Developing Musical Literacy in Children

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Music education is an important part of every child’s life and yet there is often a gap between the skills that a child has learned and what they are supposed to have mastered.

Purpose and Hypothesis
Past research has identified that the key phase for learning in children is past when the child is developmentally able to sing. Herein lies the problem on how to best develop a child’s aural skills.

Research has shown how to best develop aural and rhythmic skills in children. The problem, however, lies in developing the ear and voice at the youngest ages because children are still physically unable to sing.

A method of teaching can be created to help these young children develop their aural skills at an age where they cannot sing by listening to a variety of music on a consistent basis and teaching them rhythmic skills through conventional methods.

Abstract and Literature Review
Musical education is important to the full development of a knowledgeable human being. However, the problem occurs in the beginning stages of child development because we are unable to take advantage of the ideal time for learning because the child is not fully developed to sing. This causes a lack of vocal and aural developmental skills necessary for a skilled musician. A curriculum of instruction is needed to help these young children reach their fullest potential in all facets of music literacy: aural, vocal, and rhythmic.

Aural Skills
An important aspect of every elementary music education curriculum is the development of vocal and aural skills, which are directly related to singing. Junda (1-3) goes into considerable detail on the aspects of vocal and aural skills and how they can be fully developed for a literate sight-singer. However, Gruhn (57-58) indicates that by the time children reach the developmental stage where maximum music learning occurs they are too young to sing because of undeveloped vocal chords. There is an inherent problem with the development of children, because they cannot sing at the age when the maximum stages of development end. There needs to be an investigation on what are the best methods to develop aural skills even while the child is unable to sing.

Rhythmic Skills
Junda (4-5) gives an excellent account of the development of rhythmic skills and according to Gruhn (57-58), the development of rhythmic skills is less of a concern because they can be done at an earlier age before aural skills. In general, the development of rhythmic skills tends to be less of an issue and so the major concern rests with the lack of developed aural skills.

Practicing Skills
Undoubtedly, practicing is an important aspect of musical studies and often a requirement beginning in junior high-school programs. McPherson and Renwick (171) studied many students who were beginning instrumental study in earlier grades and analyzed their practicing habits and how they contributed to their overall success. If students at this age are able to practice musical instruments, then it is likely some sort of practice time could be put into singing to develop aural skills and make them even better prepared for junior high music classes.

Bibliography


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