1.0 mm

1.5 mm

2.0 mm

A5

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 310 863 PS 018 264

AUTHOR Boyd, Anne E.
TITLE Music in Early Childhood.
PUB DATE Jul 89
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the International Conference on Early Education and Development (21st, Hong Kong, July 31-August 4, 1989).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Early Childhood Education; *Educational Practices; *Individual Differences; *Integrated Curriculum; *Music; Musical Instruments; *Music Education; Music Reading; *Readiness; Singing; Teacher Role; Young Children
IDENTIFIERS *Developmentally Appropriate Programs

ABSTRACT

This paper emphasizes the importance of music as an integral part of the education of the young child, and draws attention to a few ways in which parents and teachers can contribute to children's musical development. Sections of the paper focus on seven questions: (1) Is music really universal? (2) When should musical training begin? (3) When should music education begin? (4) What is meant by a 'developmental' music program? (5) Is music relevant to other areas of early learning? (6) What about reading music? and (7) What is the role of the instrumental teacher? It is concluded that each child has a natural right to the best musical education his or her society can provide, and it is hoped that society in the the 21st century will fully recognize that right. The bibliography of 19 citations on music in relation to education and development is supplemented by a list of other useful materials, such as songbooks, and a list of titles in the Learning with Mother and Early Learning series. The latter series includes nursery, finger, number, memory, talking, action, dancing, singing, and skipping rhymes. (RH)

This paper is submitted for the conference entitled

CHILDHOOD IN THE 21ST CENTURY

31st July - 4th August, 1989

Hong Kong

Music in Early Childhood

by

Anne E. Boyd

This paper is dedicated to the memory of the patriotic Chinese students who recently gave up their lives in the cause of honesty and liberty in their beloved motherland - may they always be remembered with respect and dignity.

ABSTRACT

Musical intelligence is universal but will atrophy if not given appropriate stimulation and a sympathetic environment in which to develop. In early childhood, musical stimulation can enhance emotional, intellectual and physical development; when placed at the center of a young child's education, music can provide a useful medium for many other areas of early learning. All childhood musical activities should have enjoyment as their principal objective and be developmentally based. Parents have a primary role to play in the early musical development of their children but in many developed countries, where the value of music has been degraded, only a few parents have the confidence to accept this responsibility. As a first step towards better music education it is necessary to restore the confidence of parents in their own innate musicality and in their ability to assist in their children's musical growth. Early musical education should not focus unduly upon skill-acquisition, with performance as its principal objective, but rather be integrated into daily life as a spontaneous manifestation of social and emotional development both at home and in the kindergarten. Above all, the young child, as a natural musician, needs and deserves recognition and encouragement. Once a child's positive responses to music have been aroused, early musical learning can proceed rapidly and effectively in a fun-filled environment in which warmth and security are regarded as being more important than the acquisition of formal musical skills. Such an approach needs to be child-centered and to recognize the all-important need of the young child to play. An introduction to elementary musical concepts should be regarded as being fundamental in the training of adults involved with play-group leadership and for all kindergarten and primary school teachers. Teacher training programmes need to emphasize the importance of the integration of musical activities with other areas of the curriculum, whilst special provision should be made for the development of early musical literacy. The development of more specialized musical skills

needs to be separately provided within schools and the community at large, as should appropriate opportunities for the education of outstanding musically gifted children. However, resources dedicated to training for a gifted few should never be allowed to overwhelm, or substitute for, the provision of generally accessible musical facilities from which all children may benefit, now and in the future. The overriding purpose of this paper is therefore to emphasize the importance of music as an integral part of the general education of the small child, and to draw attention to a few of the ways in which parents and teachers alike can contribute. A child has a natural right to the best musical education his society can provide - it is to be hoped that society in the 21st century will fully recognize this right.

MUSIC IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

by

Anne E. Boyd, D.Phil., B.A. (Hons)
Department of Music, University of Hong Kong

1. Is Music really universal?

In attempting to arrive at an understanding of the importance of music in early childhood, it might first be useful to consider briefly whether or not the phenomenon of music is really universal. In scanning rapidly across the findings of anthropologists and, more recently, of ethnomusicologists, it would seem that the answer to this question is a resounding "yes" - no evidence can be found of the existence of a society without music. An equally important finding is that there appear to be more differences than similarities in the music produced by various cultural groups; although music is an international phenomenon, it is certainly not the 'international language' so many proclaim it to be. The music of a particular culture, to be really effective, needs the receptive and prepared ears of an audience which has in some way shared in the experiences of its creators (Blacking, 1976). A performance of African drumming heard by a Hong Kong audience in the Asian Arts Festival, no matter how exciting, cannot have the same significance as the same performance placed in its original tribal setting.[1] Notwithstanding the fact that music speaks in many different tongues, the pervasive existence of music in all human societies lends considerable credibility to Howard Gardner's proposal for the existence of musical intelligence as one of six major human intelligences common to all cultures (Gardner, 1983).[2]

In modern society people frequently divide themselves into the musical "haves" and "have-nots", with the usual dividing line being the ability to read music and play a musical instrument. These latter attributes, which are highly valued, are not necessarily an indication of the possession of a superior musical intelligence but, rather, indicate the likelihood of belonging to a particular socio-economic group for whom opportunities for musical training are accessible and affordable. The use of musical training as a means of upward social mobility in many industrialized societies contributes to an

---

[1] It has been interesting to observe the responses of a group of four-year old children in a multi-cultural playgroup in Hong Kong to a recording of African drumming: the Hong Kong children reacted immediately and fairly noisily with laughter and dance movements of their own invention. However I don't for a moment imagine that this music can possibly have the same power or significance as a live performance in its original village setting.

[2] Gardner proposes six major human intelligences: 1. Linguistic, 2. Musical, 3. Bodily-Kinaesthetic, 4. Logical-Mathematical, 5. Spatial, 6. Personal Intelligence (self-management and relationships with others).

understandable resentment on the part of the less privileged whose musical cravings are subject to ruthless commercial exploitation.

Although musical intelligence may be accepted as being universal, like other human attributes, it is unlikely to develop without appropriate stimulation. Edwin Gordon has drawn attention to the development of musical audiation (i.e. the ability to hear music which is not physically present) as the basic skill necessary for all musical understanding. His research further suggests that a child's ability to audiate will atrophy to some extent before the age of nine if not stimulated (Feierabend, 1987). Another research finding indicates that the level in singing which children reach by the age of six or seven may represent a peak in early musical development which, for most people, may not be actively developed further (Davidson, 1985). Both findings highlight the need for the provision of music education in early life if musical potential is to be fully realized.

2. When should musical training begin?

The trend in modern music educational practice is to place the starting age for musical training earlier and earlier. The great Japanese musical pedagogue, Suzuki, using a "mother-tongue" approach and special instruments scaled to fit tiny hands, has infants from two years of age beginning to learn the violin and having mastered the basics of string playing before they enter the Primary School. As well as winning many advocates, his method has been subject to considerable criticism, in particular for its "mechanization" of playing technique and the concentration upon playing by ear, which precludes learning to sight-read from notation until the child is already playing fluently.

The problem here seems to be the possibility that Suzuki students depend so much upon their ears alone that sight-reading skills never develop to the same level as in children who are taught to read at the same time as they are being taught to play. In theory, the Suzuki approach seems defensible on the grounds that we learn to speak well before we learn to read. Similarly, one can point to numbers of non-Western societies which have developed a complex musical tradition where musicians memorize a vast repertory and perform entirely by ear.[3]

Some objections to Suzuki's approach, however, also deserve consideration: firstly, music is not a language and therefore it may be erroneous to draw too close comparisons with early language learning; secondly, Western musical training is to large extent dependent upon the ability to read musical notation fluently and accurately. The violin is centrally placed within Western musical tradition as a solo and an orchestral instrument;

[3] Consider the modern gamelan of Bali where upward of forty musicians perform a large, complicated and rhythmically intricate repertory entirely from memory and where experienced musicians can exchange instrumental parts with apparent ease. This is rarely the case in the Western orchestra where professional musicians require a high degree of specialization upon a single instrument.

violinists need a training which enables them to take full advantage of both roles. To become a convincing soloist, the violinist needs to develop an individual interpretation of the "masterpieces" composed for the violin and, therefore, his approach must be anything but mechanical and "imitative". To become a first-class orchestral musician, or chamber music player, the violinist must be a fluent sight-reader.

A well-known Israeli musician, Nadiva Shor, has recently published an account of her experience teaching piano to three- to five-year old children in which she makes a strong case for the benefits of starting lessons early (Shor, 1989). I have myself heard children as young as four play Czerny studies on the piano at a kindergarten in Shanghai where music is placed at the center of the curriculum. The children seemed utterly absorbed and concentrated, and, reputedly, greatly enjoyed their music lessons. It was impossible, however, to detect whether their performance was the result of outstanding musical giftedness or simply the product of a high degree of rigorous training in which parents, as supervisors of practice periods in the home, played a crucial role.

The point needs to be made that if it is possible to train animals to perform extraordinary and unnatural feats then how much easier to train more intelligent humans - especially in early life when the brain is developing so rapidly and is capable of absorbing and processing an extraordinary amount of information, and when the small child's capacity to imitate is truly phenomenal. Whether or not such early training is really beneficial in all-round human development is a question which has not yet been satisfactorily answered.

If asking the question "When should musical training begin?" raises a host of further questions, then it is perhaps worthwhile changing the question somewhat.

3. When should music education begin?

The distinction between "education" and "training", when considering music as everyone's natural birthright, is of fundamental importance. Applied to music, "education" means many things: the cultivation of a high degree of aural sensitivity; the ability to "understand", codify and interpret a wide variety of musical stimuli; the confidence to express oneself creatively using sound as a medium; and the ability to participate at one's own level in group musical activities in which enjoyment and personal fulfillment are the primary objectives.[4] Certainly, "training" plays an important part, but the emphasis changes when educational objectives are more broadly defined: a narrowly focussed concentration upon learning to play a particular instrument as well as possible, often to the exclusion of the cultivation of much more broadly based

[4] It is tempting to draw an analogy here with the role of physical education and the provision of sporting facilities within our communities. There are certainly many parallels: however, the general provision of generally accessible sporting facilities far exceeds that of music.

musical abilities, is no longer acceptable as the ultimate goal of a comprehensive music education.

Current research findings indicate that it is appropriate and beneficial for musical education, as defined in this broader sense, to begin *in utero* (Thurman, Chase and Langness, 1987). Consider the following extract from the popular book *The Secret Life of the Unborn Child*:

> Considering his acute hearing, it should come as no surprise that the unborn child is also capable of learning a bit about music. A four- or five-month-old foetus definitely responds to sound and melody - and responds in very discriminating ways. Put Vivaldi on the record player and even the most agitated baby relaxes. Put Beethoven on and even the calmest child starts kicking and moving. (Verney and Kelly, 1982 : 7 & 8)

Later, the same writers draw upon the studies of an obstetric physiologist, Michele Clements, to claim that the foetus prefers the simpler line of a flute to the more complex music of Beethoven and that the foetus doesn't like rock music. (**ibid. p. 26**) If these findings are accurate then it is certain that musical preferences change a great deal after birth.

Given the overwhelmingly important role the mother plays, as primary care-taker and as her child's first music teacher, the most appropriate time to commence musical education might well be in the ante-natal classes attended by first-time expectant mothers. All mothers-to-be can be given a sense of the value of singing to their unborn children; of taking a brief time each day, especially in later pregnancy, to relax while listening to soothing music played on a gramophone or tape-recorder (van Niekerk, 1988). Most importantly, mothers need to be educated into a sense of their own musical intelligence and to be given guidelines as to how they can continue to assist in their children's continuing musical development after birth.

An ante-natal music programme aimed at enhancing pre-natal human development and improving communication and bonding between mother and child was established at Silver Lake College, Manitowoc, Wisconsin in the fall of 1986 by Sister Lorna Zemke. Although her data can only be verified through longitudinal study. a comment by one of the mothers participating in this programme is worth quoting:

> " I feel more in touch with this child than I have been with my other two children and I think it's the music which acts like a language." (Zemke, 1988 : 13)

It is very important to emphasize that early musical education needs to be as relaxed, spontaneous and joyful as possible. Teaching music to babies, before and after birth, involves a great deal of touching, cuddling, rocking,

etc., activities which in themselves are bound to contribute to deeper bonding between parent and child and an enhanced sense of warmth and security for both. It is worth drawing a distinction between interactive and passive forms of musical stimulation; it seems that music education in early life is most effective when it is "interactive". Thus, it is not enough to put an appropriate song on the record player or to pull the string on baby's musical toys and walk away, assuming that the music will be absorbed passively. Music in early life is essentially a social activity in which the presence of family members, and later on of peers, is vitally important. Singing and dancing with infants, playing finger games, knee-jogging, bouncing, patting, clapping and rocking are all activities which will actively stimulate early musical learning.

Musical activities should give pleasure to all who are participating and, if they don't, they are probably worse than useless. Groups of Canadian student music teachers have indicated that memories of their "happiest" early musical experiences were often associated with informal music-making in their family life. Their "unhappiest" musical memories included a catalogue of experiences in which they were forced to participate in musical activities before they were developmentally "ready" for the tasks they were asked to perform. These negative accounts included a number of "frightening" experiences with "strict" and "unsympathetic" piano teachers when, as young children, the student teachers had been mentally or physically abused, or terrified by an examiner (Wood, 1988). The importance of positive musical experiences in early life cannot be over-emphasized.

4. What is meant by a 'developmental' music programme?

Modern music education in the latter part of this century has taken great strides forward. The wonderful contributions of the famous music educators Dalcroze, Orff and Kodaly notwithstanding, a widely accepted music programme which fully takes into account the human development theories of Piaget, Bruner, Montessori and Steiner has not yet been developed. This is not surprising for while many researchers suggest that human musical development passes through stages which are similar in concept to those identified by Piaget, a convincing, comprehensive theory of musical development has yet to emerge.

To speak of a "developmental" music programme is to assume that, in introducing musical activities to children, the important concept of "readiness" is taken fully into account as children pass from stage to stage of their development. When children are "ready", learning is effortless and fluid, contributing much pleasure to child and teacher. This applies just as much to learning music as to learning other fundamental academic skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic. Learning through play is of fundamental importance in laying the foundation for more formal education later on and is particularly valuable for the encouragement of positive attitudes. An approach of this kind must also form the foundation of a developmental music programme; early on, children can learn a great deal when musical information is presented in the form of enjoyable games.

In musical development it is easy to distinguish two important milestones which form the basis for all future musical activities - these are the ability to sing "in tune" and to play "in time". Both are acquired gradually in early life and normally only become well-established between 7 - 9 years of age. The musical immaturity of small children, judged according to these abilities, is a factor which discourages parents, care-takers and teachers from initiating early musical activities: the musical efforts of small children often don't sound very musical, especially where music-making takes place in groups. However, a far more important factor than adult judgement of infant's group music making is the absorption and enjoyment of the children themselves in what they are doing. Criticism and fault-finding are completely out of place in early musical development; the infant musician thrives upon positive encouragement and interest in his musical activities.

The small child is driven by a need to explore and to express himself and, in the kindergarten, this applies quite as much to music as to language and drawing. The best music learning environment is one in which music is perceived primarily as an extension of auditory discrimination: all musical activities are based upon listening and, as a first step to musical development in the kindergarten, listening games in which the child is encouraged to differentiate sound qualities in increasingly specific ways are a logical part of the music programme.

Very young children also need plenty of "hands-on" opportunities to explore objects themselves for their sound qualities - almost any materials will do, from rustly pieces of paper, home-made rattles, ticking clocks, sonorous sauce-pans through to bells, chimes, drums, and any of the more traditional musical instruments which might be to hand and can be made available for exploration. A "Sound-box" or "Sound-corner" is just as important in a play-group or kindergarten as are coloring pencils, paint and playdough. Opportunities for the creative use of sound are as endless as the children's own imaginations. The noise which results can be irritating to adults but children, too, have very sensitive hearing and will soon regulate their sound-exploration activities.[5]

Singing is an activity enjoyed by all small children regardless of culture. Besides contributing a heightened emotional dimension to bonding between parent and child, singing is also important in social and cultural development. Singing activities are invaluable in establishing a group identity. Ritualized singing, at the beginning and end of play-group sessions, forms a meaningful bridge between the child's life within and without his "school"; a song carried in the memory will pop out at odd moments and the spontaneous individual

[5] It is as unnatural for small children to be quiet for lengthy periods of time (unless asleep) as it is for them to sit still for more than the briefest period. To force them to do either is to run the risk of stunting emotional, intellectual and physical growth: one of the many advantages of musical activities in the kindergarten is the special opportunities created for sound and movement.

singing which results can provide a comforting reminder of a previous activity.

Singing can also create a sense of security and belonging in the small child; singing sessions, whether at home or at school, should contain plenty of known material with new songs being introduced only gradually. A useful and appropriate repertory from which songs can be drawn is the rich traditional heritage of children's songs that are found in every culture. In the West, this heritage includes the ever popular nursery rhymes and traditional lullabies, which should form a normal part of children's musical diet at home and in the nursery school. These songs become especially meaningful if they have been sung at home by parents and children together. There are plenty of new and catchy children's songs which have been more recently composed and, while some of these are certainly valuable, they should never be allowed to replace the traditional "Mother Goose" songs which have been enjoyed by countless generations of children. Traditional children's songs are usually memorable and easy to sing and can therefore be very useful in promoting inter-cultural exchange in racially diverse groups of children.

Singing is also an activity which may encourage language development. Because music is generally processed on the right side of the brain and language on the left, singing, which involves both music and words, stimulates hemispheric interaction (Thurnian, Chase and Langness, 1987 : 26). A small child will learn words in a song effortlessly and often, apparently, without reference to meaning. This applies equally to songs in a foreign language and to those in the mother-tongue: therefore, if parents or teachers wish to take advantage of the linguistic as well as the musical value of a particular song, they may need to develop learning strategies over and above singing itself for the children to fully understand what the song is about. This is particularly important when using music as a medium for learning a second language (Ray Graham, 1987).

Many traditional children's songs which have associated movements are known as singing games.[6] These are especially valuable in the kindergarten for their intrinsic merit in dramatizing the content of a song, and also because these actions form a useful link with dance. Dance is universally associated with music and, from their earliest moments of life, children seem to respond naturally to music with various kinds of movements over which they exercise a gradually increasing control. At home and in the kindergarten, movement, as a response to music, should always be encouraged and praised. As motor co-ordination develops so will the child's sense of beat and rhythm. In stimulating musical intelligence, therefore, movement has a vitally important role to play and should never be inhibited if musical intelligence is to develop to its full potential.

---

[6] Examples of nursery rhymes which are also singing games include traditional 'circle games' such as *The Farmer's in the Dell* and *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush* and others such as *London Bridge is Falling Down* and *Oranges and Lemons*. The bibliography contains reference to a number of excellent collections of songs of this type.

All musical performance requires a high degree of motoric intelligence and of fine muscle control. However this does not mean to say that a child who is not particularly well co-ordinated lacks the aptitude to become a fine musician.[7] Equally, children thought to be 'tone-deaf' may have excellent rhythmic capabilities and the capacity to become good dancers. In early learning, music and dance should not be kept apart as separate activities, for even small babies respond to music with vigorous movement and this pattern continues throughout the early years. Dancing sessions can contribute a great deal to music appreciation and are enjoyed equally by children of both sexes.

Far too often children have been discouraged from further musical development by being told that because they can't sing as well as their peers they must be musically incompetent. This results in tragic and unnecessary loss of self-esteem which, besides affecting many other areas of growth, often transmits itself forward to the next generation. I have personally met numbers of mothers, who believing themselves to be "unmusical", become too self-conscious to sing to their small babies, or to take any part in their children's musical upbringing. When these children are exposed to modern play groups - in which musical activities are encouraged as a normal part of "play" - and show considerable interest in music, the parents disclaim any responsibility, believing their children's budding musical abilities to be the work of genes other than their own. Their children continue to miss out on the precious and uniquely emotional intimacy which develops between a mother and her child when shared musical experience is an added factor in their relationship.

5. Is music relevant to other areas of early learning?

By now, more than enough has been said to suggest, firstly, that musical intelligence consists of a whole spectrum of overlapping abilities which are intricately inter-related, and, secondly, that where one factor is poorly developed, this may well be compensated by the superior development of others. No child should be denied a musical education because his innate abilities do not seem to measure up to the requirements defined by "experts". Indeed, one needs to examine carefully the credentials of musical "experts": some of the least well qualified people to make judgments about the musical

---

[7] Jill Phillips has pointed out in *Give Your Child Music*, a book which contains much wonderfully encouraging and practical advice aimed at parents, that " some of the world's greatest musicians seem to find it rather difficult to move their limbs when not actually playing their instruments". She points out that her own daughter who developed into a fine 'cellist was a particularly clumsy child: as a mother, had she known and believed the recommendations of the *Gulbenkian Report on Training Musicians* (1978) that a future 'gifted' musician should possess a naturally occurring kinetic skill and manipulative ability of a high order, this particular child might never have entered the Yehudi Menuhin School. (Phillips, 1979)

abilities of children, other than in their special area of expertise, might well be professional musicians themselves.[8]

In considering the role of music in the education of the whole child, it is worth bearing in mind that it seems likely that musical intelligence overlaps and intersects with the other five intelligences defined by Gardner (Thurman, Chase and Langness 1987 : 25). If this is really so, then music, rather than being pushed to the periphery of early learning, should occupy a central position because it impinges upon the development of all the other intelligences: linguistic, bodily-kinaesthetic, logical-mathematical, spatial and personal. In other words, music affects the development of the whole person.

Consider the following scene. A group of sixteen four-year old children are sitting on the floor singing the traditional number rhyme, *Johnny Works With Five Hammers*. Beginning with "one hammer" they pound on the floor with their right fists in time with the music; then the left fist, right and left legs and finally nodding head are all added to this "symphony" of moving limbs verse by verse, until finally, "Johnny" falls asleep in exhaustion. The following intelligences are demonstrably hard at work: the words of the song are stimulating linguistic awareness; musical intelligence, specifically pitch and rhythm, are being developed as the children attempt to follow the leader's voice and gestures, in tune and in time (although at this stage probably failing to do so with great accuracy); a high degree of motor-coordination is required of limbs and head as the child exercises each of his limbs independently, so that bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence is certainly stimulated; the child is learning to count from one to five, logically and sequentially in a very 'concrete' manner, so logical-mathematical intelligence is involved; the child is certainly aware that his movements are taking place in a spatial relationship (first left, then right, from arms down to legs and, then up to head). Finally, each individual child is responsible for his own participation in this activity; he is following a leader and attempting to co-ordinate his efforts with the efforts of others. At last, when the song is completed, everyone pretends to fall into an exhausted sleep together, a short sleep punctuated by plenty of giggles - for not only has this experience discharged enormous amounts of physical and mental energy, it has been <u>fun</u>.

There is a great deal more which can be said about how music stimulates emotional, intellectual and motor development, of how valuable it is in early social development, of how music can provide relief from more stressful activities, especially in early 'formal' school life, when the child must learn to read and write and is under considerable pressure from parents and

---

[8] One of the most serious problems facing music educators is over-specialism which similarly blights most other areas of human endeavour: burgeoning research activities have created a whole host of "experts"; there are too many specialists and insufficient "generalists" capable of developing an overview and distinguishing the wood from the trees. Research in human musical development <u>must</u> be interdisciplinary to be really valuable because music intersects with so many other areas - but this constraint in itself raises a whole host of communication problems which are in urgent need of resolution if man is to begin to more fully understand his musical nature.

teachers to succeed and keep pace with his peers. The ready identification of school music with relaxation has led many parents and school teachers to undervalue music as a fundamentally important branch of human learning. The "fun" of a music class may provide just the impetus needed to lift the child to the next level of achievement in another area of the curriculum.

A recent development in British music education is the practice of music consultancy in the primary school. This development encourages the class teacher, with the assistance of a consultant (a highly trained music specialist) to assume responsibility for children's music alongside other areas of the curriculum. A very important result of this development is that it opens an enormous range of possibilities for music to be used in association with other forms of learning: music need no longer be viewed as something "special" and "set apart". Class teachers, in their turn, are given an appreciation of their own musical inteiligence and potential. In such a role the teacher becomes a natural extension of the parent as "first music teacher". In the meantime, the specialist music teacher, as "consultant", is freed to spend more time developing highly valued extra-curricular musical activities within the school: activities which more fully utilize his specialist skills and training.

6. What about reading music?

Part of the "mystique" of music derives from its notational system. Certainly this system, originally used only in association with Western traditional art music, offers unique advantages in musical transmission. The ability to read music notation opens the doors to a vast performance repertory of traditional and newly-composed works and makes it possible for an individual to become his own teacher in exploring this repertory as widely as his reading skills permit.

The questions of how and when to introduce music notation are controversial, as has been already indicated. It is certainly possible to produce arguments in support of laying down the foundations of music reading early, around the same time as a child is learning other symbols within his culture, be they Chinese characters, the alphabet and arabic numbers, or both. I have found four-year olds receptive and capable readers and composers of simple rhythm patterns - a task they greatly enjoy, provided the material is presented properly in as imaginative and game-like a manner as possible. This same research indicates that children in this age-group can go much further in learning to read music notation if given appropriate opportunities.[9]

---

[9] I refer to the as yet unpublished research I have been carrying out at Panda Playgroup in Hong Kong where, for the past three years, I have been developing, in weekly sessions with four-year olds, a music programme aimed, above all, at encouraging the development of positive attitudes to music learning. Present indications are very encouraging. This programme is exploring a range of techniques aimed at stimulating the development of audiation in small children and it contains an introduction to reading music notation. The programme also encourages parental involvement in musical home-tasks, but so far with only limited success.

The development of the new musical instrument technology, and in particular of MIDI (which makes it possible to link together musical instruments and micro-computers), opens even wider vistas in teaching children from an early age how to read music notation via interactive computer games. The appearance of a new generation of relatively cheap synthesizer keyboards makes music accessible as never before. Appearing with these instruments is a range of pedagogical material aimed at teaching the beginner how to read the usually popular songs he is learning to play upon his newly acquired instrument.

Creative opportunities are also relatively unlimited, and teenagers especially have not been slow to respond. Unfortunately, the ideas and methods of music educators, generally speaking, now lag well behind the emergence of the new technology. Music teachers must catch up with their students if the exciting new possibilities of popular music education are to be fully developed. Although what is currently available is aimed towards older children (of all ages!), it surely will not be long before the market of the 0 - 6 year-olds is also exploited.

7. What is the role of the instrumental teacher?

An approach to education which centers musical activities as an important part of the development of the whole person is likely to stimulate even more interest in learning musical instruments and create an even greater demand for the services of excellent instrumental teachers. All the new technology in the world will not quickly overtake the thrill of learning to play one or more traditional musical instruments as well as possible and, indeed, instrumental lessons are a natural extension of the enhanced role of musical activities at school and in the home - though certainly not a substitute for them. As a child whose interest in music has been aroused from the earliest moments of life matures, he or she will almost certainly want to learn at least one musical instrument.

A symptom of "readiness" for a particular kind of instrumental instruction might well be the ability of individual children to choose what instrument they would like to learn, rather than having that choice made for them. In such circumstances the average starting age for instrumental instruction may rise again; however, if the "readiness" concept is strictly observed, fewer children may drop out.

The gifted child exposed to music at home and at school will have enhanced opportunities to demonstrate his giftedness; he will race ahead of the "norm", passing swiftly through the musical development stages, just as did the infant Mozart. Such children are rare. They possess innate gifts and they have very special needs. Society as a whole stands to benefit enormously when such infant prodigies are given the proper facilities in which to develop. It is the responsibility of the world's finest professional music schools to provide a "musical home" for children who possess rare genius - a responsibility most will gladly accept. However, equally such institutions must guard against the

over-extension of exclusive music programmes offered to more normally talented or gifted children in which a high level of disciplined training becomes a breeding ground for false hope and personal imbalance. Evidence offered in the *Gulbenkian Report* (1978) suggests that the ability of a child to perform better than his peers by the end of his primary schooling may not indicate the presence of genuine giftedness; on the other hand, experts agree that really exceptional musical talent is easy to detect at any age and that it is extremely rare.

Talented children can too easily become humanity's sacrifice to its over-developed sense of the importance of the achievement, at any price, of superlative standards of performance in music, as in many sporting disciplines. This striving for perfection at as early an age as possible is part of the same drive which has led mankind to outer space exploration and towards his own extinction. It is time to scream "Enough!" and to redress the balance from over-specialization towards the sharing of knowledge and resources of all kinds much more widely within our communities. Surely, as a group of professionals concerned with the welfare of little children, we should all strive for an international community in the 21st century in which every child will be given opportunities for enhanced self-realization, and an educational system which provides for all-round development in as well-rounded and holistic a fashion as possible. In such a society music has a pivotal role to play.

A.E.B. 4.vii.89

Bibliography

Bayless, K.M. and Ramsey, M.E. (1986). *Music: A Way of Life for the Young Child.* Third Edition. Ohio: Merrill Publishing Company.

Boyd, A.E. (1988). Music in the Kindergarten: An Integrated Approach. *Hong Kong's Young Children: Sharing Our Experiences,* Hong Kong: Hong Kong Council for Early Childhood Education and Services Conference.

Bridges, D. (1987). Developmental Music Experiences with Parents and Young Children in a Community Setting. *International Music Education* (ed. Jack Dobbs), ISME Yearbook Vol XIV.

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Report (1987). *Training Musicians.* London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Davidson, L. (1985). Preschool Children's Tonal Knowledge Antecedents of Scale. *The Young Child and Music.* Virginia: Music Educators National Conference.

Feierabend, J. (1988). Applications of Edwin Gordon's Music Learning Theory in Early Childhood Music Education. *Early Childhood Development and Musical Experiences, III.* Early Childhood Commission Seminar, ISME: Brisbane, Australia.

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences.* London: Paladin Books.

Ginsburg, H. and Opper, S. (1979). *Piaget's Theory of Intellectual Development.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Hargreaves, D.J. (1986). *The Developmental Psychology of Music.* Cambridge University Press.

McMahon, O. (1987). Harnessing the Investigative Impulse. *International Music Education* (ed. Jack Dobbs), ISME Yearbook Vol XIV.

Moog, H. (1968). *The Musical Experience of the Pre-school Child.* English Edition (1976). London: Schott.

Niekerk, C. van, (1988). The Musical Education of the Foetus, *Early Childhood Development and Musical Experiences, III.* Early Childhood Commission Seminar, ISME: Brisbane, Australia.

Peery, J.C., Peery, I.W. (1987). The Role of Music in Child Development. *Music and Child Development* (ed. Peery, Peery & Draper). New York: Springer-Verlag.

Phillips, J. (1979). *Give Your Child Music.* London: Paul Elek.

Ray Graham, C., (1987). Music and the Learning of Language in Early Childhood. *Music and Child Development* (ed. Peery, Peery & Draper). New York: Springer Verlag.

Shor, N. (1989). Very Young Children and Piano Lessons. *International Journal of Music Education* (ed. Dobbs and Kemp), Number 13, 1989.

Thurman, L., Chase, M. and Langness, A.P. (1987). Reaching the Young Child Through Music: Is Pre-natal and Infant Music Education Possible? *International Music Education* (ed. Jack Dobbs), ISME Yearbook Vol. XIV

Verny, T. and Kelly, J. (1982). *The Secret Life of the Unborn Child.* London: Sphere Books Limited.

Wood, D. (1987). The Parent as Music Educator. *International Music Education* (ed. Jack Dobbs), ISME Yearbook Vol. XIV.

----- (1988). Early Childhood Development and Musical Experiences. *Early Childhood Development and Musical Experiences, III.* Early Childhood Commission Seminar, ISME: Brisbane, Australia.
Zemke, Sister L. (1988) Music for the Unborn Child. *Early Childhood Development and Musical Experiences, III.* Early Childhood Commission Seminar. ISME: Brisbane, Australia.

Some Additional Useful Material

Amery, H. (1988). *The Usborne Children's Songbook.* London: Usborne Publishing.
Barratt, C. (1984). *The Mother Goose Songbook.* London: Heinemann/ Chester Music.
Ben-Tovim, A. (1979) . *Children and Music.* London: A.& C. Black.
King, K. and Beck, I. (1985) *Oranges and Lemons.* Oxford University Press.
Hart, J. (1983). *Sing a Song of Sixpence.* London: Gollancz.
Nelson, E.L. (1977). *Singing and Dancing Games for the Very Young.* New York: Sterling Publishing.
Williams, S. and Beck, I. (1983). *Round and Round the Garden.* Oxford University Press.
----- (1986). *Ride A Cock Horse.* Oxford University Press.

--- The following titles in the Ladybird Books *Early Learning* Series are invaluable for English speakers:

A First Book of Nursery Rhymes
A Second Book of Nursery Rhymes
A Third Book of Nursery Rhymes
Finger Rhymes
Number Rhymes
Memory Rhymes
Talking Rhymes
Action Rhymes
Dancing Rhymes
Singing Rhymes
Skipping Rhymes

also

Learning With Mother (Books 1 - 5)