

**MUSIC MATTERS  
SUPPORTING SPEECH,  
LANGUAGE &  
COMMUNICATION**

Nicola Burke

# RESEARCH SHOWS HOW MUSIC PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN THE EARLY YEARS

in supporting young children's early development, particularly in communicating and in emotional understanding and early patterns of adult-infant attachment. Where sensitive adults respond to babies babble and gestures by reciprocating, and extending by building on young children's innate musicality, playful interactions through songs, rhymes and movement have been seen to be fundamental to language development and healthy wellbeing. It is important therefore, to see music threading through these key areas and not being confined to a single area of creative development as suggested by the current EYFS.

*MERYC (Music Educators & Researchers of Young Children)  
response to the 2011 Tickell review of the EYFS*

# INFANT-DIRECTED SPEECH

- ⦿ Infant-directed speech is often described as ‘sing song’ in style and is generally more accepted and expected to be used by women, particularly mothers whilst communicating with their children.
- ⦿ This is generally known and referred to as **motherese**.
- ⦿ The term **fatherese** has since evolved but is less understood and used than motherese.

# MOTHERESE, PARENTESE

- The prosodic modifications of infant-directed speech, such as its large pitch contours and rhythmic patterning, make the speech more like music. Infants respond to and attend to these musical qualities, which communicate meaning. (Rock et al. 1999).

# COMMUNICATIVE MUSICALITY

*The term communicative musicality is not to imply so much that Mother/infant communication is musical-rather that what we generally call music is one particular drawing-together of the elements of pulse, quality and narrative- elements that are intrinsic to all human communication.*

**(Colwyn Trevarthen & Stephen Malloch)**

# WHY IS SINGING IMPORTANT?

It supports children to:

- ◉ Develop listening skills
- ◉ Develop growing vocabulary
- ◉ Rehearse words and phrases
- ◉ Express feelings and emotions
- ◉ Understand communication, rhyming and phonics
- ◉ Intonation
- ◉ Develop memory

# WHY IS MUSIC MAKING IMPORTANT?

- ◉ Encourages children to explore, question & learn
- ◉ Encourages & supports listening
- ◉ Supports communication development
- ◉ Supports fine & gross motor skills & coordination skills
- ◉ Inclusive for all
- ◉ Develops confidence & self-esteem
- ◉ Develops children's understanding of the environment & world
- ◉ Encourages social skills such as turn taking
- ◉ Supports mathematical development

# MUSIC AND THE BRAIN

- In relation to music, the left hemisphere of the brain is involved in the words of songs, whereas the right hemisphere is engaged with the tune. Thinking and learning are enhanced when both hemispheres of the brain are stimulated, and music plays a vital role in this stimulation.



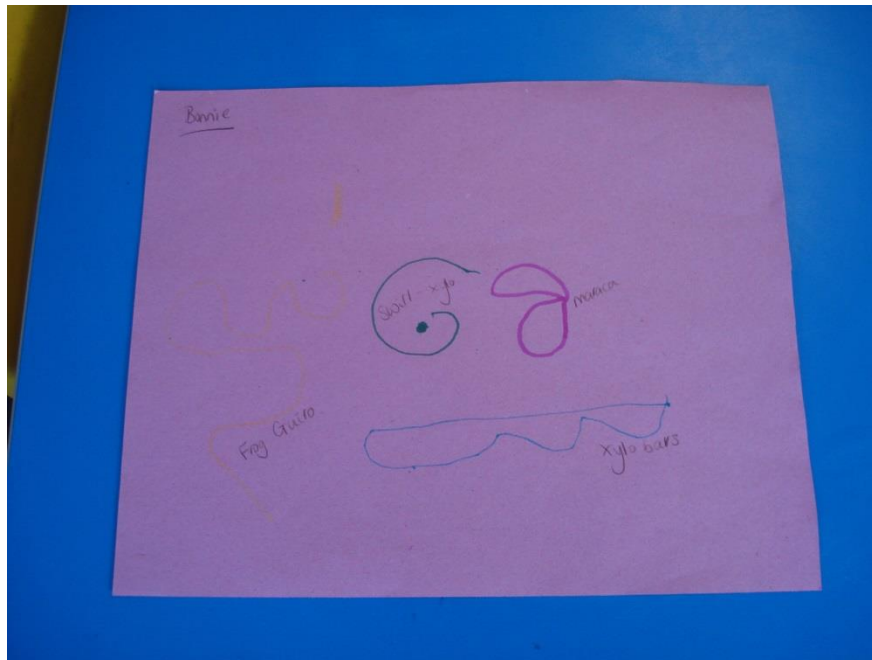
# MUSICAL PLAY

- ◉ Things to look out for in children's music making:
  - ◉ Patterns
  - ◉ Experimenting with sounds
  - ◉ Spontaneous singing/vocalising-singing during play
  - ◉ Movement with music making
  - ◉ Describing sounds

# MARK MAKING TO SOUNDS

- Children can be encouraged to mark make and create pieces of music which can be represented visually. Invite children in small groups or individually to draw to the sound of an instrument. The swirlxylo is a great instrument to start with as it has such a distinctive sound. Once children have created a symbol/picture of the sound introduce another sound for them to draw. You can then copy the children's representations, create a visual pattern and invite the children to play the pattern back. You can extend this further by introducing more sounds and inviting children to create their own pieces of music by drawing their own patterns.

BELOW IS A PICTURE OF MARKS THAT A 3 YEAR OLD HAD CREATED OF INSTRUMENTS. YOU CAN SEE DISTINCTIVE DIFFERENT DRAWINGS OF DIFFERENT INSTRUMENTS.



# DICE GAME

- ◉ In circle time have a selection of instruments in the centre of the circle. Pass a dice around the circle and say the following rhyme:

**Pass the dice, pass the dice, pass the dice  
around,**

**When the dice stops, can you make a sound?**

- ◉ When you say the word 'stops' whoever has the dice can then roll it. Invite the child to then play the number on the dice using the instruments in the circle. They could play x amount of different instruments or x amount of sounds using one instrument.

# INVITE CHILDREN TO CREATE A PIECE OF MUSIC

- ◉ Set up a music table with a selection of instruments; invite children 1 by 1 to create a piece of music, record this with a video camera or a dictaphone and play the pieces back to the children. If revisited regularly children will become familiar with the activity and you will often see children developing their own ideas.
- ◉ In small groups, invite children to make up a piece of music. The only 'rules' needed are that they need to start and stop. Children often negotiate and work this out themselves in small groups. Record their pieces and play the pieces back to the children. Alternatively you can offer a theme to children to compose around to create a ***soundscape*** - a piece of music which depicts a scene e.g. a rainy day, a day at the seaside.

# INVITING CHILDREN TO MAKE UP THEIR OWN SONGS

- This can work particularly well during circle time and if revisited regularly the children often become very familiar with the activity and become confident in creating their own songs. You will regularly see children creating their own songs during their individual and group play. If you observe a child creating a song you could offer the opportunity for the child to share their song during circle time.

# TUNE INTO LISTENING

Free online resource

[www.macbirmingham.co.uk/project/tune-into-listening-project/](http://www.macbirmingham.co.uk/project/tune-into-listening-project/)

# INSTRUMENTS

- [www.mesdirect.com](http://www.mesdirect.com) (Suppliers of instruments. Tel: 08450 264 703)



*The human ability that makes this communication possible from the beginning of life is the same ability that creates symphonies, dance, and poetry. It is human musicality.*

(Trevarthen & Malloch)