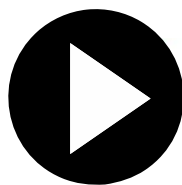


MERYC-England
Conference

**Music in Early
Childhood:
New Directions
and
Valued Traditions**
Bristol



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MERYC-ENGLAND 2018

**Music in Early Childhood:
New Directions
and
Valued Traditions**

9th & 10th November 2018

Colston Hall, Bristol

ABSTRACTS OF PROCEEDINGS

Edited by Dr Alison Street

MERYC-ENGLAND is registered charity No. 1169504

Introduction: Dr Susan Young

The theme of the conference, 'New Directions and Valued Traditions', aims to capture the careful balance between holding on to what is valuable in the long-standing traditions of early childhood music education while, at the same time, recognising present-day challenges and finding the new directions they call for. Early childhood music education embraces pedagogical traditions that reach back into the last century and that will always remain vibrant and relevant – the fundamental importance of embodiment and movement, of voice and song, of music interwoven with playful activity. Yet at the same time children's lives are changing with the arrival of new technologies, changing conceptions of parenting, increasing diversity with the movement of populations and an education, policy and economic climate that creates considerable challenges. Where then to find the balance? This conference day provides an occasion to come together as a community: to step back from everyday practice, to listen, to reflect, to discuss, to share ideas and to debate.

MERYC-England

MERYC-England is an independent, self-funding charity that works to promote good practice in early childhood music education. The charity encourages and supports the integration of good quality research with practice and aims to achieve this through one day conferences and close collaboration with the biennial European MERYC conferences. MERYC-England also supports and runs professional development programmes through its partnership with the Centre for Research in Early Childhood, Birmingham. For more information, including the constitution, please take a look at the MERYC website.

Acknowledgements

The MERYC -England conference organising committee would like to thank the generous contribution made by Take Art and to acknowledge the significant support from Bristol Plays Music and Bristol Music Trust in allowing us to hold our conference at the Colston Hall. Thanks are also due to all colleagues and friends who give up their time, on a voluntary basis, to make these events happen, and whose energy and inspiration provide the impetus for a community dedicated to early childhood music education to come together.

Keynote Presenter: Katherine Zeserson

Katherine is a musician, educator, coach, facilitator and strategic advisor. Her work is grounded in harnessing the power of reflective practice to inspire human development and build community. She has a varied free-lance portfolio combining organisational and leadership development with design and delivery of professional training in a wide range of music education and cultural contexts; one to one coaching and mentoring; guest teaching; short-term consultancy; speaking engagements and creative practice as a musician and writer.

Over the last 35 years she has won an international reputation as a strategic thinker, leader, facilitator, trainer and educator across a wide spectrum of organisations and communities - from early years' settings to universities, grassroots women's groups to local municipality departments, and small arts collectives to government ministries, major arts centres and concert halls. From 2001 to 2015 she was Founding Director of Learning and Participation at Sage Gateshead in the Northeast of England.

Current organisational clients include: Snape Maltings (Aldeburgh UK), Music Generation Ireland, Wicklow County Council (IRL), European Concert Halls Organisation, Dash Arts (UK), Luxembourg Philharmonie Royal Opera House (UK), Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (UK).. She is Programme Director for the Paul Hamlyn Foundation initiated inspire-music, and holds a consultancy role working with Santa Marcelina Cultura (Sao Paulo, Brazil), delivering socially engaged music programmes with young people . She is a founder member of UK-based a cappella vocal quartet Mouthful.

Keynote Presentation

Being music - being ourselves: authenticity, diversity and joy

What does music mean in our lives – and specifically in the lives of our youngest community members? What do children need from their earliest musical experiences? What can we do to meet those needs? How might reflecting deeply on authenticity, diversity and joy inspire us?

We don't *make* music, but rather we *are* music. We become music as we become ourselves, when we are fully aligned - mind, body, spirit. This feeling of authenticity arises when we act curiously, listen attentively, recognise and explore our feelings about the music, stay alive to the shifting dynamic of those feelings and the stimulation of our thoughts and ideas – our personal musical authenticity derives from our energy, choices, reflection and presence. How do we create environments for children to experience that authenticity for themselves?

Music is diverse because we are diverse. Diversity in music offers us a powerful metaphor for living – because musical diversity is human diversity. Music education that is authentic and diverse is therefore truly human. Around the world we can observe many different approaches to music education; from the highly regulated to the entirely under the radar; from the technically focused to the emotionally driven; from the selective to the inclusive. In many countries some or all of these are present to some degree; in many single institutions some or all of these are present to some degree; in many children's lives some, all or none of these are present. What would each of us like to do about that? How might we do that?

And most important of all, we tap into the deepest shared fun and joy in our open-hearted musical becoming. It's so enjoyable to find our different selves in music and explore the infinite aspects of our own musicality and creativity. This is what we share with all those we work with when we are fully present in our own musical authenticity – our own authentic selves.

Katherine Zeserson
MERYC November 2018

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Practice Papers

Stretch, Sing, Relax.

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Abstract

Stretch Sing Relax is a well-being pilot project for 'Just Babies' new parent group run by Letchworth Children's Centre. A twenty minute session at the group offers the traditional values of singing and by adding new directions in the form of movement and relaxation aims to help the adults feel good about their lives as new parents, helps prevent the possibility of isolation and promotes positive well-being.

This project developed by myself with the Children's Centre draws on principles and research from 'Five to Thrive' (Baby Brain Hertfordshire) and also from Kathy Cairn, Alison Street, Peter Hannon, Cathy Nutbrown, Ranjan Chateree and Jon Kabat-Zinn. The participants are usually mothers of babies up to six months old living within a ten mile radius of Letchworth. There are no criteria for attendance and no questions asked. Some fathers and grandparents attend. Play leaders also join in.

The project aims to identify songs, musical listening, stretching, movements, relaxation and mindfulness ideas that parents can do alongside their new-born and to train and mentor play leaders in these ideas for future use. A twenty minute slot where I lead activities, giving reassurance that participation is optional and singing, crying, screaming, sleeping responses are all accepted without question or judgement. Among the activities are gentle songs with ideas to help parents develop confidence to sing along, a song being mindful of baby, a playful song with bouncy interaction,

An activity focusing adults on posture, breath, stretching and twisting, a focus on baby and adult dance and movement. Emphasis is on stamina, agility, freedom of movement and one-to-one interaction as well as listening to music and relaxation for parent and baby together.

Most parents join in and ask for more. An initial questionnaire asking about listening to music, keeping fit and relaxation and mindfulness has been collected and discussed amongst parents. Play leaders are taking some of the activities and adding them to their programmes. Final discussions with the team have included their own personal development due to the turmoil resulting from the national context of the Children's Centre reorganisation.

Key words relaxation, mindfulness, singing, movement

Pop-up Reflection Stand

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Abstract

Sharing music with young children is extremely rewarding and unique work but it is not without its issues. As many EY music practitioners are self-employed and/or work in isolation they often miss out on the chance to discuss their work with a colleague who understands the joys, and fears of the role. The conference setting therefore provides a perfect opportunity for delegates to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences with others who can fully empathise. As it can sometimes be difficult to share personal experiences with people on first meeting, the pop-up reflection stand provides an informal and easy way of starting conversation by providing a focal point and 'topic' ideas (which could be suggested by others prior to the conference) to spark discussion. By being available at the free time points during the day everyone has the opportunity to make a connection if they choose.

The value of the pop-up is in enabling sharing thoughts on practice, both positive and negative, and the sense of camaraderie which many working in this field miss out on. At the end of the day a short session on what had been the main thoughts, ideas and topics discussed could be presented back to the group.

Keywords support, discussion, practice

Symposium: Where does Early Childhood Music Education fit?

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Abstract

Early Childhood Music is often not included in Early Childhood programmes of study nor is it considered to be part of Music Education in England. This can lead to music being overlooked in Early Childhood Education practice and the Early Childhood Music Community feeling isolated. So where does it fit? Perhaps it shouldn't fit anywhere as it is such a distinct area of practice that requires specific skills and knowledge. This discussion-based interactive session will involve an exploration of Early Childhood Music Education in England. The session will offer an opportunity for discussion considering the key messages that need to be shared with the wider Early Childhood Education and Music Education communities. The session will adopt the 'World Café' style of conversational process. This will enable participants to engage in discussion and reflection, to explore where Early Childhood Music 'fits' from a range of viewpoints.

Key themes drawn out during the discussions will be shared. This will support those involved in Early Childhood Music Education to develop an understanding of the different perspectives held by others. It is important for everyone working in Early Childhood Music to have a voice, and to have an understanding of the bigger picture to enable appropriate and meaningful musical experiences to be offered to young children.

Keywords Early Childhood Education (ECE), learning communities, music

Notes from nursery: The inside story - a personal perspective

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Abstract

Current thinking, amongst early childhood educationalists, focusses on the child as an active participant in their learning and the use of play to enhance this learning. It looks at how such developmentally appropriate practices can be used to create a child-centred approach to teaching.

This short presentation will look at the musical life in a school nursery setting from a personal perspective. I am an early childhood music practitioner. However, my role within the setting is not as 'the music lady' who attends once a week for half an hour, but as a TA, who works 2 full days in the setting. This has afforded me the opportunity to witness, first hand, all the children's music that goes on within a setting - the physical, vocal, social, cognitive, emotional and creative music making that occurs as the children play, sometimes on their own, sometimes with peers, sometimes with adults (Niland, 2009). It has enabled me to participate in the children's music on their terms, to observe the children as creators of their own musical landscapes, and to be part of the music making rather than the instigator thereof. This has led me to question the role of the adult in early childhood music and in particular the role of the specific music session. How do I marry the child-led approach that is so prominent in current educational thinking with circle time/music time, which appears to be a more adult-led activity? Is this traditional approach to music within a setting appropriate for the children? How does the child's perspective fit into this model? Does it allow for their freedom of expression, for their ideas to emerge? How does it fit in with the multi-modality of their music? How relevant is it to them?

My time in the setting has also highlighted other points to ponder. Nursery life does not exist in isolation. Children and staff come to the setting with histories and narratives - contextual issues - which may influence how they are on any particular day. The visiting music practitioner may have little notion of these and yet such issues have a part to play in our musical relationship with children (Young, 2018).

Key words child-centred music sessions, developmentally appropriate practice

The music inside me: Exploring The Educational and Emotional Significance Of Music Making In The Lives Of Adopted Children.

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Abstract

This presentation explores a collaborative research process between myself as a music practitioner and four adopted children aged between 4-7 years and their parents and teachers based in a North London Primary School. The action research study formed my final Masters dissertation in 2017. I originally embarked on this research based on observing the overwhelming significance music-making seemed to have on a small cluster of children I had worked with in nursery who were all adopted and who were also experiencing challenges in their transitions to primary school. As a result of this research the work now continues as a bespoke music programme for adopted and looked after children delivered weekly within the same school. It supports children from reception to year 6 linking closely with the school special needs coordinator and their families.

The study explores the importance of music in each of the children's lives through practical work including song writing, musical free-play and improvisation with the children themselves and recorded conversations with staff and parents. It uses the technique of 'poly-vocal ethnography' where sessions were filmed and shared with each of the participants to explore multiple perspectives and shared understanding about how to develop approaches together. It explores a political context where provision for the arts is increasingly threatened and investigates possible barriers to school's prioritising music and arts provision.

The work looks at the emotional toll of adoption within the lives of the children, their parents and their school. It explores attachment disorders and other associated conditions and by no means offers the ultimate solution to every challenge faced by participants but offers a variety of ways in which music can support to develop confidence, self-esteem, build and strengthen attachments and offer emotional comfort to these children through their educational journey. Findings have implications for the use of music in creating more 'attachment aware' schools and the use of a 'strengths -based approach' to create a more motivational and nurturing climate for all children who may be experiencing difficulties in school.

Keywords attachment, creativity, inclusion

Hear my voice, share my song: Intergenerational music-making for communities

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Abstract

General intergenerational programming is well established in Japan and the US (Newman, 2014), and enjoying increasing popularity in the UK (Channel 4, 2017). However, intergenerational music-making is elusive in established literature. Hear My Voice, Share My Song is the umbrella name used to test different models of intergenerational music work since 2015. Currently, it encompasses two projects, one with under 5s (some in a nursery setting and some with their families) and older people in a community setting, and the other in a care home with families (focusing on KS 1 age group) from the local school. Both projects had aims around developing knowledge and awareness of music and culture of the local community, increasing social connectedness, increasing informal music-making at home, workforce development, strengthening community links, developing my own practice as a community musician and addressing the issue of sustainability of projects.

A range of data collection methods was used, including baseline and endpoint questionnaires (using adaptations of standardised tools), weekly feedback 'postcards' (which could include drawings, writings, or anything else participants wanted to use), photos and videos, verbal feedback, a pictorial feedback method and the Early Years Musical Assessment Scales. A range of musical approaches was used, including adult-led, participant-led and musical free play to foster positive relations between all participants. This could also include singing, movement, instrumental play, song writing and sharing favourite songs. Intergenerational music-making does not have a specific pedagogical approach, although fundamentally, a Community Music approach is employed. Both research and practice in this area is fledgling.

Overall, both projects received positive feedback from participants, with musical behaviours changing, at least for the duration of the projects. However, it is recognised that significant impact is difficult to measure in a short timescale with limited participant numbers.

It was apparent that the work is developing and exploratory, but popular with participants and organisations working with the specific age groups involved in the projects. Social and musical aims share equal standing and the sessions are shaped to reflect this. Further exploration of practice and more research is needed in future.

Keywords intergenerational, community music, participatory, workforce development, sustainability

Family Sounds: Exploring co-creation with children in early years

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Abstract

Background and aims

In February 2018, Wigmore Hall Learning (WHL) led workshops for children in early childhood and their families, entitled Family Sounds, which centred on co-created practice; creation of art where all partners are equal. Led by Sound Connections (SC), the aims of the project were to articulate co-creative practice with children and explore how the practice could influence the WHL programme and the sector. The mixed approach included facilitating a youth participation workshop; observation of artist planning sessions; observation of workshops and debrief with the artistic teams.

Reflections: To enable co-creative practice with children we must consider the significance of adult behaviour to hold the space and support creativity; the potential of props, lighting and environment to provide inspiration and focus; the importance of narrative to provide a safe framework and the role of musical underscore and the opportunities within technology. What skillsets are required? The artistic team realised a diversity of behaviours, in particular: creativity, awareness, modelling, negotiating, affirmation, holding the space, freedom, anticipation, flexibility and patience.

What are the challenges to delivering work in this way? Adult behaviours and a lack of understanding of children's imaginative play can present barriers to co-creation and the inherent need to create a 'finished product' jars with the very principles of co-creation. Does background and existing cultural engagement impact co-creation? Background and existing cultural engagement affects adult behaviour and children's capacity to co-create. Careful and sensitive support creates an environment where all participants feel comfortable and relaxed.

Conclusions

Co-created practice ebbs and flows and is not a permanent state in which we work with children. Co-creation may not always produce artistically high quality music, but this is not the intended aim. It's about process and connections between people. This presentation will explore how we meaningfully and authentically co-create with children and unpack the skillsets, challenges, barriers and context that impact this practice. We will hear from music leader Esther Sheridan and Sound Connections Programme Manager Julia Roderick, who will reflect on the learning and explore how this practice can impact the wider music education community.

Keywords co-creation, families, musical play

Research Papers

The role of play in early years string teaching with children aged 4-7 years

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Abstract

Play is fundamental to the way that children learn, and appropriate learning strategies are of critical importance in defining successful beginner string teaching. Although my experience of music education with young children in public sector nursery and key stage 1 settings was full of child initiated and improvised musical play, I found this was not the case when delivering music education classes to children aged between 4 and 7 years in a junior conservatoire setting. This paper presents the findings of a small-scale qualitative exploratory study, investigating the kinds of musical learning experiences young children have when beginning to learn a stringed instrument. Three research questions formed the basis of my enquiry:

- What kinds of musical learning experiences do children (aged 4-7 years) have through beginner string programmes?
- What are the perceptions of play based approaches amongst specialist string teachers?
- What are string teachers' perceptions of developmentally appropriate teaching practices for young children?

Data was collected in three parts: An anonymous questionnaire for teachers, a focus group to discuss initial findings, and finally, individual interviews with established providers of music education and teacher training. By using interpretive, content analysis procedures, three themes emerged from the data: Common approaches to continued professional development focus almost exclusively on an adult led teaching agenda; A traditional teaching approach informed by the teacher's personal experience, and third, considerable use of exams to shape curriculum and define progression.

This paper concludes that child led musical play is fundamental to how children learn and develop. This research suggests however that traditional teaching focuses mostly on instrumental skills through an adult constructed and led agenda.

Moving forward I hope this research will add to the discourses around pedagogical approaches to string teaching, challenge our perceptions of what developmentally appropriate practice might look like in the context of early years string teaching.

Keywords music education, traditional teaching, pedagogy

Music Identity, teacher confidence and teacher education: Findings and discussion from a mixed methods study of music learning and development in the school reception class in England.

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Abstract

Stunell (2010) suggests there is a correlation between teacher's deficit in confidence, with a perceived lack of competence and agency. The present study seeks to explore the nature of teacher's confidence with regard to facilitating musical learning and development of children in the Reception Year at school. Purposive sampling of a particular population of Reception teachers provided the questionnaire respondents (N=39) and the interview participants (N=8) emerged as a 'nested' subset in this mixed methods study. Reflecting on the mostly significant role of music in their own lives, describing their musical experiences and enthusiasms, sharing their musical identities did not translate into positive confidence measures in the quantitative data for these Reception teachers. This presentation explores the issues surrounding the contributory factors, as well as the impact of Initial Teacher Education and opportunities for Continued Professional Development on teacher identity, confidence and self-efficacy. Findings suggest that the strong personal musical identities expressed by most of the Reception teachers did not always transfer into their professional sphere of life. Furthermore, it is proposed that should teachers view themselves as ill-prepared or lacking in competence to teach music, then they may question their self-efficacy, which will impact on their level of confidence, resulting in the self-fulfilling prophecy of underperformance in the classroom. Implications of these findings point to a need for further reflection and study with a view to devising an innovative strategy to break this potential cycle of perception of inadequacy.

Keywords Music identity, teacher confidence, teacher education

Words gained and music lost: A study exposing an interplay between language skills and observable musical behaviours of three-year-old children

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Abstract

A study, carried out by the author in two Children's Centres in the South West of England as part of a Youth Music funded project over fifteen months between 2016 and 2017, aimed to demonstrate a link between an increase in the amount of active music making by children (aged 2- to 3-years at start) who were identified as being "at risk", and accompanying increases in the EYFS Prime Area of Communication and Language. The musician/researcher/author attended one three-hour session per week for each of four cohorts, delivering adult-led sessions, facilitating musical play and observing child-initiated musicking. She employed music pedagogies influenced by Dalcroze and Kodály, with expressive Sign Supported English, traditional rhymes plus songs introduced by the children.

The author gathered 1080 discrete (Reactive, Proactive and Interactive) Sounds of Intent (SOI) observations from children (n=104). These were initially gathered when musical behaviours were heard or seen. After 503 SOI data points had been gathered and a disparity found between the quantity of data gathered for girls and boys, the subsequent 577 SOI data points were collected "per child". The Centres' professionals gathered and supplied EYFS data on a targeted group of children. By the end of the project, full sets of SOI and EYFS data were available for sixteen children. Comparing the sixteen children's observed musical (SOI) data with their communication (EYFS) data, an overall correlation (Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, $r > 0.65$) was found for seven children. There was no significant correlation between these measurements for nine of the cohort.

Examining episodes of individual children's progress revealed that for the majority (n=11) when language skills increased, coincidental musical behaviours decreased. This phenomenon partially explains the low correlation found. During the project, the link between communication and music for these two- to four-year olds appeared to be significantly related but not in the simple, positively correlated way that was anticipated. Whilst the author challenges the performance bias of an observation-based assessment of young children's musicking, for many of the children in this study it appeared that when words were gained, music was lost.

Keywords Sounds of Intent (SOI), EYFS, communication

Music making and the potential impact for looked after children

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Abstract

Within the United Kingdom there are numerous music projects working with looked after children and their support network. However, there is little research currently around the impact that engaging in music making has on the children particularly in helping them overcome the difficulties in their lives and the wider impact that engaging within music has on their support network. This presentation aims to examine the impact that engaging within music making has for a fostered and adopted children, by exploring the following questions:

- *What if any are the holistic benefits that engaging in music projects has for a looked after child?*
- *What impact do these holistic benefits have for the family/support unit in the child's lives?*
- *How are facilitators and organisations developing and running projects, to meet the musical needs as well as the development/care needs of the child?*

To understand the impact that music making is having a case study strategy was employed. Two projects contributed to the data collection (1) Loud and Clear family learning, a project based in the North East of England working with foster children (aged 0-5 years of age) in a weekly music project, (2) Loud and Clear family learning, a sister project working with newly adopted children (aged 0-5 years of age). Undertaking focus groups, interviews and participatory observations enabled insights to be gained into how facilitators were delivering sessions and the impact that engaging within these sessions had for participants.

Results from the study indicated that engaging in music can play a critical role helping children to develop secure attachments, build routine and develop their confidence. Alongside building upon their interest in music and developing their musical skills.

This research brings to light the importance of providing music making opportunities for looked after children and the vital resource it can be within their lives. By developing an understanding of the impact that music making has for a looked after child, in terms of their musical development and personal development music educators can strive to make sure that their workshops are meeting both the musical needs of the participants and the care needs.

Key words looked after children, support network, music making, community music

Exploring how early childhood teachers' engage in music-making with children in early years' services in Ireland.

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Abstract

The research is part of a doctoral study, partially funded by Cork Institute of Technology.

In this ongoing study, the researcher will explore how early childhood teachers' (ECTs) engage in music-making with children age three to six in childcare settings in Ireland. The study will identify what musical strategies ECTs employ and how music is understood, interpreted and created in a variety of situations. The study hopes to provide a broader perspective and a deeper understanding of how ECTs engage in music-making.

Presently, there are three curriculum documents used in the Irish early childhood education system. For this study I am going to focus on *Aistear*¹(2009), the early childhood curriculum framework for all children from birth to six years. *Aistear* is most commonly used amongst ECTs and describes children's learning and development using four themes; well-being, identity and belonging, communicating, exploring and thinking.

The research will employ a mixed-methods design for collecting and analysing data. Data will be collected via ethnographic field observations and in-depth face to face semi-structured interviews from early childcare settings across the southern region of Ireland. Skype/telephone interviews will be also be conducted with the ECTs from the early childcare settings.

The researcher will then invite ECTs and early childhood employers (ECEs) throughout Ireland to complete an online questionnaire survey. This survey will provide information about ECTs and ECEs viewpoints, understandings, experiences and knowledge of music in their settings. It will also generate a deeper insight into the kind of music practice used in initial professional education (IPE) and continuing professional learning (CPD).

Keywords early childhood teachers, early childhood music education, early years' services

¹ The Irish word for "journey"

Shaping Time: Reclaiming preschool music education for art education

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Abstract

Often preschool music education practices are deeply rooted in music as a means for something other than music itself. Notably Young (2015) expressed a deep concern that current early childhood music education, notwithstanding the cultural differences of many practices, is generally constructed "in the image of developmental psychology". Biesta (2017) is worried that using art for other things than itself will take out the art of the arts: "the issue here is that instrumental justifications for the arts do not really care about art and are therefore quite vulnerable".

The aim of this theoretical investigation is to engage in dialogue about an inherent element of music: time. Music as an Art of Time. Through the extension of temporal representation to musical time, meaning through the very nature of music itself as a temporal art, (Stambaugh, 1964) and as such supporting the reclaiming of preschool music education for art education, thereby touching upon music pedagogical consequences for practice.

My major concern is the recognition of music in the preschool age as a valuable artistic endeavour. It prepares not only for later musical participation and appreciation but also provides artistic and aesthetic engagement in its own right in the present. An emerging idea is to "argue for greater attention to subjective [...] approaches to support [musical] growth that call for ontological orientations to pedagogy as a relationship [musical dialogue] rather than a response or an intervention" (Farquhar & White, 2014).

I will argue that it is of music pedagogical significance to denote musical time as an important artistic element, thereby deepening the role of movement as an inherent musical means - which can be regarded as equal to the shaping of musical or temporal elements - to engage into musical artistic dialogue. This way it is possible to allow artistic research related subjectivism and non-discursive methods into practice as music pedagogical elements. By acknowledging the role of the teacher who can bring important elements to the music educational scene (Biesta, 2017b), the shaping of musical time in preschool music education can become the encounter of the doing of musical art (Biesta, 2017).

Keywords preschool music education, temporal art, pedagogy, movement

A study of children's participation in a nursery music session

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Abstract

This small, interpretivist study investigated children's participation in a nursery 'music session' led by a visiting practitioner. Recognising perceptions that the adult-led nature of the music session might restrict children's participation, the study aimed to explore: how children participate in a session; how values about participation are communicated in and through the session; and what factors might condition children's participation. Data were collected over three visits to a music session in a nursery setting and observations recorded in video form. Data were analysed according to themes identified in the literature and emerging themes. Reflective dialogues, stimulated by vignettes selected from the video data, were held with the children, early years practitioner and music practitioner. In the sessions children were observed taking part in activities and seemed to experience a sense of belonging. Few explicit opportunities for children's decision-making were observed but children were observed using behaviours of resistance to influence their own participation and sometimes that of others. Values about participation were communicated through adults' verbal talk, non-verbal and musical actions and through ritual and shared knowledge of common practices of the group. Communicative actions in the session were observed to communicate values not only about children's participation but also more widely about adults' constructions of the subject of music.

The findings suggested that children's participation in the music session may be both facilitated and restricted by the nature of the activity, the way the activity unfolds in time and through wider influences of the invisible environment of the setting, local authority, local music service and government. Consequently, the study suggests that increasing children's participation in the music session may require changes in practice as well as wider structural change.

Keywords early childhood music education, music session, circle time, participation, young children,

New technologies and young children's musical experiences and development

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Abstract

National and international reports have indicated a growing access for young children to new technologies, such as the Internet, tablets and smart phones. While young children may experience music through these new technologies, little research is focused on the role of new technologies in shaping young children's daily musical experiences and musical development. This presentation explores the nature of young children's home musical experiences with new technologies, in particular the tablets and smart phones. Empirical data was drawn from a larger doctoral study on musical experiences and development of young children of Chinese diaspora in London. A theoretical perspective of the 'Techno-Subsystem' (Johnson and Puplampu, 2008) in young children's daily environment is applied in order to highlight the influence of technology in young children's musical environment in the home. In the study, the participant mothers (n=20) kept a regular diary to record musical experiences and musical behaviours of their child in the family context for the length of six months. The diary account was supplemented by optional video and audio recordings. Three interviews were conducted with individual mothers in the beginning, middle and end of their participation in order to gain further insights. Three case studies were selected to illustrate the nature of young children's musical experiences with new technologies and how the parents viewed on the use of new technologies in the home. Results indicated that young children of the Chinese diaspora in London relied heavily on new technologies in their home musical experiences. Furthermore, their musical skills might be enhanced through appropriate use of new technologies. The emerging themes include: new technologies and music learning, new technologies and young children's musical cultures, new technologies and parenting practices, and parental values on young children's use of new technologies in the home. Music educators and policy makers should be aware of how new technologies might enrich young children's everyday musical experiences in a supportive family environment. New technologies might facilitate young children's development in and through music.

Keywords new technologies, early childhood, music education

New directions: Towards an early childhood music education for present-day children

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Abstract

Background

During the last 25 to 30 years childhood studies, together with early childhood studies, have had major influences on how young children and early childhood are understood and conceptualised. Yet the theories and perspectives from these substantial fields of scholarship have almost completely by-passed early childhood music education which continues to perpetuate traditional and conservative theoretical models and practical methods. In the UK some of the reasons for this conservatism are understandable given the challenging structural and political situations surrounding early childhood music education. However the consequence of this lack of engagement in developments that are taking place beyond its own small domain, is a music education which is increasingly out of touch with present-day childhoods, present-day digitised music practices, present-day parenting cultures and out of touch with academic and applied activity in mainstream early childhood education.

Aim

The main aim of this presentation is to suggest that the field of early childhood music education would benefit from more systematic engagement with theoretical developments in childhood studies (and early childhood studies) at large.

Main Contribution

To achieve this aim I will first problematise the dominant theoretical perspectives and concepts in early childhood music and describe how they impinge on, and constrain, practice. I will then draw on what are now familiar and established perspectives from childhood studies to create a case for alternative directions. Finally, childhood studies itself is currently undergoing important revisions of its core concepts and I will move on to introduce some of the most recent shifts in thinking brought about by new-materialist and post-humanist perspectives and suggest that these innovations may hold particular promise.

Implications

My hope is to see a field of early childhood music education that is more critical, more transparent, more alert to its own assumptions and biases and more interested in exploring theoretical innovations in wider fields of practice, research and theory. This is our only chance, in my view, to create music education practices which are genuinely in touch with contemporary childhoods in all their diversity.

Keywords childhood studies, present-day childhoods

Workshops and demonstrations

Little grains of SALTmusic: Distilling the learning from two years of action research

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SALTmusic is a 2 year Youth Music funded project bringing together the speech and language therapy practice of East Coast Community Healthcare and the music team at Great Yarmouth Community Trust. Multiple groups ran over 5 terms for families with children with a range of communication difficulties through speech and language therapist (SaLT) referral. The sessions were co-facilitated by SaLT and SaLT assistants, with early years music and dance practitioners. Through weekly and termly reflections we developed and adapted our methods, by the end of the 2 years it became apparent that the SALTmusic team shared a common language and some distinct areas emerged that formed the pedagogical approaches of SALTmusic. (Pitt, Arculus & Fox, 2017). The aim of this workshop will be to share with you some of these practical approaches co-developed through our community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Through interactive participation we will explore elements of the SALTmusic repertoire. The use of free play, non-verbal communication, including the principles of intensive interaction (Nind et al, 2001) and OWLing (Manolson et al, 1995). Our use of vocal play, micro songs and motifs, how we use these to empower the child through repetition, pauses and anticipation (Huron, 2006). We will also look at the use of Makaton signs in conjunction with natural gestures. The implications of SALTmusic for the children and families is apparent in the data and evaluation collected over the 2 years. Working with 93 children we saw significant increase in all key indicators. The development of communication skills is different for every child, as a team we noted that markers include attention, laughter, interaction, vocalisation and expressive movement (ALIVE). Finding joy and laughter has been vital in creating a relaxed and informal environment which takes the pressure off talking, drawing on the work of Charlotte Arculus and communicative musical funniness (Arculus, 2011) - with laughter being a signal of the effectiveness of the interventions.

The workshop will give participants an opportunity to experientially explore aspects of SALTmusic and to scrutinise and reflect on its potential implications for very young children who we may be working with.

Keywords interdisciplinary, music and communication, speech and language, two year-olds

It is what you do and it is the way you do it: How an improvisatory attitude can help to reconcile child and adult-led approaches to early years music making

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Abstract

The central theme of this workshop is improvisation and what it entails, to be explored through participation in activities used in training for early years practitioners.

An improvising attitude is useful in aspects of life. The performing arts and sport are particularly important in fostering it. One of the main reasons for this is that they are rooted in the body (Asma. 2017). In a world where information is so accessible it is easy to believe that all we should teach is 'creativity'. This presentation uses practical activities to suggest that knowledge, skills and understanding are an integral part of our ability to imagine and be creative. A theoretical underpinning is provided by: Asma S (2017) on improvisation, Haven (2007) on the science of story, Trevarthen C (2002,2010) on 'communicative musicality', Gopnik A (2001,2011) on child development and infant directed speech, Young S (2006) on children's spontaneous music making, Csikszentmihalyi M(1991) on 'flow', Lakoff (1992) on metaphor.

The aim is to share material and approaches that the presenter uses in EY settings and training sessions to engage children and empower practitioners (especially those who consider themselves 'unmusical') in their music making. The activities address components that are necessary for improvisation such as: structures, techniques, humour and attitudes. This will provide a concrete basis for discussion of some of the key messages we want to communicate to the wider early childhood education and music education communities. In particular we will discuss whether an improvisatory approach can help resolve some of the debates around:

- child- led versus adult- led approaches
- whether it is useful to emphasise connections between music and curriculum areas such as maths and language acquisition
- how new directions can be reconciled to traditional music education approaches

Attention will be given to the conditions that we actually find in settings and schools and how our limited input might be best directed. There are clear implications for practitioner training and for building bridges between people involved in early childhood education.

Keywords multi-modality, musical play, professionalism

Creative music learning environments for children and adults: Aiming for balance in pedagogical structure and improvisation

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Abstract

Every participant in music activities has something to give as an artist no matter what age, competency or talent he/she comes with. This is a pedagogical cornerstone for creating an artistic, creative learning environment that takes into account every learner's needs in music. From a pedagogue facilitating this learning process this calls for pedagogical sensitivity (Van Manen, 1991, 2008). Teaching is guided with the thought of 'opening possibilities for learning' (Huhtinen-Hildén 2017; see also Huhtinen-Hildén & Pitt, 2018).

This workshop gives an opportunity to share experiences in a workshop process and to reflect on the underpinning theoretical concepts of a learner-centred approach to early childhood music education. The process aims to deepen our understanding of theories, values and concepts that are living in our practice.

Interactive participation in a workshop process based on Sleeping Beauty's Pavane by Maurice Ravel will allow the exploration of the trajectory between pedagogical improvisation and structure. The workshop aims to explore what kinds of possibilities for musical learning could be opened through this process using the material of Ravel's composition? It also creates a shared environment to reflect professionally on the values, concepts and learning in early childhood music education.

In order to develop wider recognition of the significance of early childhood music education, we need to challenge our community of practitioners and researchers to create a shared vocabulary. Through discussion about learner-centred pedagogical thinking the workshop seeks to deepen understanding about our professional practice

This workshop and the reflective discussion inspired by the shared creative, pedagogical process will facilitate us to develop our field and to recognize our underlying values and thinking behind our practice. The stronger our community of practice among early childhood music educators is, the better we articulate and convince those making decisions that can affect the possibilities to develop early childhood music education.

Keywords pedagogical process, pedagogical improvisation, learning environment, families

Riding the musical moment

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Abstract

Background

Human interaction has an intrinsically musical nature (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009). Musical creativity occurs in moments of safety and support, and is alive and enjoyable in the moment. Children are easily able to be present in the moment. But many teachers lack confidence in music (Baldwin and Beauchamp, 2014), so feel unable to engage in a vibrant musical way with children's musicality.

Aims

To demonstrate that most adults have the necessary musical skills to support young children's musical development, using non-technical musical language. To develop participants' ability to use child-led approaches to music making. To encourage participants to trust the validity of their spontaneous ideas and creativity. To include children's emotions, as part of their experience and as a creative source.

Interactive participation

Activities: non-singing vocal warm-ups, enhancing listening awareness, silence, meditation bowls, gentle chimes, use of paper, tapping objects with beaters, listening to coathangers via strings held to our ears, what we see, hear and smell, and our moods; making sounds in response to them. Ways into music may use stories, movement, moods as starting points. Playing together; enjoying, and discovering we have the necessary skills. Validating and reflecting children's musical explorations; role-play mirroring exercise using instruments. Storytelling with instruments, puppets and song; small group exercise to create a short performance.

Implications

Practitioners' musical confidence, skills and repertoire increase. Practitioners enjoy making music with children and see music as an opportunity not a demand. This enjoyment communicates to children, giving permission and encouragement to express themselves, and helps them develop in all areas. When practitioners join in with the free flow of children's music in the moment, this ticks boxes across the curriculum (Hallam, 2010).

Specific value and meaning

This session provides a safe space for practitioners to find their own way to make music, so they can help children find their own music. Underlying ethos of accepting, validating and encouraging children's ideas and reality, to support emotional and cognitive development - using music as a vehicle for this (Turner, 1999). Genuine spontaneity provides an authenticity beyond that predicted in careful planning.

Keywords spontaneity, attunement, enjoyment

Posters

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 (Young,2007). Many work on a freelance, independent basis with little or no opportunity to share and discuss their work. In the 21st Century, reflection is considered to be a necessary part of personal and professional development (Moon,2004).

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

How the Certificate for Music Educators: Early Childhood has changed, influenced or validated practice

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Abstract

The Certificate for Music Educators: Early Childhood (CME:EC) is a new course designed for those working, or who wish to work in early childhood music. Upon completion, this course provides a recognised national qualification at Level 4. There were 8 students enrolled for the inaugural course, with some completing the course in June 2018 and others completing in either January 2019 or June 2019. More students have enrolled subsequently. The aim of the research was to understand how the CME:EC has changed, influenced or validated Early Years Music practice, with particular regard to the following areas which the course assessment criteria is based around:

- 1) Understanding children's musical learning
- 2) Planning, facilitating and evaluating children's musical learning
- 3) Reflective practice and professional development
- 4) Promoting positive behaviour
- 5) Equality, diversity and inclusion in music education
- 6) Safeguarding children

To ascertain the impact of the CME:EC course on early childhood music practitioners, a combination of online discussions and a short questionnaire were made available to all students on the course and the results were analysed. There were 6 responses to the questionnaire from a group of 10 eligible respondents. The questionnaire revealed four main areas of positive impact: professionalism and professionalisation of the work, perception of the value of access to quality Early Childhood music, skills development, and the acquisition of specialist knowledge and understanding of the work. The analysis of online discussions revealed the development of a supportive community of practice, sharing specific questions relating to the course assignment, skills sharing relating to the practical delivery of music work, and the sharing of links to useful resources. Overall, there has been a very positive response to the CME:EC from students in terms of their own perception of becoming more 'professional' in their work, and the impact the course has had on the lesson planning process in particular. Impact was also seen in terms of renewed advocacy for good quality early years music education by music practitioners, but also a newly emerging positive perception of early years music education by generalist early years practitioners.

Keywords training, qualification, professional, planning, perception, Early Years music education, skills development, knowledge, community of practice

Mood Music: Connecting music and emotional development

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Abstract

Background

Many children struggle with difficult feelings, with huge impacts on their cognitive learning (Figueroa-Sanchez, 2008). Children's distress is often discounted rather than engaged with (Koplow 1996). A key element of music is emotional expression, and almost all children enjoy making music. This work helps children use music to engage with emotional issues.

Participants

Large group, small group and individual work, in a Children's Centre and several primary schools. In-depth work with self-selected children in the Children's Centre and referred primary children.

Aims

To teach the language of emotions and relationships, helping children find a healthy response to difficult situations in their lives through making music connected to their own experience and to teach that music is not an abstract technical activity, but a personal expression.

Pedagogical approach

Music is inherently emotional, and allows children more articulate expression than language can. Principles of inclusion, respect and acceptance, combining child-led education, music therapy and humanistic psychotherapy. Koplow (2002) uses the term Emotionally Responsive Curriculum. Feelings (inherently acceptable) are differentiated from behaviours (subject to social constraints). Both can be sources of musical experience. I follow children's lead, giving choices about what music to make; and respond musically to their upsets and other moods.

Activities

Learning songs about moods at group times or assemblies, including facial, posture and whole-body expression of moods; a range of instruments available for children to use however they wish; mirroring as a way to encourage and support children's playing; making musical stories, using voices, instruments and puppets.

At different times I will observe their explorations, join in, help them extend activities, or initiate by singing or playing about what I see them feeling or doing.

Outcomes

Children develop confidence and attachment from creating their own musical narratives on their own terms. Children enjoy making music related to feelings, and don't always make 'happy' music when given the choice.

Conclusions and implications

Accepting and supporting children's emotional experience helps them move on in their personal journey. Emotions can be a stimulus for enhanced music making. Musical expression provides an accessible and fun way in to developing emotional literacy.

Keywords expression, acceptance, creativity



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