THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD MUSICAL EDUCATION

Abstract

Music is used in early childhood education to bring out children's strengths, build their talents, and support their development in other fields. It is a practice for establishing communication with children. The use of music in early childhood education has several methods, such as music and dance, listening to music, singing songs and making music. When considering bodily and psycho-motor development, the pre-school age is the most appropriate time and place for early childhood musical education. From a well-designed program, children can find meaning in life and learn how to develop into quality members of their local and global communities. For this reason, during the early stages of childhood development, musical education means taking a step toward the foundation of a successful future. Whether in application or methodology, this study underscores the importance of early childhood musical education.

Keywords: Early Childhood Music Education, Music and Movement, Music Making, Singing Songs, Music Listening
Erken Çocukluk Dönemi Müzik Eğitiminin Önemi

ERKEN ÇOCUKLUK DÖNEMİ MÜZİK EĞİTİMİNİN ÖNEMİ

Öz


Anahtar kelimeler: Okul Öncesi Müzik Eğitimi, Müzik ve Hareket, Müzik Yapmak, Şarkı Söylemek, Müzik Dinlemek

"I believe that education should begin with music. The element of rhythm gives humanity order and measurement, and the element of melody gives feelings of bravery, love and friendship."
–Plato

THE EFFECT OF MUSIC

Since Antiquity, philosophers, psychologists, doctors and educators have determined that music plays an important role in an individual's mental and physical development. In studies having to do with the relationship between music and human biology, it has been established that babies are both from birth ready to perceive music and a short while afterwards can give responses to sound. In the first year after birth, babies can differentiate between high and low frequencies and thick and thin tone qualities. In time, children learn about musical sound in four stages: 1) to notice the existence of sound; 2) to notice the difference between multiple distinct sounds; 3) to discover their own ability to produce and reproduce sound; 4) the role of sound in expressing thoughts and emotions (Andress, 1980: 49, 87). Building on this concept, children hear, learn, and even shape their lives according to the musical sound they experience, first from their mothers' womb, then from the lullabies sung by their mothers, then from the other people in the home, then from their environment, and finally from media organs like radio and television, CDs, records, etc. (Sun and Seyrek, 2002: 30).

In general, many children's interest in music is acquired through an early exposure in social settings around other children. This is because music is different from the other branches of art and this distinction is drawn from its aural nature. Music improves the quality and level of children's education. An education that includes music comes about in the form of changes, gains, corrections, and development in musical behavior. Nelly Caron says, while "musical
education should above all awaken the ability to hear, increase aural perception, and develop individual capability," it should at the same time fulfill its essential function of developing the human being (Yavuzer, 2008: 221). Music contributes to a person's emotional, intellectual and physical development. In this way, music is a great tool for childhood development. Children begin to identify themselves with the musical language of their environment and this has a lasting effect throughout the rest of their lives. According to Uçan, "with the foundation of a well-planned musical lifestyle, learning music is a period in which an individual gains musical behaviors or when existing musical behaviors can be changed" (Uçan, 1997: 106).

The concept that music has a positive effect on people can be demonstrated in a variety of ways. In one experiment, classical music was played for drops of water (for example, Beethoven's "Pastorale" Symphony and Mozart's 40th symphony), which were then left to freeze and the crystals formed by the frozen droplets were then photographed (Emoto, 2006: 8). The beauty of the resulting images is visual evidence of the positive effects of music. Continuing with this logic, the fact that the human body is made up of 70% water serves as evidence for the reason why a piece of music that conjures feelings of love can relax a person going through stress, difficulties, or anger; their increased feelings of love demonstrates the practical effectiveness of methodology in musical therapy. Other studies even show us that music has positive effects on plants and animals. In one such experiment, classical music was played for cows at a farm, and afterwards it was observed that the cows exhibited some positives behavior (Metin, 2009: 90). While observing the positive effects of music on humans and other forms of life, it follows that an education given to children from a young age can also have a significant positive impact in their growth and development.

**EARLY MUSICAL EDUCATION AND ITS METHODOLOGY**

Music, when taught to children via the active skills of listening and hearing, is at the same time an amazing vehicle for them to tap into their inner worlds and discover their true selves. It is an extraordinary vessel for the release of the boundless emotions of their inner selves. Music feeds a child's creativity and imagination; it enables him/her to always remain active and energetic; it gives them a sense of love and happiness. As Dalcroze puts it, "What is necessary is not to feel, identify, and unite the body and soul with music by listening through the ears alone, but rather to listen and identify with all of existence" (Yavuzer, 2008: 221).

While children are growing, attempts will be made to inculcate them with their surroundings via socially-acceptable games and activities. However, the issue in question is not only to expose children to such normative activities; it is how to uncover the hidden talents that are found in them and further develop them through alternative methods and forms of encouragement. Here the concept of "encouragement" should not be thought of in terms of social pressure, but rather in the spirit of not suppressing their innermost thoughts and feelings. Therefore, early childhood musical education takes on the important responsibilities of guiding, encouraging and developing children who are curious about their environment and open to learning and thinking in unconventional ways. Adult experts commonly believe in early childhood musical education for its ability to develop hidden talents and skills, and encourage an open and free social environment that children will need in their schools or in their private lives (Decarbo and Nelson, 2002: 210-242). That being said, before bringing about such an education, it should first be determined when and where it will be administered, and what artistic materials will be used; these conditions and materials should be acquired and the
program should then be implemented. As part of this education, great importance should be placed on progressive thinking and learning, and increased capacity for creativity, independence and openness to new ideas.

In early childhood musical education, close attention should be paid to the ability, sensitivity, and level of aptitude of children towards music with respect to other children of the same age. Doubtless it should be said that it is only after evaluating different levels of ability that musical skills can be properly developed; it should not be expected that a child with little or no aptitude for music be educated to the desired levels of a child with high aptitude in the same amount of time; it should be expected that people even with minimal talent be able to develop their musical abilities at their own pace. In this way, according to a well-guided curriculum, development will occur in the quickest and most efficient way possible; only in this way can a productive childhood musical education be implemented. In light of this, it can be said that the essential issue is people's "musical personalities," or the manner in which they derive pleasure from music (Karaçay, 2010: 38). After realizing an appropriate setting and conditions for early childhood musical education a child's musical talents can be developed in a productive way according to their own talent and aptitude.

If a child's musical talents are in any way suppressed or obstructed, it is an inescapable result that musical activities will be wasted and there will be no progress. According to Sun and Seyrek there are differences between a child's interest in music and a child's talent for music (Sun and Seyrek, 2002: 30). While children with an average standard of musical talent are the majority of cases, in the minority of cases children possess either very little or very high amounts of musical talent. If it is intended for a child to be recognized for his/her talents and developed as a singer, instrumentalist, or composer, then it is necessary to prepare the proper conditions for their education in a suitable fashion; even if a child has high levels of musical talent, if the proper setting and conditions are not met, it will not be possible to develop them into a successful artist. In light of this, it is clear that there is an important responsibility on teachers of preschool and primary school to discover a child's musical talent and place them on the correct path to development. Of course, it is not a preschool or primary school teacher's job to develop a child's musical talent. However, it is of the utmost importance that the teacher be able to direct a child from an early age in the necessary way to become a quality, knowledgeable musician who listens to and is able to perform beautiful music (Gifford, 1993: 33-46). Whatever style of music the child makes from an early age, in order for their ability to recognize quality in music to be developed they should work individually with an adult who, even if they are not a musician themselves, should have good musical taste (Sun and Seyrek, 2002: 32). This will be a way for the society as a whole to in the long term increase its musical quality. The old adage, "a tree bends while it is young," is pertinent here because musical education given to children at an early age will develop both their own spiritual and cultural quality as well as that of society.

An intermediate-level musical education has been achieved when children work on music and are able to express themselves in a clear and open way. This is not a behavior that can be gained through occasional practice in children of pre-school age, but rather is realized through knowledgeable and systematic activities and the consistent application of a particular method. While working on these activities, in order to have a lasting learning experience, when moving on to a new topic it is important to refresh the material from the previous lesson with new activities based on the earlier material. In time each child's skills and efforts will develop in an appropriate fashion due to the constant repetition, unification, in-depth penetration, and
connection of musical activities. Children's talent will also develop and increase with time, however there are certain limits according to their natural aptitude. The increase of musical talent is connected to these factors: musical ear, pitch memory, motor skills, intellectual capacity, and musical ability. Any child who is predisposed to these elements will develop their musical world as the day passes and they can be directed further on the path to being a successful musical artist.

For children to learn music it is most effective if they can incorporate it somehow into their everyday activities. This way it will be possible for them to bring out their musical talents while doing things that they already know and enjoy. Early childhood musical education should explain through games and necessary musical equipment how children should interact with their environment, and how they can live with others in a balanced and respectful way. The musical games that children learn should be intended to increase children's capacity for music. It should be assured that children willingly and enthusiastically join these activities because at this age children learn best through games (Anonymous, 1994). In order to eliminate inequality and injustice in social interactions between children their activities should be carefully monitored by the teacher without neglect.

**Music and Movement**

Irrespective of their level of individual musical talent, all children should be taught music through games that involve rhythm, movement, dance, and song (Tufan and Sökezoğlu, 2009: 205-214). The primary aim of this education should be to emphasize to the elements of rhythm and dance and to occupy children's minds with them. The shared goal of these elements is to demonstrate the use of the body as a vehicle of expression; movements made to music (steps, jumps, stamping of feet, turning, sliding, etc.) exercise a child's sense of rhythm. Rhythm is one of the foundational stepping stones of musical education; it is important for use of the entire body, developing bodily awareness, and gaining a habit of bodily movement (Wood, 1995: 7). These habits—absorbed awareness of the senses of touch, hearing, and sight—are formed together with the unification of the senses of time and place; rhythm is the first sign of our awareness of time.

From this perspective, rhythm can be defined as the counting of time. In order to understand one of the reasons for the existence of music, it is necessary to internalize well the balance of movement, rhythm and time. Music's fundamental natural elements are sound and movement. A movement made for any reason causes ripples in the air and this motion creates a sound wave. To say that the essence of sound is movement, and therefore rhythm, would not at all be incorrect. From this perspective, we can observe that rhythm is one of the cornerstones of music (Özmentes, 2006: 23-25). At the beginning, the use of music in such a way as to not prioritize any of the other musical elements (melody, pitch, etc.) is more effective because this is a method for comprehension of rhythm; in the next stage, teachers will incorporate into their lessons issues of musical enjoyment and a knowledge of the rules. With the help of movement, children will better understand the subject of rhythm. Rhythm takes on a role of medium between music and individuals. In this connection, understanding song and dance through games is an important form of expression which demonstrates the necessity of musical education to begin with movement and rhythm. In other studies, it has been highlighted that alongside this education rhythm, at this stage having games that develop creativity is also an effective possibility (Mangır and Aral, 1992: 41-50). Dance, because it meets the necessity of
expressing in movement the songs that the children will sing, can be used as an activity. While using dancing forms of expression such as walking, running, and jumping, children can create a palette of expression to which they can later add (Stellaccio & McCarthy, 1999: 1-23).

One of the techniques used in musical education, developed by Carl Orff, is called the Orff technique. In this pedagogical method, children derive pleasure from activities such as singing songs, poetry, trade-off competitions, clapping hands, improvisation, and dance, and these are combined with music when presented to the children. In the Orff method children are able to create their own music and dance, and can also improvise with confidence (Shamrock, 1997: 41; Dikici, 2002: 10-11). As we can see from the Orff method, rhythm, movement, and dance are important factors in teaching music to children from an early age.

Since songs in triple meter are difficult for children to perceive, when selecting pieces as much as possible it is preferable to choose pieces with duple meter. As a recommendation, it is necessary to choose pieces that have motives that are easily converted into dance movements. Another benefit of dance activities is developing social skills such as tolerance, an understanding of togetherness, and thoughtfulness and careful behavior regarding the other group members. From here, group exhibitions or activities should involve children working together or accompanying one another in partner activities (Hirler, 2005: 8-13).

Getting used to expressing songs with dance will gain importance when in later stages of musical education, instrumental music replaces songs with lyrics. This change will create difficulties for children because the reference points provided by the lyrics of the songs are nonexistent and therefore children will have to take their reference from the more abstract structures of music. Accompanying instrumental music, movements such as walking and running will increase children's focus on listening to such aspects as the music's rising and falling melodies, and the varying intensities and even stopping of the sound during rests (Wolf, 1992: 58-60). The rhythmic or musical nuances within a piece of music forming reference points for children give them opportunities to better understand and describe music through movement. In order to successfully pass along this style of listening it is required to have an intensive education in listening. Since this methodology is far from monotonous, it will give pleasure to children to help them better focus and learn.

**Listening to Music**

Aside from simply listening to music, children also learn the necessity of being quiet and concentrating; the later goal is listening to music. As with performance, every child's talent for listening is different. One of the important responsibilities of early childhood musical education is to distance children from the habit of listening to random music at home using electronic communication devices (Sims, 1986: 173-191). Firstly, children are able to listen to works of music while distinguishing the fundamental musical elements. In musical experience, it is possible to first organize pitches in a row and then perceive the passing of tones from one to another. Because of this, teachers will lay the foundation of this ability by making children listen to musical works that they already know and understand. Then the child can work to develop the skills of identifying pitch intervals, the connections between intervals and their relationship to tone; the name given to this method is comparable listening. In comparable listening, the examples need to be very distinct from one another such that the child can understand the differences they hear. For example, features such as the large or small pitch intervals, the notes of a piece of music being in major or minor, the piece being loud or soft, and
the rhythm being fast or slow should be clear. There is also a detailed kind of listening in which musical motives define specialties in certain melodic and harmonic structures. This kind of listening develops the ability to perceive musical elements in a detailed way. This style of listening is realized when pitches tied to a certain tonality and the melodic connections between pitches are given to children in such a way as to be able to distinguish them. This is one of the main goals of early childhood musical education (Barr and Johnston, 1989: 13-14). Immediately following this, the system of notation and necessary information regarding the learning of notation is required such that the child can become immediately adapted to the musical alphabet.

If a preference is to be made between major scales, which are generally more entertaining, and minor scales, which are more sorrowful, the majority of school songs were composed in major. However in recent years we can highlight the reality that this generality can change based on the composition of modal (makam) songs that have been formatted for children to be able to sing.

Lessons will be more impactful and lasting if children are encouraged to talk about correct listening habits. This should not be with the intention of asking students to report on what they hear, but more in the form of a conversation in a comfortable setting they can be asked what they feel and understand from the music. Whatever their answer is, the child should not be offended and it should be ensured that they feel comfortable. This is extremely important for children to be able to develop their ability to express themselves. In order for this to be possible, without forcing the child to focus and in order for the child to be able to grasp the meaning of the music, special attention should be paid to having children listen to and describe examples that are interesting, meaningful, short, and educational (Barr and Johnson, 1989: 15). While listening, care should be shown to well-planned messages, and the use of descriptive and explanatory pieces. These examples can be chosen from instrumental or vocal works. It is extremely important to use works that are comprehensible in terms of loud and soft dynamics, or pieces that gradually go from soft to loud or loud to soft. A knowledgeable listener can proceed to a more aesthetically perceptive kind of listening style than the average person with these concepts together with an increasing level of musical difficulty; otherwise this knowledge will not be absorbed (Abeles, Hoffer, and Klotman, 1984). Together with the ability to choose listening examples from all kinds and styles of music, teachers should also present educational examples of music in the modern classical style period. However much it is difficult for children to remember music from the modern period compared to the other periods, it would be beneficial not to exclude it.

The music being listened to will be extremely beneficial if it explains some kind of topic, specific event, or an emotion to the child a topic. This is because while listening the child will try to understand the relationship between the music and the topic and will pay attention to which topic is being explained by which section of the music. At the same time that this will be a reason for the development of the child's imagination, intelligence and memory, it will also be a way to increase their enjoyment (Sun and Seyrek, 2002: 33). The music that is played in the background while children are busy with other activities will also contribute to the child's habit of listening. It will even be a contribution to the development of the children's speed of learning, retention, and intellect while teaching them lessons in other branches. These factors will in time be vehicles for increasing children's comprehension, bringing the task of learning to an enjoyable state, and creating a more rooted understanding of music.

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Singing Songs

If we accept that the human voice is our first instrument, singing songs is the most natural vehicle for music, and alongside this can be understood as a form of expression. Using this vehicle children can express themselves at the beginning of the growth period in a melodic way by singing songs. For this reason singing songs is seen as an important form of musical expression for all children (Merry and Merry, 1950).

Singing songs is a device for a child to find their own life path and find themselves while distinguishing from the real world and imagination. In this connection, they will feel the need to sing songs just about every day for some reason. Singing songs will help the child's perceptive, intellectual, and emotional development. Due to the inability of children to be able to distinguish between reality and imagination on the same level as an adult, children will accept descriptive songs whose lyrics are composed in the manner of fairy tales and they may relive the story through song. This kind of activity will contribute to the development of the child's imaginary world. The most important topic for signing songs is the selection of materials and from which viewpoint it is necessary to draw their attention. In this connection, paying careful attention to the selected songs, whether from the educational or the instructional perspective, is required.

A song should be both interesting and educational. For example, songs that emphasize cleanliness, honesty, and friendship, that inform the importance of neighbors, that explain the importance of family ties or the celebration of special occasions or holidays can be given. The song should include the basic musical elements, it should form a unified whole between the words and the music, and it should be appropriate for the perceptive capacity of the child. The words of the song should be appropriate for the inner world of children and they should be encouraged to work on singing it. Since young children are more susceptible to learning by imitation, teachers should demonstrate the examples. While singing songs, children should be able to mimic animals, means of transportation, and people (like grandmothers and grandfathers). In order to develop talent for singing songs, the difficulty of the intervals and melodic passing between tones should be increased slowly in stages. In order for this process to be administered in a healthy manner, it is necessary to have separate voice education and breathing exercises (Lindeman, 2016: 16).

According to Mills, above all else children's singing of songs must be entertaining and it should be stated that all children will not be able to sing songs perfectly. This is because the educator can more accurately administer this process by making various corrections or fixing certain problems in later stages.

The practice of singing songs should be applied from easy to difficult taking into consideration the development of rhythm, melody, pitch and language. A repertoire selected from easy to difficult will gradually, and without challenging the child too much, assure their adaptation to singing songs; this will be necessary both for the health of their voice and their psychological condition (Andress, 1980: 49, 87). The traditional technique of imitation should be used up until a certain stage taking interest in the child's vocal development. It is necessary for children to gain the habit of singing songs without getting bored in a comfortable, clean and clear way. In connection with this, in order to determine the child singing errors, their vocal level and condition, and to apply a method to bring them to a higher level of singing ability,
there are many existing studies that measure the stages of ability. Among these, one of the most popularly used is the Rutkowski method, shown in the table below (Rutkowski, 1996: 365).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Behavioral Explanation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Presinger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,5</td>
<td>Inconsistent Speaking-Range Singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Speaking-Range Singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,5</td>
<td>Inconsistent Limited-Range Singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Limited-Range Singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,5</td>
<td>Inconsistent Initial Range Singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Initial Range Singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,5</td>
<td>Inconsistent Singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Singer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Rutkowski, problems mentioned in this table that occur with singing generally originate from the increase in group vocal education. In order for this problem to be solved
vocal education should be conducted individually or in smaller groups in order for it to be rendered more effective. As a result, teachers need to encourage children more to sing individually. Since the time of this research, which more or less covers all children who enter early childhood musical education, Rutkowski has been included in several studies. It can be seen that other researchers have benefitted from this study.

**Music Making**

Sound can be obtained through various different objects. Generally it is fun for children to create sound. These sounds when felt with a certain line and order change their meaning in large proportions. Therefore the line and order of sounds can be learned under the rubric of early musical education.

In order to express their thoughts and feelings, children will learn to use musical materials in an organized manner. Children with the feelings given by noticing and by using certain methods can create, feel, think, evaluate, reject, critique, control, express, and realize their own wants and musical styles (Biasini, Thomas and Pognowski, 1970). The sounds that children feel and take from the materials in their environment are their musical experience. Children will expand and develop new ways of expressing their melodic and rhythmic experiences through the use of basic musical tools (Moorhead, Sandvik and Wight, 1951).

As a reaction to outer stimulation, children will first use their the natural means of their bodies, their bodily organs, and voices. In later stages another means besides the body, namely an instrument, enters the picture. In examination of this situation, early musical education should begin with the child's natural percussion instruments, the hands and feet. Different ways of making steps (walking, running, stepping, stomping the feet, jumping) will be used in developing fashion. Snapping the fingers and other such movements can also be applied. As for the next stage, small percussion instruments can begin to be used. These are rhythmic (triangle, frame drum, cymbal, bell) and melodic (xylophone and metallophone) (L. Essa, 2010: 280). This application contributes to comparative listening while at the same time giving information about individual instruments. It is important to demonstrate with examples the use of instruments because in this way it will be more sympathetic for the children. While having the children try to play certain instruments the other instruments need to be taken out of sight. Along with respecting the task at hand and gaining knowledge about an instrument, this way will be more effective in allowing them to benefit. These measures should be planned in order that the child not be unhappy, not misunderstand, not to stifle the feeling of discovery, and not to damage the instruments. While it may be simple to fix damage caused to an instrument, it is important that the child learns to love and respect the instrument in order to protect it (Andress, Heimann, Rinehart and Talbert, 1973).

**Conclusion**

In light of all this information, early musical education causes a child's talent and music to meet and at the same time forms the foundation of their upbringing as future musical artists or knowledgeable, quality listeners of music. In order to lay this foundation, the method used is of great importance. While laying the foundation of rhythm and dance as ways for showing children how to use their bodies, as a second stage will come music the period of listening. Here, while at the same time as creating a habit of listening in the children, the main elements of what and how to listen will also be taught. In this later stage the children will form the habit of
singing songs. Singing, while at the same time helping to develop the child's senses, intellect, and emotion, is also important for bringing to an active stage the elements present in the song (rhythm, melody, and lyrics) from the perspective of music and text. While the children will first learn to gain musical habits (music and dance, listening, and singing) from reference points on their bodies, in the last stage an instrument enters the picture as a "medium" between the body and music. While the child is getting familiar with the instrument, he/she will learn to apply the bodily references for expression gained in the other stages, and this is the final stage of early musical education. In light of all this information, early musical education achieves the upbringing of sensitive individuals, and while aiming to develop the talents of people it also achieves the main point of enriching a person's inner world and teaching them to reflect this inner world in a positive way. These children who have been raised in a spiritually, physically, and psychologically healthy way will have laid the foundation for a successful future. It is therefore possible to do this successfully with an informative and quality musical education given at an early age.

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