, which as other scholars have demonstrated can be a foothold for our work of teachers. Yet we must seriously consider the possibility of building our own style of teaching and learning from what we have at our disposal and carry out an enriched practice open to learning.

We must break with the traditional way of using textbooks and begin to see them as what they always should have been: a compendium of tasks and exercises to be used according to our own guide, which is none other than the didactic program we must rebuild and review each year. In this way, textbooks may really serve to complete our teaching practice and not vice versa. We must reflect on this and stop delegating our programming responsibility to published materials.

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# Researching the musical engagement of young children with Retinopathy of Prematurity

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## Abstract

There is evidence that children with Retinopathy of Prematurity (RoP) are more likely than their fully-sighted peers to show a strong interest in music, to develop rare abilities (such as 'absolute pitch'), and to teach themselves skills such as playing an instrument by ear at an early age (Ockelford and Matawa, 2010). However, beyond the anecdotal accounts of parents and teachers (for example Ockelford, 2008, 2013) little is known about the nature of the music-developmental trajectories that children with RoP take in the early years. The research reported here takes the first step towards addressing this gap in our knowledge by observing and assessing the musical development of four children with RoP (with varying degrees of visual impairment: Stages 3, 4, and 5) over a period of two years.

Data are gathered through regular visits by a music therapist who interacts musically with the children, and through videoed musical 'diaries' assembled by parents. The children are assessed using the Sounds of Intent in the Early Years music-developmental framework (Voyajolu and Ockelford, 2016), which offers quantitative and qualitative means of analysis. Parent interviews are also taken to provide further information on the children's musical interests and experiences at home. Initial analysis of the data suggests that one of the children displays levels of musical development that are broadly typical for their age, two of the children's general developmental delay is reflected in their musical development and one child is showing early signs of being able to play the keyboard 'by ear' suggesting an unusual musical precocity.

## Keywords

Retinopathy of Prematurity. Music therapy. Musical development. Premature infants

## Introduction

In the UK, approximately 54,000 infants are born prematurely each year. Of these, around two thirds are likely to develop learning difficulties and 60% have some degree of visual impairment, (although not all will need treatment). Six per cent will have severe visual impairment due to retinopathy of prematurity (Bliss, Statistics section, n.d.). Retinopathy of prematurity (RoP) can occur in babies that are born early, particularly at less than 32 weeks, or in those who have a low birth weight or where babies have needed oxygen treatment. When babies are born too early, their retinal blood vessels may not fully develop. Abnormal blood vessels can cause scar tissue, meaning the

retina detaches. This damage is known as Retinopathy of Prematurity (RoP) (Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), 2015).

Research with blind children born prematurely suggests that almost half will develop exceptional music-processing skills such as 'absolute pitch' within the first 24–36 months of life. This includes those with moderate or severe learning difficulties (Ockelford and Matawa, 2010). Other studies have also suggested a prevalence of absolute pitch in blind individuals, including children (Hamilton, Pascual-Leone & Schlaug, 2004; Welch, 1988). Wan, Wood, Reutens, & Wilson (2010) found that early-diagnosed blindness (occurring at birth and shortly afterwards) was correlated with advanced auditory perception.

Many children with visual impairment who were born premature demonstrate more than exceptional auditory processing skill. A great interest in listening to and creating sound and music during childhood, with the self-motivation to learn an instrument 'by ear' has also been documented (Baker, 2014; Ockelford & Matawa, 2010). Non-musical benefits for early years children with visual impairment have also been explored. For example, Metell (2015) investigated the role of music within communication and social development and found positive outcomes in terms of children's bonding and interaction with parents

The current project aims to build on the research by Ockelford and Matawa (2010) to further understand the musical engagement and development of children with RoP through longitudinal case studies over a period of two years.

## **Method**

### ***Design***

A longitudinal case study design with an emphasis on naturalistic observation was used to understand how each child's musical engagement has developed over time. The use of longitudinal research has been noted as an effective method when studying developmental change (Menard, 2002), in particular to provide a glimpse into children's ever changing daily experiences (Green & Hill, 2006). Observing children in their natural environment has also been suggested to provide valuable insight into children's development (Greene & Hogan, 2006). Dunn (2006) writes of the importance of observation in terms of understanding children's behaviour within their relationships and states: 'If we are to document the salient influences on children's development, we need to know not only how they respond to standardized experimental procedures or situations, but what happened to children in their family and school lives' (p. 87).

Observations for this project have been taken by a music therapist who visited each child and their family at home four times a year. During visits the music therapist interacted musically with the children, their parents and

siblings when present. The children's musical activity was captured through video, with the aim of observing and subsequently gauging the musical engagement and development of each child. Families were encouraged to use music with their children in between visits and capture moments of musical engagement through video, whether with their immediate family, including parents, siblings, grandparents, or family friends.

Video observations of the children were collected by parents with the use of the EthOS app (ethnographic observation system), which allows video, audio and photographic data to be taken with a smart phone or tablet and sent directly to a secure cloud database. The music therapist collected video on a designated project tablet using the EthOS app as well, allowing all video to be stored and analysed in a central and secure database.

## **Participants**

Four families were recruited in year one by liaising with charitable organisations that work with families of children who are born prematurely, through e-flyers and online media, and through contacts with hospitals and medical professionals. One family dropped out of the study in the first year, with two new families being recruited in the second year. Data have therefore been collected on six children overall. However, in this paper, data from four of the children from year one will be discussed.

Of these four children, one child was born at 23 weeks' gestation with stage 4-5 RoP, one at 24 weeks' gestation with stage 3 RoP, one at 24 weeks' gestation with stage 4 RoP, and at 27 weeks' gestation with APROP (Aggressive Posterior RoP). At the start of the project in 2015 two of the children were 24 months of age and two of the children were 36 months.

## **Analysis**

### *Observations*

The Sounds of Intent in the Early Years (Sol EY) framework of musical development has been used to analyse observations and map the children's musical engagement over time (Ockelford & Voyajolu, 2016; Voyajolu & Ockelford, 2016). In summary, the Sol-EY framework sets out six levels of musical development and three domains of musical engagement. The domains include reactive (listening and responding to sound and music), proactive (making sound and music alone) and interactive (making sound and music with others). Of the six levels of musical development, the four which usually occur in the early years are summarised as:

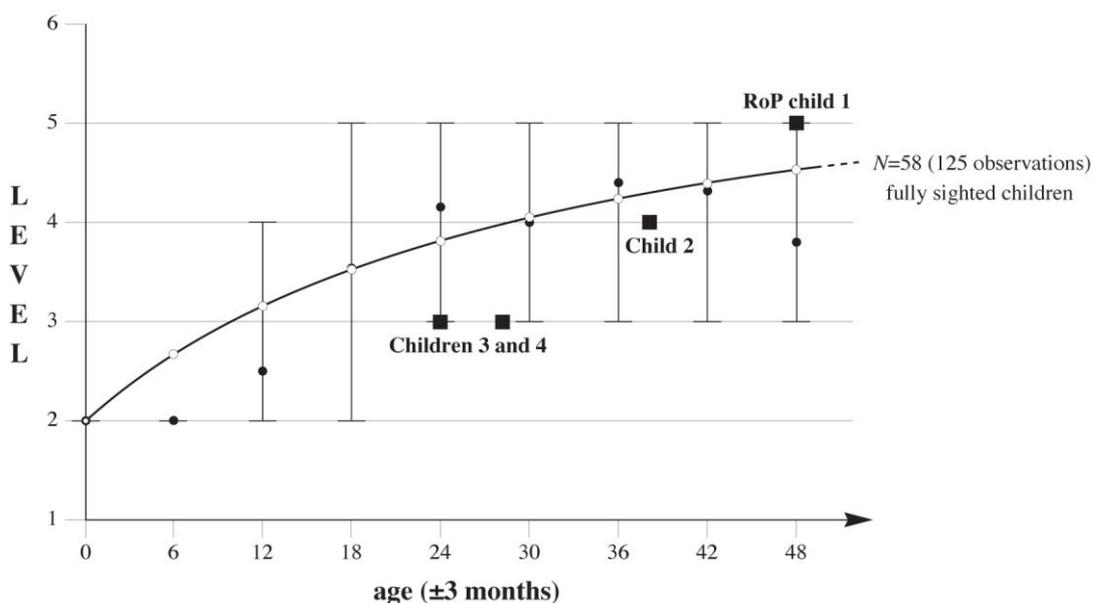
- an emerging awareness of sound and music and the diversity that is possible, and a developing awareness of a sense of agency in producing sounds
- recognising and creating patterns in sound through repetition and regularity, imitating others and enjoying being imitated
- understanding and creating groups of sound that form musical 'chunks' or melodic motifs and

- responding to and creating whole pieces that gradually become more 'in tune' and 'in time', in accordance with the child's cultural background.

Level one of the framework is a reference to the developmental level that occurs before hearing starts to work and level six refers to musical maturity, which usually occurs in adolescence. Figure 1 illustrates the Sol EY framework model, depicted as a set of concentric circles starting with level one at the innermost circle, opening outwards towards level 6.

A total of 233 observations of four children have been collected and analysed over the first sixteen months of the project. As the project is still in its second year, further observations are being collected by both the researchers and parents and are yet to be analysed. However, the preliminary analysis shows that one child is demonstrating a level of musical development ahead of that typically demonstrated by full-sighted children. For example, he has shown early signs of being able to play the keyboard 'by ear' despite having a general developmental delay. One child remains at much the same level of musical development as would be expected of her fully-sighted peers of the same age, and two of the children's general developmental delay is reflected in their musical development. Figure 2 shows a comparison between the four children in the current study and the musical engagement of a cohort of fully-sighted children, also analysed using the Sol-EY framework (Ockelford & Voyajolu, 2016; Voyajolu & Ockelford, 2016)

Figure 1. The Sounds of Intent in the Early Years framework of musical development



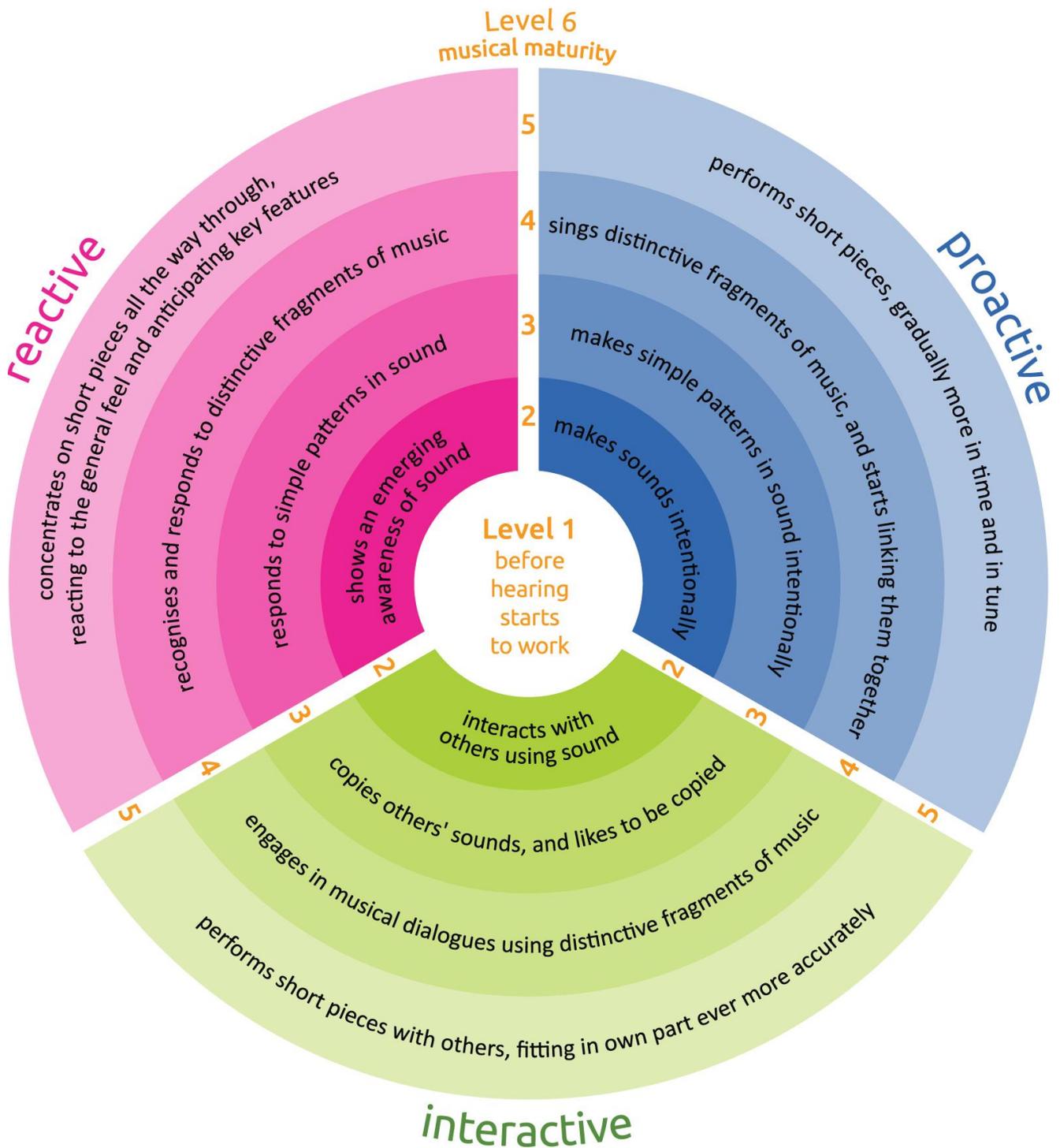


Figure 2. Comparison of neurotypical and blind children's musical development

### Parent Interviews

As well as observational evidence, during the four visits the music therapist held semi-structured interviews with parents to gain further insight into the child's musical preferences, interests, and usual activities, as well as the

parent's experience of the project. Interview questions were based on the questionnaire used in Ockelford and Matawa's 2010 study on the musicality of children with RoP. Interviews were audio recorded and are being analysed qualitatively alongside observations. Initial parent comments are included here.

#### *On the child's engagement with sound and music*

*"Every morning she comes down and the guitar is the first thing she asks for."*

*"We have never seen him so engaged for such a long-time. Usually he loses interest in activities after a few minutes. It's amazing to see how much he enjoys it."*

*"She is not interested in TV whatsoever. But she is [in] the portable DVD player. She'll ask for her music to be played... If we're at home it will be in the kitchen on the radio every morning. Otherwise if we're out and about she'll have her portable one... It's a comfort for her I feel. Because again, when we're out or she's tired or in unfamiliar surroundings she'll always opt to go to the push chair and then she'll say 'Can I have my CD player?'"*

*"Hearing is very switched on. But generally, if we're out and about, it's people's voices. If it's somebody that she hasn't heard before she'll say 'Who's that? What's that? Who are they? She's very interested in the outside world.'"*

#### *On the use of music with their child*

*"We had a few toy musical instruments lying around the house but I would have had no idea what to do with them. I'm so unmusical and the project has given me the confidence to use my own voice and to make sure I take her along to music groups and concerts now she's a bit older. Having the real instruments from you has been really good, as you can tell how they have a better sound, particularly with her having no sight."*

*"I think I would have done some singing but didn't realise the benefits and how it could help with his speech. Having the visits has been a good motivator as I've learnt that what I'm doing with him is really helpful"*

We are finding similar evidence to Ockelford and Matawa's 2010 study that children who are blind are highly engaged in listening to everyday sounds and music. Therefore, one of the key factors in the project rationale has been to encourage parents to use music confidently at home and to nurture their child's engagement.

## **Conclusion**

The data collected thus far provides a first look at the musical lives of these four children with Retinopathy of Prematurity. We see that even within this small sample, one child is showing signs of musical skill beyond that that would be typically expected in fully-sighted children of the same age, despite having a developmental delay. We have also seen, in relation to earlier studies of children who are visually impaired (Baker, 2014; Adam

Ockelford & Matawa, 2010), a high level of engagement with sound and music, which we hope has been harnessed and encouraged by the visits, and most importantly, as a consequence by the children's families.

As observational data of the children continue to be collected, future analysis will focus on their musical development over time in relation to the children's age and in comparison to their sighted peers.

Furthermore, the research team, with feedback from families, is developing a resource of musical activities based the Sol-EY framework for children with sight loss. The resource includes a set of cards, which will be paired with a website to include video and audio examples of each activity as well as downloadable versions of the cards, songs and activity suggestions

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# **The Branded Product and The Funded Project: Neoliberal policies creating musical spaces in early childhood**

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## **Abstract**

Early childhood music education presents itself as a politically neutral space, concerned only with micro worlds of practice and music in childhood and supposedly detached from the macro worlds of economic and political processes. Educators generally hold liberal ideals, but this is a weak position that fails to provide a robust critique of the political and social order and tacitly serves to maintain the status quo with its unjust power relations.

In this presentation I aim to raise awareness of the macro issues of politics, power and economics and how they operate to shape and constrain early childhood music education. I will argue that far from being neutral and detached, early childhood music education is deeply imbricated in current political structures and that the trick of neoliberal policies is to make this process invisible. Or, if the process visibly breaks surface now and then, to ensure that the 'political' appears to be simply common sense, unavoidable and uncontestable.

I build an argument drawing on two sources; writings from critical pedagogy and documents such as project reports, blogs, web-pages and policies. I will reveal how the neoliberal concepts of competition, choice, individualism and enterprise permeate early childhood music education and have resulted in a two-tier, socially divisive system, one publicly and the other privately funded. While my descriptions and discussion are rooted in the English context and neoliberal policies have a particularly entrenched position in the English system, the core argument that education is a political enterprise whether we acknowledge it or not holds for all European countries. Many of the issues and controversies will be similar across Europe, albeit played out in culturally inflected ways.

Raised awareness of the economic and political processes which shape early childhood music education will equip educators to actively critique the status quo and to argue for systems and structures that have the potential to reduce inequalities.

## **Keywords**

Early childhood music, neoliberal, politics

## **Introduction**

This paper focuses on the socio-political context in the UK and how it shapes early childhood music education. The specifics I describe arise from the relationship between political ideology and early childhood music education that reflect broader trends common across the Western world. So although the topic is confined to the UK, the discussion and analysis can, I hope, provide an example which will stimulate similar considerations in other countries.

The UK political system is defined by neo-liberal ideology which, in simple terms, places value on the free market. The free market is accompanied by concepts of competition, choice and enterprise (Rose, 1999, pp141-142). As policies issued by government have shifted to privilege the free market, so

has the state cut funds for social services and increased the emphasis on individuals taking full responsibility for their own situations. The period following World War II had seen a rise in the welfare state in the UK, but since the Thatcher-Reagan era this has been gradually dismantled. No longer is poverty understood to be caused by structural inequality, or social responsibility something that is shouldered by us all, instead, poverty, inequality and all that ensues, are attributed to individuals who have, in some way, succumbed to individual weaknesses and failed.

Neoliberalism and free market principles bring privatisation. There has been a huge increase in the private provision of early childhood education in the UK, both in general childcare and education and early childhood music specifically. As Davies explains (2014), private provision introduces market-based principles and techniques to institutions that traditionally lie outside the economic market, in our case to arts and educational institutions. These institutions are remodelled according to neoliberal principles and take on certain characteristics associated with the market. Thus arts organisations and education have to 'produce' something that has a certain value, whether it is cultural artefacts, artistic activity, or educated children who will go on to serve the market as productive workers. Adopting market-place characteristics, these institutions emphasise delivery, targeting, specifying inputs and measuring outcomes: all highly rationalised, controlled processes associated with economic thinking that are couched in a matching vocabulary of production. This rational language of production has become so commonplace that we have become immune to its true meanings and implications.

Neoliberal policies have resulted in early childhood music education splitting into two main forms that I call the 'funded project' and the 'branded product'. The funded project refers to early childhood music work that is usually paid for by a charitable or other donation and is free of cost to the 'consumer'. It is typically established in the short term and usually works within the (shrinking) state sector of nurseries, children's centres and preschools. As I will explain in sections that follow, the 'funded project' is a direct outcome of market processes being extended into public institutions and of the socio-economic inequalities that result from neoliberal governance. The 'branded product' refers to the private music classes set up and run by entrepreneurial businesses and purchased by parents for their babies and small children. Private music sessions are to be found in almost every middle class area of the country taking place in locally rented spaces. The 'branded product' is a direct outcome of the increased emphasis on privatisation, competition and choice, but it is also tied in to changes in parenting. I describe each form in turn in more detail.

### **The branded product**

In the branded product early childhood music has become a tradable commodity provided by businesses ranging from the single entrepreneur to nation-wide franchises, jostling in a competitive market place. The parent becomes the customer, making choices based on her (invariably the mother)

own decisions between competing products. She is purchasing a commodity to meet the perceived needs and best interests of herself and her child. It goes without saying that the mother has no concern beyond her own family and child and the music provider no concern beyond her own business. Liberal ideals of social duty or equality of access have no place here. Entrepreneurs adhere to a business model that provides choice, efficiency and value for money, but only for those who can afford to pay. Entrepreneurs must invest where profit is most likely and so choose to invest in areas where more affluent families live. Competition, in economic theory, supposedly ensures that good provision flourishes and stimulates innovations that meet consumer demands. Private provision is volatile, however, for it is dependent on local clients for uptake of places and at the same time on reducing local competition.

Market forces supposedly ensure certain standards are maintained because poor quality provision is not purchased and therefore does not thrive. However making enough money is the first priority over and above the child's needs. A commodity product caters to parental demands and perceptions, rather than follows research-led practice. 'Research' in the form of sound-bites, usually exaggerated and reductionist claims for the benefits of music that appeal to mothers' desires may be called upon as a sales ploy, but it is unlikely that the practice is based on carefully thought-out research-informed practice. What has emerged is a large private 'for profit' sector of competing entrepreneurial businesses selling a highly commodified version of early childhood music that caters to mothers' perceptions rather than children's needs.

This opens up a debate about contemporary middle class parenting, about what mothers desire and seek from a music class for their children and, as a follow on from these debates, about their understanding of what good provision looks like. The private early childhood music class, designed for middle class mothers, is a place where a particular image of babyhood and early childhood is constructed with and for the parents. The marketing often uses brand names (monkey music, little tots, bumble bees) that present small children as cute and cuddly. The names may alternatively emphasise traditional, conventional music learning (little notes, rhythm-time, mini maestros) that carry connotations of educative value for middle class parents. The session strives to be a place of innocence and happy fun that replicates a long-standing cultural construction of early childhood as innocent, pure and natural. There is a determined effort to create an enclosed space, with cushions, light fabrics, props and small toys that is disconnected from real life in its emphasis on little furry animals, rural, nostalgia-tinged, lifestyles and elements of surprise and magic. A sentimentalized intimacy for the youngest becomes animated, 'party-style' fun for children a little older. Careful observation (of Youtube clips) reveals that parents often manipulate quite small children to participate in ways that seem to capture the notion of children being formed musically in the sessions to fit a particular image. The way the session constructs childhood and babyhood embody contemporary middle class adult desires and anxieties

for their children rather than careful thought for what young children may need or even want. From a children's rights perspective, the children are not being thought of as people with genuine needs, wants, feelings and perceptions that deserve to be met.

Co-operation and sharing between private providers does not take place, with many keeping a tight guard on their materials and methods. This pool of 'trade secrets' is their main commercial asset. The business model aims to be long term and very stable. Providers stick with the 'tried and tested' because innovation represents a business risk. Websites typically state how long the business has been operating as evidence of its durability and success.

### ***Divided provision 1***

So the 'branded product' represents one side of the neoliberal picture that encourages marketization of provision and individualism, choice and freedom for the purchaser. The poor and/or minority mother, is unlikely to have access to the 'branded product'. It will be costly and probably not take place locally within walking distance. Even if both those limitations were surmountable, the private music session is unlikely to be a comfortable experience for mothers outside the white middle class circle with its very particular model of parenting and images of childhoods that it reconstructs and sells. Poor and minority mothers living in less affluent areas are targeted by the 'funded project'.

### **The funded project**

Funded projects typically prioritise access to music for children living in areas of economic deprivation. They are short-term and temporary in contrast to the branded project above and expect 'quick returns'. They are often couched in a language of innovation and experimentation but in reality, however, because they are short-term and driven by predefined outcomes and measurable standards, can rarely take risks and tend to be cautious and unadventurous.

There is a public policy assumption that has become accepted as a truism that children who do not belong to middle class families, be they working class or minority ethnic, are at risk and need publicly funded programmes to intervene early and set them on the correct pathway. The assumption has seen a shift to a social interventionist agenda in which music provision has become deeply entangled. These children are clearly marked out in a discourse of 'deprivation', 'vulnerability' and 'disadvantage' that has become so widespread that its indiscriminate use and the way that it disguises the harsh truths of poverty with soft-edged euphemisms is not questioned.

Moreover funded projects face a serious difficulty because they are perpetually incomplete. They chase social interventionist aims that are illusive because the problems they seek to remedy are fundamentally the result of structural problems – economic and political - that never can be solved by small children attending a music group. And so the endlessly compelling and

worthy rhetoric is recycled, the introduction of new organisations, new networks and partnerships with catchy, creative titles that out-source the work, will always be chasing the moon.

At the same time the mothers are to be 'engaged' in the funded project, thus taking away from them the right to choice that they may be exercising if they do not participate. For middle class mothers, this right is assumed and presumably there is no concern as to whether these mothers engage or not, or are 'hard to reach'.

These projects cannot escape the all-pervasive public sector management that is another outcome of a belief in market processes. The projects are rationalised, adopting target setting and audit which, at core, are about efficient use of funds and returns on investment.

### **Divided provision 2**

The split system makes it difficult to have any kind of overview. Each one ignores the other as if it does not exist and both are working to different agendas, adopting different discourses, in different places, with different groups of children and different styles of practice. They have created and perpetuate a segregated, two-sided provision that reflects a deeply divided society. Both models have become part of the problem, perpetuating inequality, and *neither* is part of the solution.

The key issue here, and the main thrust of my argument, is that neoliberal principles, whether *implementing* government policy through the funded project or *reflecting* policy through the branded product are driving and shaping developments in early childhood music. These two forms of early childhood music have evolved, defined not by national professional bodies informed by academic theory and expert, artistic practitioners, nor by institutions that have the interests of the very young child at heart (as with music therapy for example) but by unregulated markets on one side and policy-controlled administrators on the other. The continuing focus in public policy on early intervention as a solution to structural inequality distracts attention from critical analysis of the real political and social situations that underpin it. It distracts attention from asking questions about the real aims and purposes of early childhood music, what babies and small children genuinely need or even want, and crucially, what they have a right to. Thus any deeply unsettling discussions or the imagining of radical solutions that might bring about genuine change are avoided.

### **Roles as defined by a neoliberal outlook**

There is a group who have thrived in the current climate. These are the administrators and managers who design, measure, produce, control and assess (Ball and Juneman, 2012). A layer and system of management has taken over that takes genuine stakeholders out of the picture and disempowers them. The disempowered include the parents and children who are 'targeted', the experienced music educators who will merely

'deliver' and the music education academics who are reduced to producing 'evidence' that is pre-specified by the policy-led project aims. The early childhood music specialist, the professional educator who often has long experience, expertise and commitment to their work, loses out. They have no choice but to become workers in either the funded project or the branded product. In both options they are employed on insecure, part-time, temporary conditions with no benefits. They must court the one who pays by moulding their practice to either the policy-led demands of the funded project or the market-led demands of the branded product. In neither situation can the early childhood music specialist, as artistic, creative, skilled musician-educator, find much freedom to work in ways that are born of their own skills, knowledge and artistry or the freedom to be responsive to the children's needs and rights.

Academics also have no place unless we become part of the regimes that measure, produce, control and assess, using our skills and knowledge to validate rather than challenge. Oppositional views are repressed in a climate where everyone is, understandably, fearful over future funding and income. Active debate is rare and when it happens may only tinker around the edges, framed by the current discourse. Deep critique and seeking of alternatives is discouraged and those who engage in it are usually side-lined and not invited to the central networks where decisions are made and money allocated. Thus any oppositional centres of practice and thought are deliberately weakened.

The managers are not truly independent either as they are dancing to the tune of policy makers or purchasers, but they are the ones in the employed posts who hold the power. They are part of the new 'knowledge economy' who strive to be innovative in devising new approaches. They are to be flexible and team orientated with a set of core, transferable skills that they adapt as they move through different 'funded projects' (or set up their franchises). Certain high profile approaches get passed on enthusiastically, superficially and without scepticism in this marketisation of new ideas. The managers are typically committed to the ideology and techniques of accountability, measurement and management and have the power to enforce them.

As Moss explains (2014) a neoliberal outlook 'depoliticizes' everyone and acts as if there were no alternative. Its approaches and principles are so taken for granted that they become invisible and we do not ask the democratic, deeper, difficult questions about aims, directions or purposes.

## **Ways forward?**

Is there a recognition of the problem, of the need for change? Is there a will? Is there a commitment for practices that have the capacity to transform? Can we find new forms of early childhood music defined not by unregulated market entrepreneurs and policy-controlled administrators, that strive to challenge the *status quo*, not reinforce it.

I suggest a multi-levelled approach. Firstly, there should be more readiness for honest, brave, open dialogue based on a genuine commitment to social

responsibility and justice. The dialogue should struggle to find a new language to articulate change, not fall into familiar discourse. From a critical theory perspective language is not a neutral conveyor but serves to construct the world in certain ways, thus the language we adopt is key. This would include debate that acknowledges the economic and political at the macro-level that shape our work, including the erosion of the welfare state and the imposition of rampant freedoms given to the market, and how they impede us all. Once a problem is understood as shared, it creates an immediate shift in perspective. There would be a genuine recognition of how class, income and cultural difference operate to mediate access to music provision and, importantly, how that disadvantages us all - in solidarity - not just some (cf. Apple, 2013, p.64). All mothers, irrespective of social position, are understood empathetically with care and respect. Debates about social class, cultural variation in parenting and child upbringing styles should draw on theoretical understandings, provided by academics who are valued as critical thinkers, not straitjacketed into being servants of technocratic processes. These theoretical accounts need to avoid the micro-level, reductionist, determinist arguments for music in the early years, or 'benefits of music' rationales, but scale up to the macro-level socio-political context. A fairer resource distribution should tackle structural inequality. In music provision this would be for long-term, stable provision accessible to poorer families and importantly provision that focuses on music process, content and pedagogy in a much more in-depth way. It continues to surprise me how the funded project has come to neglect the in-depth, detailed process of young children doing music, so focussed is it on project structure, social-interventionist aims and outcomes: likewise the branded product and its empty focus on 'what sells'. Loosen the regulation of the funded project and allow experienced, knowledgeable music educators more of a role in shaping the aims of the work according to context and in developing music-rich possibilities through content and process. This would give room for children (and mothers) themselves to voice and articulate what they need, want and have a right to, to replace the top-down, outcome-driven approaches based on interventionist assumptions that currently dominate. Fairer resource provision also provides higher pay and better employment conditions for the early childhood music specialists. Neoliberalism drives market capitalism under which inequality and children living in poverty is rising not decreasing. It favours competition not collaboration, individualism not social conscience, and excess consumption (that threatens human life on earth) not sustainability. We need to find a more socially just and responsible, less politically compliant and more genuinely democratic way forward to an equally shared and sustainable future. Is this unrealistic, 'pie in the sky' thinking? No, I don't think so. But it does call for an honest, brave scrutiny of the current situation.

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# BabySong

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## Abstract

There is a weight of evidence suggesting that babies are born with a pre-disposition to music and furthermore that they prefer listening to Infant Directed Singing than to normal speech (e.g.: Trehub 2003 & Trehub and Nakata, 2001). The BabySong Project\*, co-directed by Professors Kathy Gooch and Sacha Powell, emerged from previous Baby Room research undertaken by the team at the Research Centre for Children, Families and Communities. The project challenged what was perceived as a growing functionalism in baby care. A key aim of the BabySong project was to develop a closer, more intimate approach to interactions between practitioners and the babies in their care. During the project, we worked with local baby room practitioners to explore ways in which singing and song could be incorporated into their everyday tasks and activities with their babies. In the project, we developed a 'Spectrum of Song' to encourage practitioners to think beyond nursery rhymes and children's songs. We fostered exploration of all aspects of vocal expression and sought ways to turn a range of vocalisations - through playful, imaginative and spontaneous approaches - into 'singese' (or 'singing') opportunities, integrating them into regular interactions with their babies. We discussed the value of 'stillness', and songs to soothe as well as enliven (including vocalisations and improvisations), but noted that although lively 'play songs' seemed to be encouraged by managers, 'closeness', and 'being still' with babies could be seen as problematic in baby rooms in day-care contexts.

## Two Vignettes

Evie has just woken up in her cot. Mum comes in and leans over the cot. She greets Evie by gently singing: " Good morning, good morning, the sun is shining in the sky, good morning, good morning to you" Evie responds with obvious pleasure, stretching, squirming and waving her arms. She smiles and makes a variety of small sounds in response to her mother's singing. Mum continues to communicate, moving from song to motherese "Hello – wakey wakey beautiful girl. Did you have a good sleep? You've been awake for hours and hours and hours... "

Baby Harry is lying on his changing mat. Looking up at his dad he starts making noises. Dad responds by imitating Harry. Harry smiles in acknowledgement and tries another sound which his dad also imitates. He tries slightly different versions of the sound and each time dad copies. The exchange continues...

These are just two tiny, intimate glimpses of where 'song' is a significant medium for communication and bonding between baby and parent.

## Why Sing?

It seems that people have always sung with their babies. Every culture has its lullabies and children's songs. These get handed down through the generations, and, as with any oral tradition, get slightly altered with each sharing. They become a rich seam within the culture (Trehub 2001; Mithin

2005; Simkin 2013). Whatever the cultural differences in these songs, there are certain universals in terms of their features and characteristic. These songs are designed to aid bonding and communication, to relax and soothe babies, or to entertain and amuse them. But if we think beyond the straightforward song we see that music and musicality have a much more subtle, and significant part to play.

Babies are hyper-sensitive to the rhythms, melodies and tones of speech long before they understand the meanings of actual words. Indeed, there is a weight of evidence to show that babies much prefer listening to 'infant-directed speech' ('IDS') than to normal speech (Trehub 2001; Mithin, 2005). A characteristic of this kind of speech is the exaggerated 'ups and downs' in pitch. This form of IDS, known as 'motherese' is often accompanied by larger, exaggerated movements of the head and facial expressions.

There is also a wealth of evidence that this kind of 'musical' speech is universal practice. It happens the world over, in all cultures – no matter what the language. Indeed Chinese mothers break the rules of their tonal language in order to convey the 'tune' of motherese rather than the words. (Powell, Gooch & Werth, 2014; Bryant & Barrett 2007; Fernald, in Mithin 2005). This is not altogether surprising when we realise that babies are, it seems, predisposed to engage in the rhythmic movement of music and other regular sounds, to exhibit tempo flexibility, and demonstrate positive displays of affect towards music (Zentner & Eerola, 2010). Babies appear to be even more responsive to carers' musical interactions than to IDS, whether their carers are singing known songs, made up songs or just simply making musical sounds (Trehub, 2001). Malloch and Trevarthen (2009) coined the term "communicative musicality" to describe this kind of communication with infants.

To return to the vignettes right at the beginning of the paper, clearly Evie's mum initiated what Trevarthen calls a 'proto-conversation' - a turn-taking exchange with a non-verbal infant (Trevarthen 2002). Bergeson and Trehub (2007) show that mothers use specific signature tunes when talking to their infants. These tunes not only identify them as individuals but also identify ways of expressing emotion in particular contexts, communicating and conveying emotional messages between carer and infant without words (Zeedyk 2006; Malloch and Trevarthen 2000). Another study by Bigelow and Rochat (2006) has shown that infants, by the age of two months, have become familiar with and sensitive to their own mother's way of timing her behaviour when socially engaging with them (in Gratier & Magnier 2012).

As well as contributing crucially to an important developing relationship, this kind of interaction is seen as beneficial developmentally for the baby. It activates 'large swathes' of both sides of the brain and helps to foster language development and emotional well-being (Young 2008; Goddard Blythe, 2011). Trainor and Schimdt (2003) speculate that it may have an effect on the brain's emotive processing functions, before the development

of language skills. Mithin (2005) suggests that music has a developmental, if not evolutionary, priority over language.

If we turn our attention to the vignette of Harry now, we see that it was he who actually initiated the exchange, not his father. Each vocalization he offered was rewarded by an imitative response from his father, giving Harry a powerful sense of agency. Encouraged, Harry was motivated to repeat the exercise, creating what clearly became a highly pleasurable exchange. Gratier and Magnier (2012) make the point that infants have a strong desire to share meaningful experience. They *intend* meanings and they do so through interpersonal coordinated timing that is motivated, from birth. Gratier and Magnier (ibid) interestingly draw a parallel between the phenomenon of such rich and nuanced infant/parent communication and the processes involved in the improvisations of jazz musicians.

*“When jazz musicians feel they are playing well together, they are able to sense each other’s movements and expressions, they sense how the tempo might progress and, at the same time, they anticipate harmonic progressions and melodic lines... both infants and improvising musicians achieve a sense of belonging through the process of getting into a groove, or achieving interpersonal synchrony, which opens up spaces for co-constructed meaning and the sedimentation of dynamic cultural forms of interaction.”*

(Gratier & Magnier, 2012, pp.53-56)

By the second month, babies’ vocalizations finely match to the acoustic properties of adult speech. Parents perceive their infants to be taking part in dialogues. Just like jazz musicians, they feel they have something to ‘say’. The infant is highly motivated to communicate with close others through *“coordinated timing, emotive expression and sympathetic mirroring across sense modalities...”* (Gratier & Magnier, 2012, p48). They also cite Stern (1982) who refers to mother-infant interaction as a ‘duet and a dance’ and Condon (1982) who talks of the ‘orchestration and choreography of communicative behaviour’ (p48).

There seem to be distinct benefits too for parents and carers in this kind of communication. The importance of this was recognised by Goouch and Powell in their summary of the important Baby Room Project<sup>11</sup> (Goouch & Powell, 2015). MacKinlay & Baker in their education programme specifically looked at creating positive experiences for first-time mothers through lullaby singing. They concluded that the experience of singing enables the singer to see their babies react and respond to singing and creates a sense of empowerment and achievement (MacKinlay & Baker, 2005). In the Limerick Project, Corolan and colleagues (2012), considered the benefits of mothers singing with their babies while they were in utero, and when newly-born. This

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<sup>11</sup> Funded by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation (2009-2012)

research found that singing lullabies benefited the mothers in four distinct ways:

1. It enabled them to feel closer to their infants;
2. It developed their confidence with their babies;
3. It enabled them to make connections with others, and
4. It provided them with an additional tool for communication post-birth.

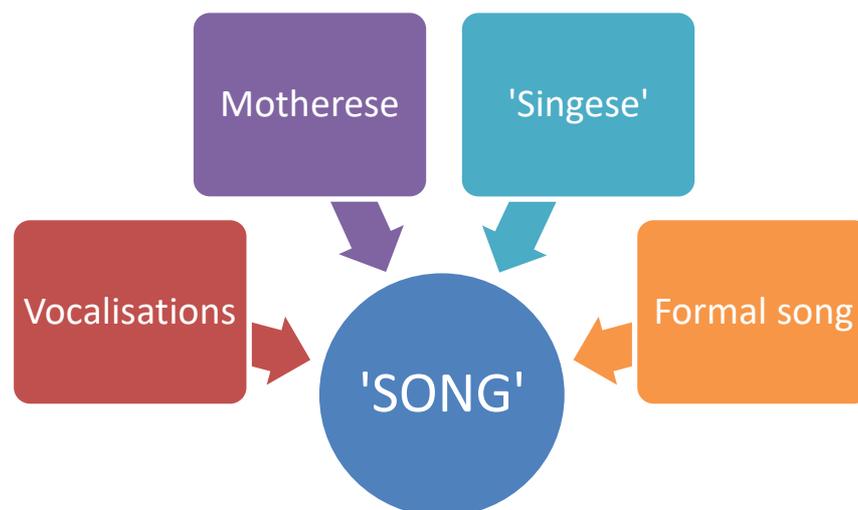
(Corolan et al. 2012)

### **The BabySong Project<sup>12</sup>**

Out of the Baby Room Project from the important Baby Room Project (2009-12) emerged a project more specifically focused on singing and song: the BabySong Project (2014-16). A key aim of the Project was to address what was perceived as a growing functionalism in baby care where the overriding goal seemed to be completion of a task – for example feeding or changing a baby's nappy. 15 nurseries from East Kent were recruited. The Project involved professional development sessions over five academic terms, and nursery visits to see the practitioner working in context and meet the managers. The Project culminated in a BabySong Conference at the Turner Contemporary Gallery in Margate. Working with these practitioners, we aimed to develop a closer, more intimate approach to everyday baby room interactions between practitioners and the babies in their care, and we saw 'song' as a crucial medium through which to achieve this.

### **The Spectrum of Vocal Utterances**

It is important to consider here what we mean by 'song'. The Spectrum of Vocal Utterances (Fig 1) illustrates that musical communication can be very broadly defined.



*Figure 1: Spectrum of Vocal Utterances*

<sup>12</sup> Funded by the Ragdoll Foundation (2014-2016)

The notion of 'Song' in this context covers a range of vocal musical utterances. These utterances or *vocalisations* do not necessarily need words – they can include any sounds that can be made with the human voice. Ordinary speech can become the musical speech of *motherese* which in turn can be manipulated into the spontaneous, extended rhythmic and melodic phrasing that characterises what Dionyssiou calls *singese* (Dionyssiou, 2009). So-called *Formal songs* - those that we learn from our culture or that we 'acquire' as finished 'products' - form an essential part of our regular repertoire too. We knew however that these were already being sung in baby rooms. What we wanted to particularly highlight were the first three components of the spectrum. We explored *vocalisations* and sought ways to turn *motherese* - through playful, imaginative and spontaneous approaches - into *singese*, integrating them into regular interactions with the babies.

A child who complains about a stone in her shoe, for example, could be distracted by a quickly improvised melodic chant: "Ooh aah! I've got a stone in my shoe, a stone in my shoe, a stone in my shoe. Oh no! I've got a stone in my shoe and I don't know what to do - ouch!!" More subtly perhaps, when a baby yawns, the downward sliding pitch of the yawn itself (a glissando) can be imitated, manipulated and 'played with' in a reciprocal way, creating a musical dialogue between practitioner and baby. In order to promote this kind of approach it is important to have a clear understanding of this; to move beyond the straightforward (though clearly important) singing of songs, to see the huge potential the human voice in terms of fostering meaningful, musical communication.

During the Project, It was clearly important not only to develop the conceptual understanding of the practitioners in this way, but also to develop the kind of confidence needed to engage in these kinds of interactions. We needed to boost the skills and confidence of the practitioners in this kind of spontaneous vocalisation and song making. We sought to do this through practical workshops. Participants were then encouraged to apply their learning in their own baby room settings.

### **Play Songs and Lullabies**

One of the key considerations during the project was choice and application of 'repertoire'. It is surprising to realise that even very young babies can have strong musical preferences. In one particularly powerful video clip, the baby unequivocally shows which song she prefers. She smiles and gurgles when her mother sings *Incy Wincy spider*. This turns to loud wails and grimaces when her mother switches to 'Lady in Red.'

([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FMPM5TqkMU&index=9&list=PLHTKyB1JN5ed5\\_L1WL6kHhHcS4aATq7g8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FMPM5TqkMU&index=9&list=PLHTKyB1JN5ed5_L1WL6kHhHcS4aATq7g8))

Infants are highly sensitive to the underlying affective message contained within songs, in terms of their *musical* content, regardless of the lyrics. Different kinds of songs produce different behavioural responses. For ease of distinction we referred to these as 'play songs' and 'lullabies'. Lullabies tend

to be slow, low-pitched and quiet, whereas play songs are more likely to be fast, high-pitched and loud (or have sharp variations in dynamics). Most important however, is the way the song is sung. We should not underestimate this last factor. In technical terms, both the tempo (or speed) of a song, and the timbre (or tone of voice) have been found to be related to specific emotional or affective messages (Tsang & Conrad, 2010). The true expressive effect of a song is highly dependent on the manner of singing: a loving tone of voice and slow tempo usually conveys soothing or comforting messages, whereas fast, clipped utterances can express excitement, fear or surprise. Another interesting distinction was made by Rock and colleagues who found that 6-month-old infants directed their attention outward and looked more often at their caregivers while listening to play songs, whereas their attention was more directed inward while listening to lullabies. (Rock et al., in Tsang & Conrad 2009).

During our Project we encountered a proliferation of 'play songs' and a dearth of 'lullabies' being regularly used by practitioners. (This echoes the findings of Powell et al., 2014). Drawing on the important principle that it was the way songs are sung, rather than the song itself, a key feature of our workshops was exploring how we could turn 'play songs' into 'lullabies' and vice versa, simply through the playful manipulation of musical dimensions such as tempo, dynamics and timbre. We encouraged the participants to 'take liberties' with the musical materials of song; to adapt them, spontaneously, to the needs of the babies and the needs of the situation.

### **BabySong in Practice**

We gathered a good deal of data from the practitioners (and also their managers) about how they were responding to the Project, how their thinking was being influenced and how this translated into practice. There was a clear suggestion of some positive developments in their baby rooms. We had noticed, for example, that the playing of commercially produced CDs of play songs and lullabies was quite prevalent. This was a practice we were trying to move away from as we felt it did not necessarily promote the kinds of intimate, bespoke, responsive interactions we were trying to foster. We urged practitioners to use unaccompanied song in all its forms. Persuaded to eschew the CD, they took particular notice of how the babies responded in a markedly different way to the unaccompanied human voice. They also found that they were listening more closely to the utterances of their babies so that they could respond by mirroring their gestures and vocalizations, or turn them into song fragments. Some practitioners made resources that would prompt and stimulate singing ideas during functional activities such as nappy changing and feeding.

The practitioners also started becoming aware of the sheer amount of noise babies were subjected to on a daily basis. After a careful listening exercise we gave them to do in their baby rooms, they realised that their nurseries were actually quite noisy places. They were keen to share some of these new insights with their managers and some changes in practice were considered

at whole staff meetings. Practitioners were challenged with the notion that there are times when 'stillness' might be desirable to enhance moments of closeness and peacefulness. Although we heard one or two 'vignettes' of stillness occurring in their baby rooms, it seems that 'closeness', and 'being still' with babies can be problematic. Participants talked about the difficulties of justifying 'stillness'; of the need to 'jolly up' and to 'look lively'. One said it was 'hard to find the moments'. There seemed to be an imperative to 'keep busy' and be seen to be so – busyness and activity apparently being an overt sign and presumption of 'hard work'. We hypothesised that opportunities to be still and quiet within these baby room cultures could in practice be compromised.

It is important to remember that practitioners (and their managers) are politically, culturally and practically 'situated'. 'You go by Ofsted most of the time' was a comment that exemplified the 'top-down' pressure felt by many of the practitioners and their managers. This gives rise to significant questions about who is legitimising pedagogies; about the culture of performativity in care settings. What counts as engagement on the part of both practitioners and babies? Are silence or stillness and opportunities for those 'special moments', realistic options in baby rooms? What opportunities are there for intimacy and closeness? Are we even allowed to use that language in the context of the nursery setting? There is much potential work to do here.

## Recommendations

So what can practitioners or parents do to capitalise on the power of singing and song in developing this kind of synchronicity? The key strategy involves awareness and alertness allowing practitioners to look for every opportunity to engage with and respond to babies in this way:

- Listen out for and **imitate** any of the baby's vocalisations. Exaggerate, repeat, make bolder. Create a 'musical dialogue'.
- **Take turns** to make up a sound - copy and 'play' with it. (change it slightly each time in a kind of '**sound ping pong**')
- **Mirror** the baby's **actions** and **add** some matching **sounds**
- **Mirror** the baby's **utterances or vocalisations** (e.g. a yawn) and **add actions** and **gestures**
- **Play** with sounds. Use an exclamation such as 'Ouch!' or 'Yippee!' or 'No!' or 'Yay!' or 'Ugh!' **Repeat** in a playful way. **Exaggerate** the pitch/volume/tempo...
- **Convert** instructions or suggestions into '**singese**' e.g.: Let's go and get some lunch; shall we change your nappy? Repeat and make into a kind of chant or chorus.
- **Manipulate and change songs** or bits of songs to create different moods e.g.:
  - **Convert songs** e.g. turn play songs into lullabies
  - **Change the song's narrative** e.g. sing very quietly or very slowly (e.g. Grand Old Duke of York to create some very weary soldiers) contrasted with loud and lively.

All this practice, whilst highly desirable is not without challenges. Its success is entirely dependent on the willingness, engagement and skills of the practitioner in the first instance. A practitioner who was, for example, reluctant to sing or experiment with their voice would be problematic (“can’t sing, won’t sing”). Having a positive attitude to singing or vocal work, and a willingness to go beyond tired repertoire are, one could argue, more important than musical skills per se. The more generic skills of observation and listening and the ability to communicate effectively with young children are much more crucial here. The practitioner needs these skills together with a confident and perceptive knowledge of the child in order to recognise opportunities for such engagement in the first place, and then to capitalise on those opportunities and ‘improvise’ together.

Having an enthusiastic, motivated, willing, skilled practitioner on its own however is not enough. Early years managers and, importantly, policy makers have to recognise and value the worth of such activities and actively promote this kind of practice, eschewing the idea of practitioner as performer. They also need to understand that such engagement does not always have to be lively and up-beat. Armed with this knowledge, we should be prepared to justify, foster and fiercely support these precious moments of musical communication.

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# ***Spoken Sessions***

## ***Part IV***

### ***Symposia***

## Symposium 1

### Who are the Practitioners in Early Childhood Music in the United Kingdom?

#### **Discussant: Alison Street**

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### **Abstract**

The practitioner in early childhood music plays a fundamental role in creating musical spaces, and yet there is no pre-requisite training required for early years music specialists in the United Kingdom, no measure of musicality or minimum standards, and studies show that practitioners are from many different backgrounds. This symposium will consist of three research papers relating to the identities, background, qualifications, training, beliefs, assumptions, and purpose of specialist and non-specialist practitioners who "music" with young children aged 0-5 years. The aim of this symposium is to collate a picture of who is making music across early childhood, including all forms of practice, and explore what this means for children and families engaging in this practice.

Paper no 1: The Big Picture: Exploring Early Childhood Music Groups: the aims, background and experience of leaders. Presented by Zoe Greenhalgh this research paper focuses on the leaders of early childhood music sessions and groups across the United Kingdom, exploring their aims, knowledge, attitudes and prior experience in relation to music and early childhood education.

Paper no 2: The Close Up: The Musical Identities of Early Childhood Music Specialists: an exploration of the contributory factors and how these identities relate to practice. Presented by Karen Eaves this paper explores the musical identities of those who specialise in supporting early musical interactions, identifying differences between personal musical identities and musical identities within educational roles.

Paper no 3: The Other Side: An Exploration of the Beliefs, Assumptions and Knowledge of Early Childhood Practitioners towards Early Childhood Music. Presented by Jane Parker, this paper examines the background, beliefs and assumptions of non-specialist early childhood practitioners in England and their musical practice.

We ask: How do these notions of identity and beliefs influence the children and families who are engaged in such practice? What implications may be drawn for training and continuous professional development?

### **Keywords**

Practitioner training, music education, musical identity, early childhood, early years

## **Symposium: Who are the Practitioners in Early Childhood Music in the United Kingdom?**

### **Exploring early childhood music groups: the aims, background and experience of leaders: The Big Picture.**

#### **Zoe Greenhalgh**

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#### **Abstract**

This research focused on the leaders of early childhood music groups for children aged 0 to 5 years and their parent/carer. Using a questionnaire qualitative and quantitative data was collected from 137 leaders from across the United Kingdom to explore their aims, knowledge, skills, attitudes and prior experience in relation to music and early childhood education. In addition to providing information about their qualifications, leaders were asked to identify their main focus; early education, enjoyment or music learning.

This study has expanded understanding of early childhood music groups and their leaders in the United Kingdom, revealing how little is known and understood about the sector and how varied it is. It has exposed the huge scale of group provision across the country and the apparent dominance of freelance, self-employed leaders. The diversity of data; aims, backgrounds, qualifications and experience made analysis complex and identifying any reliable overall trends difficult. It has made plain a lack of shared vision of what an "early childhood music group" is; there are at least three different types of group yet all of them use the same descriptor. From the outside it is often difficult to distinguish a group that is purely enjoyment based from one with early childhood music learning at its heart. In terms of those that actually aim to teach children musical skills and knowledge, some form of quality assurance and qualification framework would greatly aid consistency and quality, and raise awareness of the particular nature and requirements of being an early childhood music educator.

#### **Keywords**

Early Childhood Music; Preschool Music Groups; Preschool Music Educators; Training; Qualification

#### **Background and introduction**

Within the UK there are a huge number of people who lead early childhood music groups for babies, toddlers and preschool children accompanied by their parent/carer on a weekly basis. The providers of these groups range from individuals working independently in their local geographical area to large commercial national or international franchise and licensing organisations, professional music and arts companies, Local Authority library services, Museums and Art galleries and many others in between. Whilst many leaders are self-employed, others are employed or commissioned by other organisations or venues. As government funding for music in early childhood is not universally available, most these groups have to either be financially viable in order to generate an income or provide some other form of benefit for the provider. Many independent providers will be concerned

with providing a quality educational experience but will still need to be business minded in order to generate an income upon which to live. Others with a more commercial agenda may want to run their own business and choose children's music groups as their chosen "commodity". This is a completely unregulated sector where anyone, regardless of musical, educational or early childhood knowledge, skills or background can set up and lead music classes for young children (Young, 2007). The sector as a whole is consequently fragmented and unmapped, and is apparently also unconnected with national early years policy and the professionally accepted notions of best practice in early childhood education and settings. There is a complete lack of cross-sector cohesion which, coupled with the lack of necessary prerequisite knowledge, skills or qualifications, results in the absence of professional accountability and, anecdotal evidence suggests, a wide variation in quality. My previous study (Greenhalgh 2013) supports this view finding the aims and objectives of such groups to be diverse, and the skills, knowledge and experience of the leaders to be wide ranging and not necessarily relevant. Contrary to expectations it also became apparent that in some cases neither the aims and objectives nor the leader's knowledge and skills were related to music in spite of all groups being promoted as "Music" sessions. My previous study examined a small number of practitioners in detail. The intention with this study was to expand the sample to a large number of early childhood music group leaders and providers to gain a better understanding of the nature of the sector as a whole; the aims and motivation of the lead practitioners and what skills and understanding they possess to enable them to fulfil their role as Early Childhood Music Educators.

### ***The research questions:***

- What do the leaders of early childhood music groups (for children aged birth to 5 years and their parent/carer) aim to achieve in their work?
- Are these aims supported by the leader/practitioner's knowledge, skills, attitudes and prior experience in relation to music and/or Early Years education?

In order to address these questions a large sample from a cross-section of the population of early childhood music group leaders/providers was contacted predominantly via an electronically circulated questionnaire to gather relevant data from a variety of early childhood music practitioners in the UK from those working with large national franchises (such as Jo-Jingles, Kindermusik, Music with Mummy and Caterpillar Music for example) to independent sole-traders in the UK.

I was concerned that the questionnaire should be representative of the UK population of early childhood music leaders and practitioners rather than recruited via my personal networks and online communities. Most of the sample was therefore sourced via an online parenting organisation, "Netmums" ( ) which, among its many functions for parents, lists information about activities for children under 5 years old by geographical area. This is the way that many parents access children's

music classes in their area and so this seemed a logical place to start. The early childhood music sector is indeed large, far larger than I had ever realised! The first two of the 12 “Netmums” regions in the UK (North West and South West England) yielded over 300 individuals advertising music sessions, most of who provide multiple numbers of classes throughout their area. This is big business involving huge numbers of children and families and yet remains somehow invisible on a national scale.

In such an under researched area it is difficult to know how representative the sample is of the sector as a whole. Whilst there were many freelance and self-employed respondents, providers of music groups within arts or cultural settings such as those provided by professional orchestras, opera companies and the like as part of their education programme were not apparent. Early childhood music sessions were perhaps at the time a more recently adopted activity within these organisations and form only a small proportion of national provision. From personal experience I would also suggest that this activity is often through a project or performance style of engagement with families and young children rather than regular weekly classes.

The expected questionnaire return rate of 70 was exceeded with 137 questionnaires completed, far more than expected generating large amounts of data.

## **Findings**

### ***Nature of employment:***

The largest group by a considerable margin (58%) identified themselves as “Self Employed/ Freelance/ Sole Trader” with leaders who owned a Preschool Music Franchise or Company Licence forming the next largest group; 18% of all leaders. Approximately 775 invitations to participate were sent out by email of which it is estimated 34% fall into the Franchise/Licence Company category and yet only 17% of respondents claim to be from this group. There are two possible explanations that immediately spring to mind. One is that those who have invested money, time and effort into buying into a franchise or licence company and building up their clientele are very protective of their business. This is a highly competitive world where music group providers are vying against each other to fill their classes and be commercially successful. Any request for information or observation within these groups is likely to be treated with a great deal of suspicion as the content of the classes is copyrighted and fiercely protected from theft. The owner of one franchise that received my email request to participate did query the legitimacy of this research for these very reasons and instructed all her franchisees not to complete the questionnaire.

The major franchises are also generally very self-contained with little contact with other early childhood music group leaders. Leaders are often recruited from parents within the group and training is generally in-house. It may be that engagement with the wider sector is not seen to be a priority or particularly relevant and considered at best to be unnecessary or possibly at

worst, a threat to commercial and economic success. In the last ten years of attending a large number of early childhood music workshops, conferences and events I am not aware of ever meeting a single franchisee colleague.

### **Aims and objectives:**

Enjoyment and "Having fun" was the main objective of nearly half of the sample. Children's learning from sessions was primarily perceived to be in social skills, followed by confidence, with fun and music skills equal in third place. Communication and language was a common priority which supports the belief that song, rhyme and rhythm support language acquisition, literacy and communication skills (Young, 2007)

### **Background and training:**

While a third of respondents had qualified teacher status, nearly 40% claimed to have no experience of working with young children. 10% had no musical experience or knowledge. In general, many leaders appeared to have some qualifications or experience to support their given aim.

While many leaders indicated the importance of "teacher knowledge", surprisingly few, only 8 out of 638 responses, made any reference to the need for training of which only half suggested this should be specific to early childhood music as opposed to general music or teacher training.

### **Discussion**

The findings of the seminal EPPE study (Sylva,K. Melhuish,E. Sammons,P. Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart,B., 2012) stressed the importance of early childhood practitioners being well-trained and skilful which, as has been shown, is often not the case within early childhood music groups. Many of these leaders however do not claim to be "instructing" children but rather aim to provide a fun session, entertainment for them to enjoy with a parent and possibly do not consider music or early childhood knowledge and pedagogy to be necessary; they provide a service which parents are happy to attend with their child. In a society where young children are often seen to be subjected to too much "formal" educational practice and assessment (House, 2011) some harmless fun might be what some feel is needed. This view point may well have some validity, but harmless fun still demands leadership that is of good quality and well informed.

So, if leaders are providing sessions that are about "enjoyment and having fun", is it necessary for them have musical or early childhood experience or qualifications to support their aim? This may be a challenging question to answer and two particular thoughts come to mind. It seems that there is an issue with calling all these group music groups which clouds any clear vision of what they really are. From the outside, they are all early childhood "music" groups but in reality there are at least three different sorts of group in which the main visible commonality is likely to be music and singing. Some are "just for fun", some are about early education in general and school readiness, and the others really are about music and music learning. Perhaps

the leader's motivation for running these groups has some relationship with their level of appropriate qualifications and expertise. Highly skilled leaders who are passionate about this area of work are perhaps more likely to be aware of current notions of good practice and to develop their knowledge and skills by attending courses and events or participating in cross sector networks. Other leaders may enjoy music and working with young children and find running music groups a convenient and flexible way to earn a living that fits well into their life, where there are no standard employment procedures and they are answerable to no-one but their "customers", the parents and children who attend. Since it is the parent, not the child who decides whether or not to attend, it could be that the leader will aim to fulfil the parental expectations. Parents pay for a service and part of that service is the expert knowledge and experience of the leader whose role is to strike a balance between the fulfilment of parent/child expectations and employing informed and high quality practise models based on their own knowledge and skills of music and early childhood pedagogy.

In some situations, the leader may be employed by an organisation where the motivation is centred on people and increasing service use rather than on income generation. Early childhood music groups that are situated in Libraries, Museums and Arts Centres and venues may function as part of the organisation's marketing strategy, aiming to entice a different "audience" into their facility and encouraging them to engage with their core services again in the future by attending concerts, joining the library and so on. From this then comes the thought that if their music group is not actually about music learning, does the leader need to have any musical knowledge or skills? To some degree I would say it depends, but knowing that children learn from what and who is around them and these are all "music" groups, it is surely reasonable to expect leaders to have a reasonable level of proficiency in music and singing in the same way that they do with numeracy, literacy and spoken language. Unfortunately, music does not seem to be valued in the same way and whereas teaching a child that two add two equals five would cause great consternation, teaching children to sing incorrectly or out of tune may go unnoticed.

It is intriguing that there are many references in within the data that suggest that fun, enjoyment and energy are both necessary and important elements in Early Childhood Music groups whilst these words are rarely used in Early Childhood literature. Where they do appear, it is most commonly in relation to the role of play and play, in turn, is used in the context of children's learning. In this literature play is seen as an important process which is independent from any sense of end result or outcome not as an end in itself (Fisher, 2013, p138).

During the analysis of this data I have found this frequent opinion that music groups must be "fun", often at the exclusion of all else, highly perplexing. After hearing yet another advert on local radio for some children's activity which was dominated by assertions of how much "great fun" the children would have, I wonder if "fun" has become something of an obsession in popular culture, something that is seen to be desirable in itself, a commodity

available for purchase. Have we all become “Play Junkies” who see fun to have value while learning and experience do not? When early childhood music groups or other early childhood activities for that matter, market and describe their activities as “great fun”, are they trying to appeal to the psyche of the popular masses (“we just want to have fun”) in attracting customers with this message, thereby negating the need for a strong knowledge base to support well founded pedagogical content? Is a “fun” activity something that is not serious, a bit of “fluff” that is not related to any form of learning? This is an interesting question that would bear further investigation.

## **Conclusion**

This study has expanded what little is known about early childhood music groups and their leaders in the United Kingdom. Quite apart from responding to the specific research questions, it has exposed the huge scale of group provision across the country and the apparent dominance of freelance, self-employed leaders. From the data, it appears that in general, many leaders appeared to have some qualifications or experience to support their given aim. Whilst qualifications and experience may improve a leader’s knowledge base this data cannot reveal is whether it is utilised or indeed effective in providing children with a quality experience.

What has also been revealed is how little is known and understood about the sector and how varied it is. There is such a diversity of data; aims, backgrounds, qualifications and experience which has made analysis complex and identifying any reliable overall trends difficult. It has however made plain the lack of shared vision of what an “early childhood music group” is and here I suspect is the nub of the matter: there are at least three different types of group yet all of them use the same descriptor. From the outside, it is often difficult to distinguish a group that is purely enjoyment based from one with early childhood music learning at its heart. A better form of classification for these music groups would be useful, some way to make the aims clear and transparent and so that parents can differentiate between group types and understand what children may gain from attending. In terms of those that actually aim to teach children musical skills and knowledge, some form of quality assurance and qualification framework would greatly aid consistency and quality and raise awareness of the particular nature and requirements of being an early childhood music educator.

Whatever the aim of the leader however, I would suggest that leaders should have at least a minimum level of knowledge relating to early childhood approaches and music; to be able to sing in tune and provide a good musical role model. It is impossible from this data to shed much light on these leaders’ everyday working practises and would strongly recommend that more in depth research is undertaken across the sector to gain a better understanding of the nature and quality of early childhood music groups and those that lead them.

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## **Symposium: Who are the Practitioners in Early Childhood Music in the United Kingdom?**

### **The musical identities of early childhood music specialists: An exploration of the contributory factors and how these identities relate to practice: The Close Up**

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#### **Abstract**

Our musical experiences from birth help shape our identity and this research examines the musical identity of those who specialise in supporting these early musical interactions. What do we know about their musicality and how musical they are? What are their perceptions of the relevance of their own musical identities to their work within early childhood?

A survey of 86 practitioners provides quantitative and qualitative data detailing musical skills, professional levels, genres and importance of various attributes in practice. Case studies of three independent practitioners provide qualitative detail of life history and musical identities within practice. Early years music specialists have strong musical identities, for which there are a number of contributory factors. The majority were performers and teachers. Differences were found between personal musical identities and musical identities within educational roles. The early years music specialist sector had clear genre affiliations as musicians but made changes to these within the context of their early years practice.

The findings of this research hold important implications for early childhood music education. In particular consideration must be given to the mutuality of identity formation. Significant points in early childhood are found to be contributory factors and turning points in the development of early years music specialists' musical identities, including familial relationships, togetherness and environment. These might in turn be motivating factors in the development of young children's musical identities, and I call for further research into the mutuality of identity formation between young children and practitioners.

#### **Keywords**

Identity, Musical Identities, Early Childhood Music

#### **Introduction**

This paper explores the musical identities of early years music specialists. What do we know about their musicality and how musical they are? What are their perceptions of the relevance of their own musical identities to their work within early childhood?

Specialists in early childhood music often have no obvious musical identity beyond that of the nursery rhymes and children's music stereotype, and no obvious common identity as a sector. The content of sessions may be entirely dependent on the individual running the session and their musical background and experience. There is no standardised music training (Young, 2007; Greenhalgh, 2014) and no defined occupational standards. The Early Years Foundation Stage Framework

incorporates music within Expressive Arts and Design (Department for Education, 2014, p. 8) in the expectation that practitioners will observe sound making behaviours and introduce children to music listening (Parker, 2013).

In order to explore how early childhood music specialists identify themselves musically, and how they feel this translates into their practice, a sector perspective was gathered through a survey and was reinforced with individual case studies detailing musical biographies and self-perceptions of how these relate to practice.

The central research question asked: "What are the musical identities of early childhood music specialists?" There were two sub questions through which the main question was explored. Firstly the research explored the construction of musical identities in early childhood music specialists through the sub question: "What are the contributory factors?" Secondly the research examined the contributory factors identified within the context of practice using the sub question: "How do these relate to practice?"

## **Survey findings and discussion**

The findings of the survey component present a profile of the early years music specialist sector, detailing not only the musical identities of the individual practitioners, but also representing the musical identity of the sector as a whole. The survey gathered information in four main areas: (i) demographic information containing profile of practice, enabling comparisons across groups and informing case study criterion; (ii) identification with culturally defined roles in music, including perceptions of ability and professional level; (iii) measures of musicality and perceptions of important aspects of musicality for early years practitioners; and (iv) exploration of engagement with genres of music, including a profile of genres incorporated in early years practice.

### **(i) Profile**

Basic statements of identity were sought in the opening survey questions. The first presentation of musical identity was in response to the question, "Are you a musician?" MacDonald, Hargreaves and Miell noted that the identity of being a musician is acquired socially and culturally (2009, p. 464). There were 85 responses of yes, and there was only one response of no. So the first statement of musical identity is that 99% of early years music specialists do consider themselves musicians.

The remaining demographic and background information gathered provided a baseline profile of a typical early years music specialist as a female musician from a Western classical background who identifies strongly with the educational knowledge and expertise aspects within her role.

### **(ii) Culturally defined roles and professional level**

The findings of skills level across culturally defined roles; (performer, teacher, composer, listener, producer, facilitator, creator, improviser)

shows clear areas of high skill, as well as clear areas of skill gaps across the early years music sector. 95% felt they were skilled or highly skilled as teachers. 95% felt they were skilled or highly skilled as listeners and 87% were skilled or highly skilled as performers. Although 77% identified themselves as skilled or highly skilled creators, a significant 64% had only basic skill or no skill as composers, 51% had basic skill or no skill as improvisers and 65% basic skill or lower as producers, including 24% of whom had no skill at all as producers.

The perceived areas of high skill correlated with the professional levels the respondents recorded they were working at within the different roles. These included 88% active as performers, 100% as teachers, 82% as facilitators and 79% active as listeners. However there were some discrepancies found when comparing lower perceived skill level with the professional level of the respondents. Although there was a perceived lack of skill in the field, 51% indicated they were active as producers, of whom 20% were working at a semi-professional or professional level as producers. 45% were active or above as composers, and 54% were active or above as improvisers.

### ***(ii) Measures of musicality***

Early childhood music specialists were extremely good at singing in tune and keeping time, they had an extremely good sense of rhythm and their musical feel was extremely good, with over 50% scoring themselves the maximum in each of these categories. Their musical expression was good, their memory for melodies was good, and they were good at picking up new melodies. They were not so good at creating music with technology, songwriting, composing, or improvising and they were average at recognising chord progressions by ear.

Moving then to examine the importance of the same skills within the context of their early years practice, the attributes that were considered to be most important for early years music specialists were musical expression, musical feel, keeping time and singing in tune. Chord knowledge, songwriting, composing and production skills were not considered important for early years music specialists.

Early years music specialists' perceptions of their own skill level matched what they felt to be important attributes for early years music sessions, with a few exceptions. Interestingly, 65% of early years music specialists considered improvisation to be very or extremely important, even though only 54% were active improvisers and 47% viewed themselves as skilled or highly skilled in improvisation. The perception that feel and expression were of greater importance than melodic or rhythmical accuracy is significant and may be reflective of the communicative musicality employed within early childhood music. The changes instinctively made by a mother when communicating with her infant, creating an inviting singsong manner, can be described as

infant directed speech. When using infant directed speech vocal pitch is expressive, curving up and down, the voice softer in tone, and speech is slower (Bergeson & Trehub, 1999). There is also increasing research about singing for affect regulation such as increasing pleasure, and promoting sleep (Trehub, Ghazban & Corbeil, 2014). This increased importance by the early years music specialists of emotional attributes over technical attributes within practice may therefore be reflective of the instinctive nuances of communication with infants.

#### ***(iv) Engagement in genres***

Early years music specialists responded to questions surrounding which genres of music they employed in each of the different cultural roles. In addition, in order to explore the connection between musical identities and early years music practice the respondents were asked to select all the genres that they incorporated into their early years music practice, both in a live and a recorded capacity.

Children's music was proportionally the genre most engaged in by all cultural roles with the exceptions of listener and performer when classical was the genre most engaged in. Although early years music specialists did not consider themselves skilled improvisers, composers and producers, or perceive themselves to be working at a high professional level in these roles, there were still 51% improvising, 45% composing and 19% producing within the genre of children's music.

Overall the top five genres incorporated in early years music practice were children's music, classical, vocal, folk and world music. That classical and folk music are included in the top five genres incorporated into early years music practice reflects the musical identities of early years music specialists, with classical and folk being the top two genres the respondents affiliated themselves to as musicians. Taking live music and recorded music separately, the same five genres of children's, classical, folk, vocal, and world, were the top five most frequently incorporated in both formats. When Burke undertook a study of recorded music with non-music specialists she also found that nursery rhymes and classical music were the top two styles incorporated within early years settings (2013, p. 31). Burke suggested that the choice of music in settings was adult directed, and that practitioners were creating audio environments (2013, p. 67). I find it particularly interesting that the non-specialist adults in Burke's study and the specialist practitioners in this study made similar audio selections of recorded music. This concurs with Lamont's experience sampling study that found classical music was mostly chosen by teachers and mothers (2008, p. 255). World music was not prominent in the musical identities of the early years music specialists in this study and yet this is one of the top five most popular genres in both live and recorded music. This would indicate that the genre within early childhood music activities comes from a pedagogical motivation.

What does this tell us about musical identities? A musical identity constantly evolves according to social constructionist views (Lamont, 2011). Early years music specialists present different skills and genres according to cultural roles they are undertaking.

### **Case study findings**

The case studies represent three different early years music specialists typical of different strands within the sector. Case study Pam was taken as a representation of the typical practitioner with a teaching and education background. Case study Betty was taken as a representation of a typical practitioner of a specific early years music method. Case study Matilda was taken as a representation of a typical practitioner who developed her own approach. The case studies presented the musical identities of the practitioners and the contributory factors to these musical identities. Furthermore they considered these musical identities and contributory factors within the context of their early years practice.

For each case study semi-structured interviews took place between the practitioner and researcher. Clear themes began to emerge as contributory factors within the case studies, including familial relationships, aptitude, togetherness, environment and confidence.

These contributory factors of their musical identities appeared as the key characteristics they described in their practice. Each practitioner recalled significant opportunities and key events from their childhood that could be found directly reflected in the musical identities of their practice.

In the case of Betty, singing was a dominant aspect of the musical identities in her home, childhood and family life. She described how her grandfather, "Had a song a day", her dad, "Was always singing, he wasn't a particularly good singer and he sang completely different stuff, he sang sort of, you know, ridiculous things", and her mother, "She was always singing". Betty also had a recollection of someone singing 'sol-fah' in her early childhood at primary school. She said it wasn't a very conscious thing but that she was aware of it. She recalled enough to know it was Curwen sol-fah, and that the Oxford Song Books with the hand systems in were used. This dominance of singing, and the echoes of Curwen's sol-fah are central to the musical identities within Betty's early years work, as she is an advocate of the Kodaly method.

Matilda described two significant opportunities that contributed to her musical identity and both relate to accessibility to instruments. Firstly a family piano was located in the centre of her house. She played the piano with her sister and spent hours doing different things at the piano. Secondly Matilda received the gift of a flute from a lady in her church, who knew she played but didn't have one. Matilda cites that one of the things she is 'known for' in respect to her approach to early years music practice is the inclusion of lots of real instruments in sessions for the children to get hands-on with. She brings in instruments such as harp, gamelan, and bassoon, and hopes that

“Children that got hands on with instruments and familiar with things are more likely to return to them later on”.

Pam asserted strong views about the conception of musical talent. She was uncomfortable and embarrassed with the notion that she was considered talented in her childhood. She explained how one of the most significant opportunities she had was receiving a bursary to a music college in London where she learned improvisation. Both of these aspects of her musical identity feature in Pam's early years music practice. Her practice is underpinned with her philosophy that everybody is equally musical. Within the practice she incorporates activities such as mirroring, which encourages and reinforces improvisation within young children. She also improvises during sessions on guitar and piano in imitation of children's movements, and with other visiting musicians.

The case studies, and in particular significant or transformative events as retold by the participants that have contributed to the construction of their musical identities, show that the musical identities of the practitioners are clearly present and reflected in the practice they have developed. These findings demonstrate environmental and wider cultural influences are fulfilling roles in self perceptions of musicianship, and in an individual's sense of developing identity, as found by Hargreaves, Miell, & MacDonald (2002). In particular, in each case it is possible to see that the practice incorporates facets from, and mirrors these musical identities, to create the fundamental principles held by the practitioners towards their practice.

## **Conclusion**

Through surveys of the early years music specialist sector and life history based case studies of three typical practitioners from different strands of early years music it was possible to explore perceptions of skill level and professional level within different cultural roles, along with perceptions of the importance of these in early years music. Early years music specialists have strong musical identities, for which there are a number of contributory factors. The survey findings showed that UK early years music specialists predominantly came from a Western classical tradition and their musical identities were largely related to the cultural features within this. The majority were performers and teachers, but placed emphasis on the educational aspects of their role. They played orchestral instruments, classroom instruments, and many were multiple instrumentalists including piano or guitar. The early years music specialist sector had clear genre affiliations as musicians but made changes to these within the context of their early years practice.

Clear themes emerged through the case studies in relation to the construction of their musical identities, namely musical family relationships, togetherness, environment and aptitude. Significant transformative events in relation to these themes were dominant in the musical identities of the case

studies and occurred as fundamental principles within their early years practice.

The findings showed the professional educational musical identities afforded greater musical freedoms and enabled the three subjects in the case studies to fulfill their motivations. While it could be considered that the early years sector is so diverse it is facilitative of a range of skills which can be transferable, it could also be argued that the three case study subjects evidently felt comfortable in a range of media, and were sophisticated in articulating their motivations.

This study exposes some encouraging indications. Early childhood music specialists focus upon communicative musicality and creating opportunities for togetherness and connectivity through music. They shift cultural roles in the context of their early years practice, striving to be experimental, perhaps even forward thinking. Furthermore, practitioners embrace their educational role, constructing musical identities within this role, and look to research to inform practice.

This holds important implications for early childhood music education. In particular consideration must be given to the mutuality of identity formation. Significant points in early childhood are found to be contributory factors and turning points in the development of early years music specialists' musical identities, including familial relationships, togetherness and environment. These might in turn be motivating factors in the development of young children's musical identities, and I call for further long-term research into the mutuality of identity formation between young children and practitioners. Furthermore I call for a standardised framework of training to support the early childhood music sector in the interpretation and implementation of research, to mutually inform for the benefit of young children and their balanced education.

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# **An exploration of the beliefs, assumptions and knowledge of Early Childhood Practitioners towards Early Childhood Music: The Other Side**

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## **Abstract**

This study accounts for a research project aimed at exploring the beliefs and assumptions of early childhood practitioners towards their own musicality and their beliefs, assumption and knowledge about the musicality of young children under their care. The aims and origins of the project are explained within the context of training early childhood practitioners.

The research combined quantitative and qualitative data collected from a questionnaire with 82 respondents and follow-up semi-structured interviews with four individuals. The results of this research identified that early childhood practitioners in the small cohort investigated had low levels of training with 62% having no specific music training at all. The early childhood practitioners displayed a wide range of beliefs and assumptions regarding their own musical ability. 13% of early childhood practitioners perceived themselves to not be musical. The majority of early childhood practitioners believed young children in their setting were fairly musical, yet the music activities they offered the children are either mainly adult-led or leaving the children to explore instruments on their own.

My exploration of beliefs, assumptions and knowledge may help inform future interventions for training at a time when there is a real need for more high quality early childhood music education for early childhood practitioners. It is important for trainers of early childhood practitioners to understand all these aspects if they are to provide appropriate and meaningful early childhood music training.

## **Keywords**

Early childhood music, early childhood practitioner, training

## **Introduction**

In this study I seek to explore the beliefs and assumptions of early childhood practitioners (herein after referred to as ECPs and are adults employed to work with young children) towards early childhood music. Central to this research is the exploration of what the adults, as the educator in a young child's setting (a variety of early years organisations examples of which are: pre-school, nursery, and children's centre) believes and assumes what young children's music looks like. It reflects on my own learning journey as a trainer to early childhood practitioners. I question whether one size fits all when it comes to empowering early years practitioners to use music effectively in their setting and if I need to take a different approach in my role as a trainer. This exploratory research is the first step in helping me understand the complex beliefs and assumptions of an early childhood practitioner regarding their own musical ability, as well as the musical ability of young children. I also hope to highlight a need for specialised early childhood music

training. I intend to explore how much training practitioners receive as part of their professional development. Young is concerned about the absence of 'a proper, preliminary professional qualification to equip practitioners...' (2009, p. 10). It is important for educative practices to understand how essential training is, if they are to recognise the importance of music in early childhood.

I have approached the research design as a quantitative and qualitative account of early childhood practitioners' beliefs and assumptions towards early childhood music. The research questions I posed were:

1. What beliefs and assumptions do ECPs hold about their own musicality?
2. What beliefs, assumptions and knowledge do ECP's hold about the musicality of young children in their setting?

The second question addresses my interest in the gaps in knowledge, assumptions and beliefs ECPs hold about the musicality of young children. The first question helps me to explore ECPs' beliefs and assumptions about their own musicality to possibly identify the influence that this may exact on the second question.

## **Background**

### ***What beliefs and assumptions do ECPs hold about their own musicality?***

To understand ECPs' approach to music in their early years setting, it is vital to try first to understand their beliefs and assumptions and to take into account how these beliefs and assumptions have developed over time (Stavrou, 2013). Day (1999) reminds us why it is important to explore beliefs and assumptions. He asks '...can we really understand teachers' work without understanding their understandings of it?' (p. 55). The first research question essentially asks if ECPs believe they are musical.

A number of researchers believe that humans have innate musical abilities. According to Blacking (1971) all human beings possess a capacity for musical competence. Welch (2005) agrees with Blacking in his article entitled 'We are musical', explaining that our musical development begins pre-birth and it is part of our 'basic human design' (p.1). There is also literature that debates whether musical ability is innate or learned (Hallam & Prince, 2003). Malloch and Trevarthen (2009) suggest that musicality is an innate human drive. However, as a society we may impose the labels of musical and non-musical through a cultural identity (Gracyk, 2004). ECPs may perceive that they are musical novices and this perception may be derived from the feeling of musicality being educated out of them (Young, 2009). These fears were previously identified by Mark (1996) in that music in schools is still only appropriate for the talented few.

### ***Am I musical? The link to the concept of talent***

Some ECPs may believe they are not musical as perhaps they associate musicality with having a musical talent (Ouvry, 2004). This perception has been challenged by a number of researchers within music literature (Mills, 1989; Hennessy, 2000). All these researchers share the view that music is not something that is elitist or for the chosen talented few. Young suggests we need to 'break the cycle' of the perception of musical talent (2009, p. 13). However these beliefs may well be deeply ingrained amongst practitioners as 'gifts that are only attainable by, or given to, a chosen few' (Hennessy, 2000, p. 183). Equally the belief may well have been reinforced over many years during the musical experiences of the practitioners themselves.

### ***What beliefs, assumptions and knowledge do ECPs hold about the musicality of young children in their setting?***

*Music in the UK in the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (EYFS)*  
ECP's in the UK consult the EYFS curriculum when they plan their music activities. It has not changed greatly from a previous curriculum when Young commented the EYFS (music) curriculum '....still holds on to some conservative versions of practice...' (2009, p. 9). She adds '.....the expectations of how children will make music with instruments in Foundation Stage curricular documents are, to be frank, very low...' (Young, 2009, p. 90). It would appear that the curriculum concentrates on observing children making 'sound' rather than 'music'. There is no helpful suggestion to practitioners that they even join in with children's music, yet alone model, copy, mirror or synchronise with the child's musical play.

### ***Musical Play: a specific area where ECPs lack pedagogical knowledge***

The current UK Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework supports a play based curriculum. Haughton and Ellis write '...a powerful element of this (the EYFS) is that children have ownership of play...' (2013, p. 76). The Department for Education states in EYFS that practitioners should shape their practice on the principle that 'every child is a unique child' and that they 'learn and develop in different ways and at different rates' (2012, p. 2). According to 'Development Matters: Characteristics of Effective Learning' practitioners are encouraged to '...play with children... join in with play sensitively, fitting in with children's ideas...' (2012, p. 6). We are given the impression that the EYFS is based on best evidence from research and experience that young children learn best when they are engaged in play. This should mean that fewer activities are provided where children are simply directed by adults. Yet Young (2003) observed that the mainstay of early music childhood practice continues to be the adult-led collective singing session. Despite the knowledge that young children learn best through play, it appears that musical play, which involves interactive music play between practitioners and children, is much less developed (Young, 2003). A view held by a number of ECPs is that children's own initiated music is merely just noise, as their efforts do not sound like 'real'

music unless the adult intervenes and guides them (Ouvry, 2004; Tafuri, 2009). If play is viewed as something so important that it is embedded and established in the EYFS, I need to consider why some ECPs choose to separate music from general play activity and instead approach it as a general group singing session.

### *Music as a management tool*

Some ECPs may use music as a management tool. The term management tool indicates music being used for other reasons apart from its intended purpose. Examples of this could be: the use of singing in a circle as a mechanism to keep young children occupied in a large group to release ECPs to do other things, as a way to manage behaviour by bringing children back to an adult led activity, as a time- filler when other tasks have been completed when there are no alternative activities to hand and as a fun activity to break up more academic work (Goddard, 2002; Ouvry, 2004). Through this, I question whether music is being valued in its own right by ECPs.

### *Do ECPs view music as a servant to other areas of the curriculum?*

It is important to recognise how music can support other areas of learning. For example, ECPs may sing a song because it helps fine motor skills, count to 10 or pronounce a phonic sound. In addition young children can learn through music, by doing music (Hargreaves, 2013). The question here is whether ECPs value music as a subject in its own right or whether they view music as a servant to other areas of the curriculum (Young, 2003). It could be amongst some ECPs that music is marginalised in favour of more important subjects in the curriculum such as maths and English. Therefore the only way to cover music in EYFS is to link it with subjects. Early years curriculum materials often recommend a music activity that can support learning a number, phoneme, historical or physical concept. This then leads to less time available for music in the curriculum, further eroding music's value as a subject in its own right.

## **Research Design, Findings and Discussion**

A total of 82 EYP participated in this research study (80 female and 2 male) by completing a questionnaire during a one day conference at which I presented. Four ECPs (pseudonyms Louisa, Pam, Libby and Cheryl) from four different settings were chosen to be interviewed. All four were known to me through project work or working in the same locality. Whilst this may appear to be a sample chosen for convenience, these four ECPs had offered a diverse range of responses regarding their beliefs and assumptions in the questionnaire.

### ***The need for training?***

It seemed a necessary starting point to ask ECPs in the questionnaire how much music training they had received as part of their training. The results are shown in Figure 1.

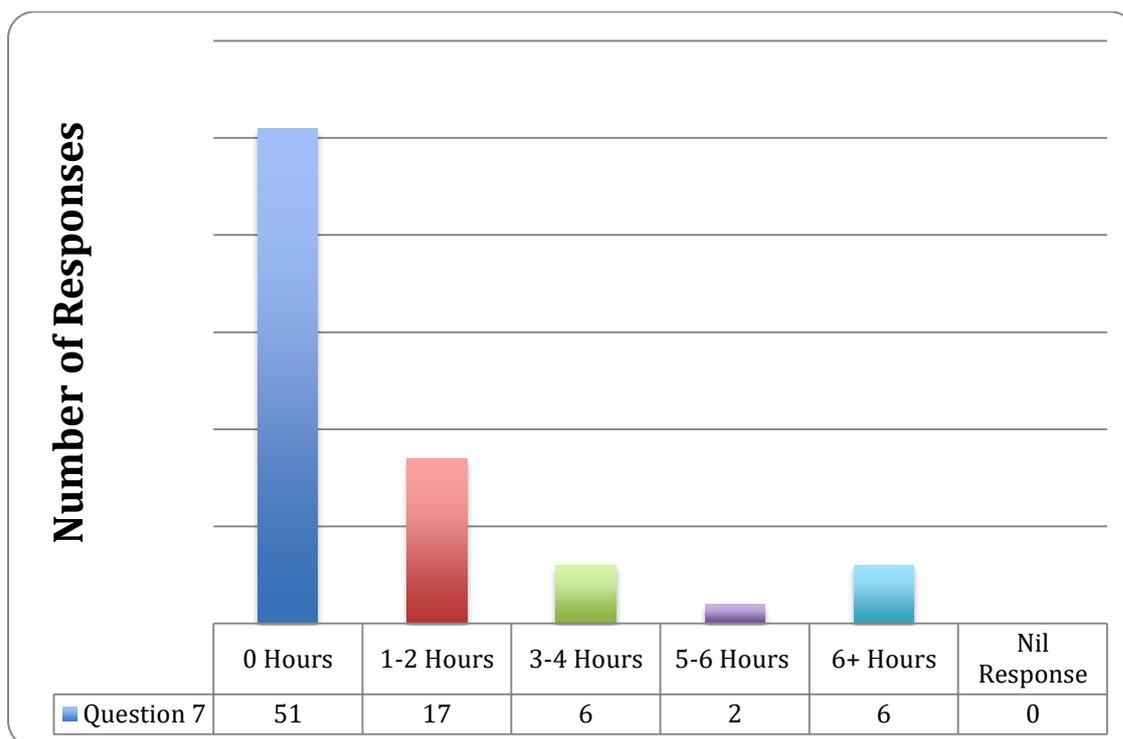


Figure 1. Frequency distribution of hours of early childhood music training

Out of 82 responses, 51 ECPs (62%) claimed to receive no training at all. Only 6 ECPs (7%) had received one day of training during their entire career as an early childhood practitioner.

### Interview qualitative data on training

All four ECPs interviewed mentioned the need for more music training. One commented that her staff would not have received any specific training for their level 3 qualification to work with young children. Regarding her own training, she said:

*The only training I had was very structured as in this is a music lesson and that's how you deliver it. Thinking about the training county puts on, well there is no music. It's all about Ofsted. Let's face it, when Ofsted comes in, they don't look for music (Pam)*

I was aware from the literature that in order to train ECPs I need to understand their requirements (Ouvry, 2004; De Vries, 2004; Mackenzie, 2007; De Vries, 2011; Gluschankof, 2011). However I was surprised from the data how little music training ECPs have received as part of their early childhood training. If many perceive themselves as lacking knowledge (Ouvry, 2004) then I need to look at the data for underlying and deeply ingrained beliefs and assumptions that will give an insight into this lack of knowledge.

*Theme One: How musical am I?*

I gathered quantitative and qualitative data to enable me to explore and understand the beliefs and assumptions of ECPs regarding their musicality. Of interest from the findings is that the majority of ECPs did not rate themselves as fairly musical, with the mean response being 2.76. Indeed 13% did not rate themselves as musical at all. There were others that rated themselves higher than the mean however their judgement may have been derived from differing views of what it means to be musical. This was identified from the open question on the questionnaire asking the ECPs to explain their choice in terms of musicality. The responses included: the ability to read music, to play an instrument, to have a loud voice or even to have a special lady come in and deliver music.

*Am I musical? The link to the concept of talent*

Regarding the issue of talent, there were a number of responses that indicate differing belief and assumptions. For example:

*I found out that my birth father was a jazz musician. I never met him. So there's something there. Got it in my genes I guess! (Louisa)*

This implies that talent is inherited rather than the view that talent can be developed with a different mindset (Dweck, 2006) or that it is developed through a process (Coyle, 2009). As Lawrence (1946) comments: '.....who is musical? Why everyone's musical, psychologically speaking....we know that all of us are invested with some musical talent....' (p.167). However in our Western culture, musicians are regarded as musicians because of their talent rather than their hard work and training (Walker, 1987).

*Am I musical? The link to self-confidence*

When asked about their abilities to sing, lead and support a music session the results were varied. From the questionnaire most respondents seemed happy to lead a music session, however 21% of ECPs rated himself or herself as unable as a singer.

Confidence clearly influenced the participants' beliefs about their musical ability. Data from the semi-structured interviews implied that ECPs demonstrated different levels of confidence in their ability to lead, sing and support music in their setting. Pam and Libby were very vocal regarding their lack of confidence in singing and making music in front of their peers. Cheryl believed her staff lacked confidence as they were reluctant to join in circle singing sessions.

These findings concur with those of Hennessy (2000), De Vries (2004), and Suthers (2008) who all identified a general lack of confidence amongst many non-music specialists. Even though all those interviewed agreed music was important in the early years, a lack of confidence may have been a barrier to fully implementing a more child led music approach.

## *Theme Two: What beliefs, assumptions and knowledge do ECPs hold about the musicality of young children in their setting?*

This question essentially explored my second major theme. Data in the findings helped me understand what knowledge ECPs had regarding the musical capabilities of the young children in their setting. The findings gave an insight into beliefs and assumptions concerning children's musical play, the use of music as a management tool, music as a servant to other areas of the curriculum and the assumption that children have limited musical capabilities. It highlighted gaps in ECPs' knowledge as well as it offered an insight into what knowledge the ECPs already have.

### *Assumptions and beliefs regarding musical capabilities of young children*

Of interest from the findings is that none of the 82 ECPs rated any child 'unmusical'. The majority rated young children in their setting as fairly musical, with the mean response being 3.37. Therefore respondents, in general, rated the children in their settings as more musical than themselves as adults. There were differing views of what it means to be a musical child. This was identified from the open question on the questionnaire asking the ECPs to explain their choice. The responses indicate a range of beliefs and assumptions. Some ECPs consider involvement in a circle singing session as a sign of a musical child, whilst others possibly consider children are too young for music.

There also appears to be a lack of congruence in the data. The majority of ECPs believe young children in their setting are fairly musical, yet the music activities they offer the children are either mainly adult-led or leaving the children to explore instruments on their own. This was evident from ECPs' beliefs and assumptions regarding young children's musical play as well as their knowledge regarding children's musical capabilities.

### *Assumptions and beliefs regarding children's musical play and children's limited musical capabilities*

The discussion of musical play had emerged in the semi-structured interviews. Negative beliefs and assumptions had surfaced regarding the use of instruments. This would confirm Marsh and Young's (2006) suggestion that certain forms of musical play are not encouraged by adults who are being influenced by the level of unacceptable noise or that they 'view of play as a trivial, lightweight, random, and somewhat useless activity' (p.289).

Interestingly no one mentioned young children playing musically with their voice. The spontaneous vocalisations of young children in their setting had not been thought of as music to any ECPs who participated in this research. This could have been a flaw in my data collection methods as I had not asked for evidence where music was happening in their setting.

### *Music as a management tool and music as a servant to other areas of the curriculum*

Only 2% of ECPs indicated that they use music as a management tool (to manage behaviour or engage children) in the open ended question in the questionnaire. This is a very low proportion of people. However a respondent in a semi-structured interview alluded to the use of music as a management

tool. My evidence appears to be questionable in supporting the view of Goddard (2002) and Ouvry (2004). This may be due to ECPs not wishing to admit to having poor behaviour in their setting, or that music is viewed as a time-filler. Some ECPs do view music as a servant to other areas of the curriculum. The most popular answer to why music is important in their settings is to develop social and language skills. Only 9% of respondents believed music was important to develop music skills.

## Conclusion

This research study aimed at making a valuable contribution to the growing body of knowledge regarding the beliefs, assumptions and knowledge of Early Childhood Practitioners. It explored these aspects in relation to not only their own musicality but also towards the musicality of young children under their care. The results reveal a wide range of beliefs, assumptions and knowledge related to the two aims. It is important for trainers of ECPs to understand all these aspects if they are to provide appropriate and meaningful early childhood music training. My exploration of beliefs, assumptions and knowledge may help inform future interventions for specialised music professional development at a time when there is a real need for more high quality early childhood training.

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# Symposium 2

## The Viennese Approach of Elemental Music Making

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### Abstract

In 2016 the former department of music education of the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna was renamed: "Department of Music Education Research, Music Didactics and Elemental Music Education". This shows the growing influence of the work the Elemental Music Education-team developed as a group of professionals dedicated to Elemental Music Education.

Our approach – the "Viennese approach" – has a clear dedication to creating musical spaces for all ages and all levels with the focus on making music together from the beginning. Our chief concern is to stimulate and promote enjoyment of making music in a group and to experience music as an artistic form of expression in relation to other artistic forms.

This contribution gives an overview of the structure and offered courses. To get an insight of our special way of working we want to focus on three different fields:

- (1) Elemental Music Making with child-parent groups with focus on an equal partnership offering musical input for children as well as for parents (Mario Smetana)
- (2) Elemental Music Making with children picture books in different aged groups (Veronika Kinsky, Michaela Ulm-Aram)
- (3) different forms of cooperation with primary schools (Eva Königer)

### Keywords

elemental music education, elemental music making, child-parent groups, adults and toddlers, make music to make music, picture books, storytelling, primary school, art and language

## Introduction

During its nearly 50-year history, *Elemental Music Education (EME)* at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna (mdw) has evolved from initial preparatory instrumental lessons to its own multifaceted department and is still crucial for discussing teaching methods, further education and research in the field of general musical education.

The programmes we offer are, on the one hand, inherently tied to *instrumental and vocal education studies* - either as mandatory classes or an optional focus – whilst on the other hand are intended to provide further education for people working in social and educational fields.

The students' own experience with *Elemental Music Making (EMM)* is regarded as the cornerstone of our classes. They experience various processes of making music in close relationship and interplay with language, motion, and sound visualization. They receive impulses on a wide variety of topics in order to go on their own to search for sound and to find more ways to express themselves. Additionally, they are taught all sorts of vocal skills, percussion instruments, piano and guitar and deepen their methodological knowledge.

The core element of the study programme is made up of about 40 groups: *EMM* for people of all ages, from toddlers to seniors, where our students can observe, reflect, contribute to and finally conduct the lessons themselves as a way of learning.

The motto of all our classes is: "We make music to make music!"<sup>13</sup>

According to our understanding, *EME* does not need to be justified as a means of personality development, it does not serve another purpose than to realise our desire to express ourselves through music. In *EMM*, every participant is actively involved in the teaching process with his or her whole body and soul and therefore experiences music in its many shapes and forms first-hand. We also believe that the ability to express oneself through music is innate to every individual. Technical skills are not required, but naturally develop by finding more and more differentiated ways of expressing ourselves through music. *EMM* is possible at any age and level of ability, and is not at all limited to beginners' lessons, but enriching and meaningful for both amateurs and professional musicians. We make music exactly as our abilities allow, we follow our independent wishes and are closely connected to our own music (Schneidewind, 2011).

Classes for adult professionals in particular often allow the discovery of new ways to access their own musical creativity – in an environment where they need not fear failure nor judgement.

Our classes can be divided into three groups:

(1) **Basic courses** provide basic experiences with music and music making and are

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<sup>13</sup> German: „Wir musizieren, um zu musizieren!“

generally targeted towards children of the age of four to five years. Each of the approximately 100 annual instrumental (voice) education students at the mdw is obliged to take part in a basic course for the duration of one semester in order to gain first teaching experiences.

- (2) **Advanced courses** expand and deepen the experience of *EMM* and also focus on specific topics like the voice, instrumental play, composing, improvisation or musical theatre.
- (3) **Special courses** are targeted towards specific groups: parent-child-courses, courses for adults, courses for professional musicians or courses for mixed-age groups (e.g., for siblings).

The following paragraphs will introduce several topics in order to provide an insight into the working methods of *EMP* at the mdw.

### **Parent-Child-Groups: Taking adults seriously in their artistic-aesthetic demands**

Parent-child-groups are a special feature in *EME*. In many courses the focus is solely directed at the children. The accompanying adults support the children in their tasks rather than caring for their own artistic and aesthetic demands. This contradicts the basic idea of *EME* that every participant should contribute with his individual, own abilities. In the case of baby courses, the adults' artistic musical play is possible: children experience music by listening and feeling. As soon as the children crawl or try their first steps, the musical behaviour changes. The children explore the music instruments with all their senses, and parents are intuitively very keen to promote their child musically. Hence, the adults' independent musical play is often neglected. If one wants to satisfy the artistic-aesthetic demands of both age groups in this constellation equally, one encounters a problem. The close relationship between children and their parents makes it difficult for both participants to remain independent. According to the motto: "If my child is doing well, I am also well," adults often neglect their own needs.

But also the children often cannot tolerate their parents taking a different musical role. Frequently it can be observed that children take away the music instrument from their parents as soon as they begin to play.

The presented approach provides a two-step process: The first *EME* lessons address the children's needs, whereas the parents take an accompanying, supporting and motivating role. Through joint experimentation with the instruments and other materials, through free movement in the room and contact with other couples, safety and security are created for the children as well as for the parents. If sufficient security is established for the largely independent musical play of the children, the focus can be directed on the creative and aesthetic needs and abilities of the parents as equally independent musicians. Social forms become more flexible: e.g., the group plays for a moving couple, or parents play for listening or moving children, and vice versa. Also musical forms become more variable: e.g., the children play a rhythmic accompaniment, while the parents take more complex harmonic and melodic functions.

## Elemental Music Making based on a picture book

In most of our lessons, a non-musical topic will be the starting point for musical improvisation and creation. Day-to-day events and topics, such as the environment, the seasons but also art, like paintings and poetry, are popular choices. Picture books with their distinctive characteristics offer special possibilities for an Elemental Music lesson:

A picture books artistically connects art with language. Visual impression can add to things that language cannot quite express and words can supply information that cannot be found in the pictures (Thiele, 2003). In this way the book serves as inspiration to both the teachers and the pupils and appeals to them on several emotional levels, intensifying the musical and dramatic impressions for them.

Picture books that are based on a story furthermore provide a structure and plot which can be useful for organizing a captivating session with its own arc of suspense. This leads to the children paying closer attention and allows them to be interested and actively take part in the lesson until the very end. This intimate storytelling, in addition to the imagery, is also characterized by an atmosphere of utter concentration and intense absorption of the subject.

*"By reading, what was written about, gains a voice, the text becomes alive. The reading shifts between oral and written language and builds a bridge between the story and the children listening. If it succeeds, a dense atmosphere is created which leaves space and time behind."*<sup>14</sup> (Kretschmer, 2009, p. 43)

Thus words easily become rhythmic chants, rhymes turn into songs, or a situation is turned into a vocal and instrumentally accompanied scene that is acted out dramatically.

Words and images evoke musical improvising, new creations and ways of playing. We think of musical pieces that can be connected to the story, which allows us to listen to them with more attention to the details and motivates us to create moving scenes and to be part of the music.

### **Practical example based on "Die Brücke"<sup>15</sup> by Heinz Janisch.**

Heinz Janisch (2017) in his blog about picture books says the following:

*"I admit it: I am 56 years old, and I am reading picture books. I love picture books. I also like to gift picture books, especially to children, because they're champions at observing, exploring and reading... you get a story and an exhibition. An exhibition of twelve, fourteen magical, enigmatic, fantastic pictures. Often, a picture book is the first art exhibition that children get to see... a picture book sets unique stories into motion, picture by picture."*<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> original: "Beim Vorlesen erhält das Geschriebene eine Stimme, der Text wird lebendig. Das Vorlesen bewegt sich zwischen Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit und schlägt eine Brücke zwischen der Erzählung und den zuhörenden Kindern. Wenn es gelingt, entsteht eine dichte Atmosphäre, die Raum und Zeit vergessen lässt." (Kretschmer, 2009, p. 43)

<sup>15</sup> engl.: "The Bridge"

<sup>16</sup> Original: „Ich gestehe: Ich bin 56 Jahre alt, und ich lese Bilderbücher. Ich liebe Bilderbücher. Ich verschenke auch gern Bilderbücher. Besonders gern an Kinder, weil sie Weltmeister im Schauen, Entdecken und Lesen von Bildern sind ... Man bekommt eine

In this context, "sound by sound" has to be added. At first, there is the sound of the person telling the story. Words and sentences contain melody and rhythm; an essential feature of stories are repetitive sentences which encourage you to repeat them, hum them and sing along. The story-teller and the listener form a special bond. Pictures and illustrations present additional possibilities for free association. For Frenzel, Müller and Sottong (2013, p.192) the success in telling a story depends on anticipating the associations of the listeners. At first it maybe seems contraindicative to combine what spontaneously occurs with a plan, but this is a vital component of EMM.

### *Plot of the book*

"Die Brücke" is about a river that knows many stories but never changes – it always stays the same, a small bridge and two equally strong protagonists: a bear and a giant. Both want to cross the bridge at the same time. Unimpressed by mutual aggressive posturing, they confront each other, unable to step back. Looking for a solution, they come up with cooperation. They grab each other by their shoulders and slowly spin across – like a pair of dancers.

### *Musical aspects*

The river is a catalyst for transformation. It has been flowing before the story begins and will flow after it ends. A whole tone scale is not associated to a mode, it provides openness and mystery at the same time. This opens many paths of music making. The flowing river is characterized by metallophone chime bars. The sounds can be arranged and rearranged freely and can be played with different affects. The children move like the waves of a river, they add instruments of their choice and many personal river images flow into one.

The first protagonist is a bear: big, strong and fierce. For a group where the children are not yet familiar with each other, the bear needs an additional authentic, yet lovable characteristic. We decide that the bear wants to cross the bridge because there is something on the other side which he loves dearly: honey.

In her second guitar lesson, Juen, a Chinese student, develops a characteristic four-bar motif in e minor, which is accompanied metrically. The bear motif gets repeated and is played to accompany movement. The honey-collecting swarm of bees is characterized by kazoos, their exhilarating flight forms the counterpart to the bear's sluggishness. Graphical notation

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Geschichte geschenkt – und eine Ausstellung dazu, eine Ausstellung in zwölf, vierzehn magischen, rätselhaften, phantastischen Bildern. Oft ist ein Bilderbuch die erste Kunst-Ausstellung, die Kinder zu sehen bekommen. ... Ein Bilderbuch setzt eigene Geschichten in Gang, Bild für Bild."

makes the daring flight repeatable, possibly by voice or by a finger moving across the paper.

The second protagonist is a giant. Pictured with impressive head-gear, reminiscent of the middle ages, he could be a king who is used to being right. He wants to cross the bridge because he is the king. A rondeau by Jean Joseph Mouret demands royal strides, singing along to the bass lines. Active listening is an additional characteristic of practical *EMM*. In this case, two characteristics are emphasized: the pompous instrumentation and slow meter. Both enable the players to transform into striding kings and queens.

The conflict takes place on the same level. If two xylophones are set up by touching themselves at the highest tone, a bridge can be created. At the center of this bridge, there's literally thin air. Two children, facing each other, can play out this conflict with their instruments. First, the slow approach towards each other is played on the instrument - the quarrel really permits a multitude of musical expression, ranging from imitation, a play on dynamics and the repetitive playing of certain notes.

Finally, resolving the conflict begins with physically getting closer. As described in the book, both protagonists cling to each other, providing the security not to fall off the bridge. Then, step by step, they turn and dance across the obstacle, finally reaching the other side. Children will find a large variety of solutions for this. If they enact this scene dancing, there's mostly an *accelerando* towards the end. If they play it out musically, they tend to savor their steps across, and very often a joyous dance music emerges.

Picture books are without doubt artefacts in themselves. If they serve as a base for further associations, they enable the multiple facets of *EMM* to shine even brighter.

### **Elemental Music Making in primary schools**

Collaborations with primary schools are a field of practice that is becoming increasingly important for *EME*. The Austrian primary school curriculum calls for a weekly music lesson, normally held by the primary school teacher who has a general education covering all primary school subjects.

In the collaboration I am introducing, the music pedagogue comes in as an external expert. In this context, Peter Röbbke (2012) compares the pedagogue with a native speaker in language teaching, and uses the term "*native artist*" for the external music pedagogue.

An important focus of the collaboration is the active involvement of music as the core of the lesson, and to create a diverse encounter with music.

The following questions arise out of our understanding of *EMM* in regard to school classes:

- Is *EMM* possible in a larger group/ school class? If so, then how?

- How can we, on a voluntary basis, with interest and joy in making music, integrate making and creating music together into the school routine?
- Is it possible for a group of 25 children, with different needs and abilities to make music together and experience individual expression and creativity?

EMM is the core of every music lesson in the collaboration. The central commitment in music making is seen as “music-making for the sake of making music”. The gained knowledge and experience in the course of time is not the point of focus. Therefore no specified learning objectives are formulated but the path that leads to making music.

In this context Ruth Schneidewind speaks of the “*process of music making*” (2011, p. 35).<sup>17</sup> Participation in this process does not require any skills or experiences. Every school child can take part in making music together from the beginning, bringing in his or her own abilities and experience.

The EME teacher is responsible for creating a stimulating work environment, for providing impetus and guidance during the process.

Due to the large class groups at schools, new methods are needed to implement our understanding of *Elemental Music*. Proactive participation of each single child in a large group is hardly possible. The music making process is therefore mostly initiated in the large group, but then continued in smaller groups.

From the very beginning the EME teacher provides many impulses, making it possible for the participants to find their individual expression. So every child is given the possibility to independently engage with his or her voice or an instrument.

As this procedure becomes familiar, it is possible to work in duos: to become musically interactive, to make arrangements and find solutions together requiring a social as well as an advanced musical experience.

After a while, working together can become more complex. The children work together in small groups creating musical arrangements and compositions. Material for these compositions comes from previously created elements, from a theme, from pictures, poetry, stories as well as songs and music pieces.

At first, the teachers and students guide the small groups, but the adults withdraw more and more as the children become more independent and inventive in creating their own music.

The students are part of this collaboration and witness some realities of their future profession. Since their teaching practice at the mdw is usually held with smaller groups, the larger groups prove to be demanding at first. Through intensive reflection and discussion of each lesson, the students increasingly grow with their tasks. Eventually they work on their own and hold lessons towards the end of the semester.

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<sup>17</sup> German: “Musizierprozess”

Collaboration between the mdw and the University College of Teacher Education Baden (PH Baden) was formed to offer primary school teachers a two-year extra-occupational training, specialising in music. This course will now become part of the educational programme offered by the mdw. The exceptional quality of this course is the emphasis on the participants' artistic self-experience. EME is a major artistic subject and is therefore an important part of the curriculum.

A broad range of active and participatory music making at primary schools level has been created: for the children as an active experience and for the teachers as a gained competence in initiating and guiding the music making process with children.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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# **Part V**

## **Poster Sessions**

# Foundations that support school readiness: Using music to enhance language and executive function development in preschool children growing up in challenging circumstances

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## Abstract

Cognitive and emotional control systems emerge around the age of three and, although these systems continue to develop into adulthood, the foundations laid in early childhood exert strong influence in almost every domain of psychological functioning and behaviour later in life (Crone & Dahl, 2012; Moffitt et al., 2011). Brain research has also revealed early sensitive periods in which the developing brain is maximally susceptible to environmental influences and it has become increasingly clear that some aspects of early development are predictive of longer-term outcomes (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Sirois et al., 2008) (Howard & Melhuish, 2016, p. 2).

For example, executive functions EFs (specifically the subcomponents of self-control and focused attention) are critical for school readiness (Carlson, 2005; Hughes & Ensor, 2008; Kochanska et al., 1997; Morrison et al., 2010) and children from lower SES and at-risk backgrounds have poorer EFs (Hackman et al., 2015; Ursache & Noble, 2016). Indeed, EFs are more strongly associated with school readiness than are IQ or entry-level reading or math (Blair, 2002; Blair & Razza, 2007; Normandeau & Guay, 1998; Diamond, 2014). EFs refer to a set of cognitive skills that allow us to maintain and update information (working memory), to adjust our behavior according to changes in the environment (cognitive flexibility), and to suppress irrelevant responses (inhibition) (Jurado & Rosselli, 2007). EFs are of central importance to much human behaviour. It is now clear that they can be improved at any age through training and practice, and that those with the poorest EFs consistently gain the most from programmes that set out to improve them (Diamond & Ling, 2016).

This research is investigating the relationship between music, language and executive function development in a cross-section of preschool children growing up in challenging circumstances. Possible relationships are being addressed via a training study, which aims to answer the question of whether language-poor music training or language-poor art training have any measurably significant impact upon executive function and language development.

The second objective related to the above was to evaluate critically the effects of the two different types of training. To achieve this, an appropriately selected battery of preschool tests are tracking changes in participants' EF and pre-literacy skills at multiple time points throughout the training study.

The final objective will determine whether longitudinal music training has a significantly increased impact on EF and language development, in comparison to short training. Mid-point results will be determined by June 2017.

**Keywords:** Music, executive function, language, education, cognition

# Investigating music and language development in preschool children

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## Abstract

Evidence for a link between music and language has been reported at both sub-cortical (auditory processing) and cortical (implicit processing) brain levels (Moreno et al., 2011), and musicians have shown enhanced language skills compared to non-musicians across several domains, namely, vocabulary knowledge (Forgeard et al., 2008), pitch processing in speech (Schön et al., 2004), selective attention for speech in noise (Parbery-Clark et al., 2009; 2010), and prosody perception (Thompson et al., 2003). Perceptual abilities in the musical domain have been shown to correlate with early reading skills and phonological processing in pre-readers and primary-age children (Anvari et al., 2002; Peynircioglu et al., 2002). In addition, musical training has been demonstrated to relate significantly to academic performance, specifically reading ability (e.g. Willatts, 1994) and mathematical achievement (Hoch & Tillmann, 2012). Furthermore, musical training has been linked to altered brain structure and function (Herholz & Zatorre, 2012; Moreno & Bidelman, 2014) (Zuk et al., 2014, p. 2).

In addition, according to the 'rise time hypothesis' (Huss et al., 2011), developmental relationships between musical and linguistic processing depend in part on shared underlying neural processing of strong and weak beats and the patterns that they form. While beat and meter in music are periodic, metrical structure in language depends on the alternation of strong and weak syllables in order to avoid stress clashes, and so language has nonperiodic metrical or prosodic structure related to the patterning of strong and weak syllable "beats". The patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables in language may thus be processed by the same neural mechanisms used for processing patterns of strong and weak beats in music, at least in childhood (Verney, 2013).

Using the Sounds of Intent in the Early Years framework (Voyajolu & Ockelford, 2016) and established methods of pre-literacy testing, this research is evaluating reactive, interactive and proactive musical behaviours against receptive and productive language ability, in a cross section of children taking part in short-term music intervention.

### Keywords

Music, language, preschool education

# **The networked flow to read children' interactions in musical experience with the MIROR**

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## **Abstract**

In the last decade some studies underline as the IRMSs (Interactive Reflexive Music System), as the Continuator first and the components of the MIROR platform then, can be defined as 'flow machine' (Addressi & Pachet, 2005; Pachet, 2010) and tools to 'enhance a state of flow in children' (Addressi, Ferrari & Carugati, 2015) during musical exploration and improvisation. From the original concept of flow as optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), Gaggioli et al. (2011) propose a wider framework, deriving from Sawyer (2007), to understand group creative dynamics, linking the flow with the concept of social presence: The intuitive perception of successfully transforming intentions into actions (Riva, 2009). A further development is described by Triberti et al. (2016) on the application of networked flow with new technologies.

The results of the MIROR Project have already shown the closed relation between the MIROR components and the state of flow in children, considered as an individual and personal experience (Addressi, Ferrari & Carugati, 2015). The aim of this study is to apply the concept of *networked flow* as a framework to analyse the interactions between the couples of children during the musical exploration and improvisation, and to verify whether and how the MIROR Impro could foster and maximize the musical creative potential of the couple.

Six 8-year-old children were involved divided in three couples. They played together with and without MIROR Impro for three sessions. The play-activities were carried out in a primary school and the participation of the children was free. There was no pre-fixed duration of the session and the children were free to play as long as they wanted. The conditions described by Gaggioli et al. (2011) are used to guide the analysis of children' musical interactions with/without the MIROR Impro: group's goal, close listening, complete concentration, being in control, blending egos, equal participation, familiarity and communication. A particular attention is given to the content of communication between the two children in the couple and their musical intentions.

Several conditions, among those described by Gaggioli et al. (2011), are present in the musical interactions among children. For two couples, the presence of the MIROR Impro (activated) implies: a) a strong concentration in children, b) the communication becomes more frequent as c) the close listening of the partner and d) making the couple's goal clear. Implications for the use of the new technologies and the role of the teacher will be described.

## **Keywords**

Group creativity, music technologies, MIROR, flow

## On-line training courses for early years educators, specialists and musicians

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### Abstract

The Music House for Children (TMHFC) has noted the growth in popularity of online training courses since 2007. The reasons for this phenomenon include

- Improved digital technology
- More affordable than on-site training
- Accessible for hard to reach communities
- More flexibility

TMHFC has provided practical training since 1998. Five training courses were adapted as online courses and endorsed by CACHE ( in 2015. CACHE is recognised world-wide. Each course has a music focus and can work in conjunction with early childhood studies at levels 1 – 4 (UK) or degree equivalent. The courses comprise an introduction to music in early childhood and include:

*First steps into music – a detailed insight into the significance, background and influence that music has on young children.*

*Music with additional needs – an introduction to how music can be delivered to young children with varying needs as part of learning, as well as intervention and communicative play.*

*Applying music with movement – Exploring the multi-sensory learning through movement and musical play, and how this impacts on learning and life skills.*

*Delivering music in the early years – Using a music template to immerse into all areas of the curriculum with accessible music practice in and out of a setting.*

*A guide to resources – top tips on accessible resources including instruments for young children to learn, explore and communicate in musical ways.*

We present 'An introduction to music in early childhood: First Steps'. This course gives students accessible skills to provide music activities with young children from babies up to 6 years old. Several modules explore specific topics. At the end of each module students answer questions which have to be correct before the next module is accessed. Video examples, questions and answer sheets and practical activities are included throughout, with suggested literature for reading. The course is approximately 12 hours in total with a 6 month completion time.

Once completed the student is given a CACHE endorsed certificate. Ongoing support is provided via web-links. All five courses are affordable, easy to navigate around and will enhance knowledge and understanding of what music means to young children, and how to support life skills, communication and learning through music making.

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