Early Childhood Music Newsletter

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2000-2001 Early Childhood Music SRIG Leadership

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Inside this Issue: page

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR:
Joyce Eastlund Gromko

Greetings! I hope you have had a rewarding semester of teaching this fall with many opportunities to watch all your students grow in musical development. In addition to my teaching on campus this semester, I have also been teaching general music every day at an urban junior high school in East Toledo. Several music education majors have assisted me in building a safe and trusting classroom environment where our students can develop their musical artistry.

Our experience in the urban environment has underscored for me the importance of musical arts in nurturing children's musical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development. Whereas my students had never had private lessons on beautiful instruments, and had not performed in aesthetic spaces nor prepared concerts for auditoriums full of spectators, they have very quickly come to appreciate the music they can create on our beautiful instruments. They are aware that they play better in aesthetic spaces and they like performing. When they come to class, they know that we will engage in active music-making, applaud accomplishments, and nurture everyone's contribution. They are learning to respect the music and their peers, to focus their energy during rehearsals, and to perform with poise and style.

What I have learned this semester is what one of our SRIG guest speakers has been researching all of her professional career. Her name is Dr. Dale Farran and she is Professor of Education in the Department of Teaching and Learning at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN. She is the past Director of the Kennedy Center Susan Gray School, the largest early intervention program in Tennessee. Dr. Farran is the editor of two books dealing with risk and poverty and more than 75 articles and book chapters. Her research has been supported by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the Spencer Foundation, the William T. Grant Foundation, and the Office of Special Education. Her vita is available on line at: http://129.59.1.28/kennedy/people/farran.html

At our SRIG session, scheduled for 9:15 a.m. on Saturday, April 13, 2002 Dr. Dale Farran, Vanderbilt University, and Dr. David Nelson, University of Iowa, will each present a paper on the topic of research in early childhood. The title of Dr. Nelson's presentation is, "Music in Early Childhood: An Historical Perspective of Research Efforts." Announcements and nominations for new officers will follow the paper presentations. Our election of officers will be conducted electronically.

I look forward to seeing all of you at MENC on Saturday, April 13, 2002!

Articles

The Development of Accurate Singing in Children

Scott L. Phillips

Introduction

For more than a century, researchers have been interested in understanding the processes through which children hear, understand, and reproduce sound. Studies have shown that there are three parts to accurate pitch perception and vocal response. The first is the physical ability to receive sound waves from the air and transmit them to the brain. The second is the ability to think about or perceive what a sound means and relate it to previously gained experience and knowledge. The third is the ability to use the voice to accurately recreate the perceived sound. These three skills make up accurate singing, or what is commonly referred to as the ability to sing in tune. This paper will explain how hearing develops in children and discuss what steps can be taken to improve pitch perception and increase the child's ability to sing in tune.

The Physical Development of Hearing

The first aspect of accurate pitch perception and vocal production is the physical ability to perceive sound waves. Physicians have studied development of the physical apparatus necessary to perceive sound. Unlike the other two areas, in which abilities may be improved with specific kinds of practice, complete physical development of the hearing apparatus occurs similarly in most individuals. Before birth, a peripheral system develops which includes the parts of the ear and the auditory nerve. By about six months of age, a central system that includes the contact points in the brain finishes developing.

Medical research of hearing in very young children helps us understand these physical features in terms of the ability to perceive sound and music. One study was conducted to determine at what age babies were able to perceive the intonational speech patterns of their mothers. It was observed that before 7 months of age, the children's intonational patterns were indifferent to those of their mothers. After that, however, the baby's patterns began to mimic those of their mothers. This aligns with the development of the more central components of the hearing apparatus, and indicates that this development enables the perception of pitch (Castro-Sierra, 1989).

Another study tested the ability of children ages 8-11 months to recognize differences in melodic contour (Trehub, 1984). As the testing of very small children is often difficult, an operant head-turn testing technique was employed. This tech-

nique involves placing the baby in an environment with speakers located in front of and to the sides of the baby. A stimulus is presented (in this case a melody) several times to allow the baby to habituate to the sound. When a change in the melody is perceived, the baby's head turns in the direction of the speaker where the new melody is heard (Brophy, 2000). This method allows researchers to evaluate what changes the baby is able to perceive. The children in Trehub's test listened to repetitions of a six-note melody. This same melody was modified by changing the contour while preserving the register, transposing the register while preserving the contour, and changing the octave. Results indicated that the infants were able to distinguish all of the transformed melodies from the original one. A second part of the study made the task more difficult by inserting a distraction sequence between the original melody and the modified ones. In this case the infants were not able to identify the differences in the transformed melodies.

This study tells us two very important things about the hearing of infants. First, the physical apparatus in place by six months is sufficient to allow the recognition of pitch and the distinction of melodies. This ability is very similar to that displayed by adults in similar tests (Walker, 1987; Watkins, 1985). Second, although the hearing apparatus is in place, underdeveloped memory and cognitive abilities limit recognition of the stimuli.

In summary, research has shown that the human auditory system is highly functional at six months, at which point complex pitch detection and differentiation skills are in place. While these skills continue to "broaden and improve"(Castro Sierra, 1989) a little as the child matures, most of the increase in ability to perceive pitch that will potentially follow will be due to the development of memory and cognition abilities and conditioning to certain types of pitch patterns.

Music Cognition

The second aspect of accurate pitch perception and vocal production is the ability of a person to interpret the auditory signals in the brain. Those in the area of psychomusicology have heavily researched this field. Cognition can have one of two interpretations. The first conception is sometimes referred to as the "blank-slate" view (Serafine, 1984). This view sees cognition as the process by which an object is received through the senses and is transferred directly to the brain where it remains, until memory loss obscures the object.

Blank-slate cognition has important implications related to the perception of pitch through the concept of "inner hearing." Inner hearing is the process of "imagining the music as it should sound" (VanAuken & Larson, 1988). Proponents of inner hearing maintain that since the mind's representa-

tion of the pitch is perfectly accurate, concentration on that image leads to improved memory of the pitch and hence more accurate perception (VanAuken & Larson, 1988). The other view of cognition is called the "constructivist" view (Serafine, 1984). It proposes that the mind creates a representation of the object by relating it to familiar ideas, feelings, knowledge, forms and so on. This idea has powerful implications for the development of pitch perception in children. The more understanding or experience a child has with tonal patterns, the more easily he or she is able to construct meanings, and respond to new musical patterns and experiences.

Research in the area of cognition confirms this representation of pitch perception. Krumhansl (1979) found that Western listeners reported that the notes making up a major chord seemed to belong together. Notes diatonically related were perceived as distant from the triad, and notes chromatically related were perceived to be more distant. This was not true of non-Western listeners who were not exposed to tonal music (Krumhansl, 1979). Deutsch (1972) found that a tune that was disrupted by having the tones randomly transposed by the octave was difficult to recognize. Most people perceive melody by relating it to a shape instead of by the frequency of the sound waves. Serafine further reports that musicians perceive loudness, duration, and pitch better than non-musicians. Finally, Walker (1987) found that although all children could perceive differences in the stimuli he presented, only those with musical experience were able to represent the idea of pitch through a vertically placed visual response.

These findings make clear that several steps can be taken to improve children's pitch perception. First is the skill of imagining the music inside the mind through inner hearing. This skill can be practiced with children through techniques such as playing a pitch pattern and then having them imagine it, singing songs that progressively omit pitches (such as B-I-N-G-O), or by omitting sections from songs they know, and having them imagine the missing parts. Next, children need experience hearing pitches, patterns, melodies, songs, rhymes, rhythms and music in general. These will become the canvas and the context for the musical experiences the child will encounter during development. It has been stated that the physical ability to perceive musical patterns is in place by six months of age. Some have suggested that the process of singing or playing music for the unborn child in the womb may have an impact. Zoltan Kodláy was once asked at what point it was early enough to sing to a child. His response was that singing to a child should not begin at birth or even at nine months before birth, but that it should begin nine months

before the mother's birth (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 1995). This philosophy underscores the importance of the mother's ability to give the child accurate musical experience early in life. Finally it is important that the child be learning about music and assigning terms to musical experiences. This will give the child a vocabulary for identifying and quantifying musical experience.

Singing in Tune

There are many factors that contribute to the child's ability to sing in tune. Of course the prerequisite to all of these is the ability to accurately perceive pitch. It has been shown here that perceiving pitches correctly requires more than just the physical auditory anatomy. One must also be able to conceptualize what is being heard for it to be accurately perceived. It seems obvious that a child who can't hear pitches correctly would not be able to recreate them correctly. The opposite, however, is not necessarily true. The fact that a child can perceive pitches correctly does not necessarily mean that he or she can reproduce them accurately.

Models of Accurate Singing

A child who can listen to a model voice that is singing accurately will be more successful producing accurate pitch. For children aged three to five these models may involve simple three-note patterns like the one given in the opening example. As children get older, the rote singing of children's songs can be a useful tool in encouraging vocal accuracy (Moore, 1994). Care should be taken to make sure that the range of notes modeled is consistent with that of the child. Most children's comfortable singing range extends from middle C to high C. Although some studies show that most children have the potential vocal range of nearly two octaves, they, as do most adults, tend to sing in the lower half of the range. A good model voice should freely use the upper range and encourage students to do so as well. Also care should be taken to ensure that the timbre of the model is similar to that of the children's voice. Roe (1983) suggested that children often try to reproduce the timbre of the vocal model, causing out-of-tune singing. Children responded more accurately to a female's voice as a model than a piano, flute, male voice, or music classroom instrument. Another study found children with less vocal experience responded more correctly to non-vibrato models than to vibrato ones (Moore, 1984).

Solo vs. Group Singing and Instruction

Studies have shown that children tend to sing more accurately when they sing alone than when they sing with another voice or a group. Goetze (1989) found that kindergarten, first, and third graders were more accurate when singing alone than they were when they sang with a female teacher or the group. Rutkowski found that after

nine months, students who had received individual and group-singing instruction sang more accurately than those who had experienced only group instruction. This may be a result of the children's inability to accurately perceive the model's as well as their own pitch in the group settings.

The Use of Melodic and Harmonic Reinforcement

The use of classroom instruments, movement, hand signs, and visual mapping may all help to reinforce accurate pitch production with children. These ideas align with the concept of musical cognition discussed earlier. They provide mental references to pitches at the same time the pitches are sung. John Curwen devised a system of hand signs that corresponds to solmization syllables. Students' vocal accuracy increases with the use of these mental reference points. These hand symbols have by adopted by the Kodály method of teaching music (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 1995). Apfelstadt (1984) studied kindergarten students who used simple mallet instruments in the music classroom to reinforce correct pitch.

On the other hand, studies have also shown that the use of harmonic accompaniment on a piano, guitar, or autoharp may actually disguise the true pitch and compromise vocal accuracy (Moore, 1984).

Appropriate Vocal Instruction

Randall Moore observes that, "Several music methodologies lay claim to having curricula that lead to good singing; however, scant published research has verified many of the popular methods" (1984). The Dalcroze, Kodály, and Orff methods have some support for improving vocal accuracy. The method proposed by Kenneth Phillips in his book Teaching Kids to Sing advocates the correct use of breath support as the foundation for good singing. He conducted his own studies to confirm the effectiveness of his method. He found that among middle school children who incorporated this method for one year, vocal accuracy was increased.

To summarize, studies have shown that there are many techniques that improve children's ability to sing accurately. The opportunity for the child to hear and follow good models of accurate singing allows for proper representation of pitches in the mind. The emphasis on solo or small group singing instruction instead of large group instruction allows children to more clearly hear themselves and the pitches being modeled. The use of instruments to play pitches of the melody during singing instruction gives children aural reinforcement of the correct pitches, as opposed to the use of harmonic accompaniment that can confuse the pitch focus of young singers. Finally, the use of appropriate vocal instruction that encourages the correct use of the voice and body in singing enables children to better create the sounds they can hear in their minds.

Conclusion

Research studies in have greatly enlightened our understating of the processes by which musical pitches are perceived, understood, and reproduced through singing. By six months of age children are able to not only perceive musical pitches, but also distinguish aspects of melodic patterns in the same way as adults. We learn that through the development of musical cognition skills, children are better able to perceive, process, understand and remember musical experiences and accurate pitches. We also learn that there are many techniques that can be employed to encourage accurate singing in children. The information presented here gives hope as well as practical ideas for educators who want to improve their students' ability to sing in tune.

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Scott Phillips is a doctoral student in music education at the University of Iowa, a vocal specialist, and president of CMENC Chapter 40.

Sesame Workshop Creates "Sesame Street Music Works"

Carlos Xavier Rodriguez

Sesame Workshop, in conjunction with NAMM, MENC, the Texaco Foundation, and The National Endowment for the Arts, has created a new educational resource called "Sesame Street Music Works." It is designed to help parents, early childhood professionals, music educators, and music therapists provide music to young children. The materials are web-based and can be found at www.sesamestreet.com. A video has also been produced, accompanied by a simple step-by-step guide that provides notes on children's early musical development, suggestions for making music with young children, activities that emphasize self-expression, ideas for making simple musical instruments, and notes on how to get the most from the accompanying video. One of the more helpful features of the video and guide is a clear explication of the following:

- preschoolers' abilities (e.g., creating their own stories and songs, reproducing simple patterns, making comparisons, using rhymes,)
- meaningful musical activities (e.g., creating songs and finger plays, using movement to develop self-expression and body awareness)
- adult-child interactions (e.g., imitating, dramatizing, exploring, attending concerts, making connections among other arts)

Printed in English and Spanish, this resource promises to reach a large base of users and promote the cause of early childhood education and development.

DIVISION NEWS

NORTHWESTERN DIVISION

(Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming)

Kathleen Jacobi-Karna
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Mary Lou Van Rysselberghe served as Chair of the ISME Early Childhood Education Commission Conference, *Music within Every Child*, this past July at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. Following the Commission conference, she represented the Commission during the World Conference of ISME in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada also in July of 2000.

Randall Moore, Laura Leung, and Jayne Standley's research article, *Calming Effects of Music on Preschooler's Resting*, was published in the Winter 2001 issue of the OREGON MUSIC EDUCATOR.

Kathleen Jacobi-Karna presented a research poster, *Preschool Children's Conversations During Free-Play with Musical Instruments*, at the 2001
MENC Northwest Division Biennial Conference in Spokane, Washington.

"ISME Early Childhood Music Education Commission"
Mary Lou Van Rysselberghe, Chair

The ninth meeting of the ISME Commission for Early Childhood Music Education has just taken place at Queen's University in Kingston, Canada. Katharine Smithrim served admirably as Site Chair for the proceedings, welcoming all to convene in this beautiful Ontario setting. Arriving delegates and friends gathered at a festive reception and buffet supper Sunday evening prior to the initial session. During the week of July 9 to 14, 2000, seventy-three delegates and visitors participated in a full program of open forums, paper presentations, workshops and discussions pertaining to research and innovative practice in early childhood music education. The theme "Music Within Every Child" provided a continuum throughout the conference.

President Einar Sobu and his wife were guests for the first half of the conference. He brought official greetings on behalf of ISME to the delegates at the opening session Monday morning. Presenters and delegates included a significant number of persons who reside in countries and regions not represented in previous conferences of this commission. It is apparent that the creation of the ISME Web site, including the specific location for matters pertaining to this Commission, has generated considerable interest among new members in the work of this Commission. The global dimension of ISME is expanding.

Music opened each session. Delegates and guests enjoyed starting each day with singing. Square dancing was a lively event for all participants one evening.

During the proceedings, the ISME Early Childhood Music Education Commission adopted the following Vision and Mission Statements:

VISION:
We envision a world in which the musical rights of every child will be acknowledged and assured. Each will be given an excellent music education and the opportunity to be musically responsive. The child's potential and quality of life will be enhanced by and through music.

MISSION:
Because we desire to promote music in the lives of all young children, we strive to share and to promote current ideas, teaching, and research

related to music in early childhood. Our mission is *a*) to provide an international forum for the exchange of ideas regarding the various ways in which children may participate in their own musical culture; *b*) to improve the quality of research and learning in the field of music education worldwide; *c*) to stimulate thought and effective practices in recognition of every child's right to music education; and *d*) to examine the effect of music on children in changing societies.

Goals for the operation of the Commission also were considered, revised, and approved by the delegate body.

Wendy Sims addressed delegates to impart the ISME Vision and Mission Statements and other informative facts about the Society. The Commission feels pride in Wendy's continuing contributions to ISME, and thanks her for her considerable efforts on behalf of the welfare of the Commission.

Open forums featured panelists—respected researchers and teachers who shared their perspectives in three areas of vital interest to this commission. The first one took place Monday morning of opening day. Wendy Sims, Board member of ISME, capably led panelists Louie Suthers of Australia, Eugenia Costa-Giomi of Canada, and Marijke Albers of the Netherlands in a discussion of *Research as a Basis for Our Practice*. Discussion followed with active participation of those attending. On Wednesday, Donna Brink Fox presented panelists Linda Neelly and Sister Joan McCusker of the United States, and Katharine Smithrim of Canada on the topic, *New Ideas: Practice Based on Research*. Thursday's Open Forum was led by Carol Scott-Kassner on the topic, *Evolution of Effective Practice through a Cultural Framework*, and featured panelists Stuart Manins of New Zealand, and Eugenia Costa-Giomi of Canada. These sessions stimulated delegates to relate issues that have arisen from their own experience in other cultural settings.

Afternoon workshops were presented by innovative clinicians who had been invited by the Commission to share their practical wisdom and techniques. On Monday, Mary Stouffer of Canada presented *Swing Me Over the Water: Music with 2- and 3-year-olds*. Delegates participated in another workshop, *Babies to Grandparents: Family Music Making* on Wednesday afternoon under the direction of Heather McLaughlin of Australia and Japan. On Thursday, Sheila Woodward of South Africa engaged the delegates in a workshop *Music Awakenings*.

An informative session, *Spotlight on the Commission*, was given on Tuesday by the six Commission members responsible for this conference.

Special events during the week included songs and puppets shared in an informal showcase of delegate performances, a Voyageurs field trip via canoes with a delightful picnic at Katherine Smithrim's home, and a memorable ferry trip to the General Wolfe Hotel for dinner on Thursday evening.

During the closing session on Friday, four longtime members were recognized for their individual contributions to the ISME Early Childhood Music Commission. Annie Langelaar of the Netherlands, Katalin Forrai of Hungary, Olive McMahon of Australia, and Donna Wood of Canada were honored with Certificates of Merit. Donna Wood was able to be present for the occasion.

The ISME Early Childhood Music Education Commission is led by six individuals who have worked closely together during this conference and the interim two years preceding it. Current Commission members are Stuart Manins of New Zealand, Maria Seeliger of Germany, Ilza Zenker Leme Joly of Brazil, Lily Chen-Haftek of South Africa, Katharine Smithrim of Canada, and Mary Lou Van Rysselberghe of the USA. Again, technology has enabled these individuals to communicate effectively via Email and FAX on a frequent basis, which has enabled the

Commission to determine its direction through interactive process. Katharine Smithrim and Mary Lou Van Rysselberghe complete their six-year terms following the Edmonton World Congress 2000. Nominated to take their positions are June Boyce-Tillman and Lori Custodero. Maria Seeliger is requesting to be replaced for the remainder of her term, and Charlotte Froehlich has been nominated to take the position for two years. Lily Chen-Haftek has been nominated to become the Chair of this Commission.

Improved communication through technology has marked the preceding two years of history for this Commission. The Call for Papers was posted on our Web site, drawing a record number of papers for consideration. Many individuals became informed about the anticipated conferences in Kingston and Edmonton through details provided on our Web site and, consequently, a greater number of participants indicated their interest by attending. Finally the work of the Commission was made possible through Email and FAX. Commission members as well as conferees have become better acquainted and genuinely collegial because of advancements in communication technology. The mission of the Commission has become more clearly defined as it moves into the 21st Century.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Lou Van Rysselberghe, Chair
ISME Early Childhood Music Education Commission

July 2000

The research article, *Attentiveness of Preschool Children During Structured Music Activities* by Kathleen Jacobi-Karna was published in the Spring 2001 issue of the OREGON MUSIC EDUCATOR.

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University of Iowa Elementary General Music Methods Class hosts Crossroads Day Care

April 16, 2001

The course 7E: 145 (Elementary General Music Methods) is designed to provide students with skills and understandings related to musical development in children. As part of an outreach program sponsored by the University's collegiate chapter of Music Educators National Conference, the class presented a morning of music with 18 four and five year-old children. Each student created a five-minute activity that included singing, playing, listening, moving, and dramatization. The morning culminated with refreshments for the children and teachers. For more information on the materials and activities, you may visit the CMENC Chapter 40 website at: http://www.uiowa.edu/~menc

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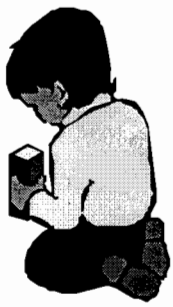
Important News for SRIG Members

The biannual meeting of the Early Childhood SRIG will be during MENC's 58th Biennial In-Service Conference, April 11-14, 2002, in Nashville, Tennessee. At this meeting, nominations will be taken for the position of Chair-Elect of the SRIG. The election will be held through e-mail, and the results reported in the Spring Newsletter.

The scheduled time for our SRIG meeting is 9:15 a.m. on Saturday, April 13, 2002.



Spring Newsletter Alert

The Early Childhood Music Newsletter will be published in APRIL 2002. Along with articles and divisional news, it will present the results of the election of the new Chair-Elect of the Early Childhood SRIG.

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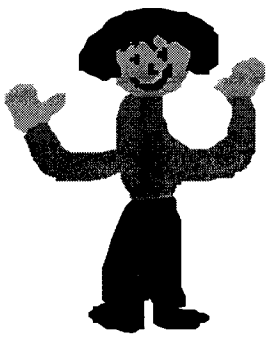

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