



Music at heart

more than just music lessons

How can I help my unborn child to be musical?

Music in the environment

The best way to help your unborn child to be musical is to put music into the environment that surrounds him/her. As a parent, **you** are that environment and, as Suzuki says, “Environment nurtures growth.”

In his book, *Nurtured by Love*, Suzuki recounts the story of a five-month old baby, Hiromi, when she attended the violin lesson of her six-year-old sister (pp 6-8). Her sister was learning the Vivaldi A minor concerto, practicing the piece and listening to a recording of it on a daily basis.

Suzuki tried an experiment. Whilst looking at Hiromi, he first played some music by Bach, and then switched to the Vivaldi her sister was studying, and an amazing thing happened:

“I had no sooner started the piece when Hiromi’s expression changed. She smiled and laughed, and turned her happy face to her mother... ‘See- that’s my music’ she unmistakably wanted to tell her.”

Hiromi then turned her gaze back to Suzuki and moved her body up and down in rhythm.

Suzuki marvelled at how inspiration and interest are acquired involuntarily by an infant from everything s/he sees and hears, like a seed that is planted. He later encountered Hiromi as a five-year old, performing the same concerto on her own violin, “Putting her heart and soul into her playing.”

What kind of music should I play?

Suzuki suggests, “Instead of playing an out-of-tune record or singing an out-of-tune lullaby, play a beautiful recording, regardless of the difficulty.”

The choice of music for your unborn child is very important:

- use recordings of beautiful classics by Bach, Vivaldi or Mozart, or one of the other well-know composers of the Baroque or early Classical periods
 - this kind of music is the equivalent of poetry with a series of regular verses which rhyme in patterns at the line-ends
 - your baby will respond to its clear melodies, the rise and fall of the phrases and the predictable forms and structures
- preferably, the speed of the music should equate roughly to the speed of the baby’s natural heart-beat

In the same way that it takes more time and effort to appreciate poetry written with a freer structure, unusual vocabulary and without rhyme, or the way that spicy food is an acquired taste, the foetus does not take well to music which shocks with loud surprises and dissonance.

Suggested works:

Allegri: *Miserere mei Deus*

J S Bach: *Largo ma non tanto* (II) from Double Violin Concerto in D Minor, BWV 1043

J S Bach: Brandenburg Concerto No 2, BWV 1047

J S Bach: *Prelude* (I) from Cello Suite No 1 in G Major, BWV 1007

Barber: *Adagio for strings*, Op 11

Corelli: *Pastorale ad libitum* (VI) from Concerto Grosso, Op 6 No 8 (Christmas Concerto)

Dvorak: *Largo* (II) from Symphony No 9 in E Minor, Op 95 (New World)

Grieg: *Morning* from Peer Gynt Suite, Op 23

Handel: *Air* from Water Music

Mozart: *Adagio* (II) from Clarinet Concerto in A Major. K622

Mozart: *Andante* (II) from Piano Concerto no 21 in C Major, K467

Mozart: *Adagio sostrnuto* (I) from Piano Sonata No 14 in C sharp minor, Op 27 No 2

Mozart: *Eine kleine nachtmusik* (Serenade No. 13 for strings in G major), K525

Saint Saens: *The Swan* from 'Carnival of the Animals'

Schubert: *Andantino* (IV) from Piano Quintet in A Major D667 (The Trout)

Vivaldi: *Adagio* (II) from Oboe Concerto, Op 9 No 2

Warlock: *Pieds en l'air* from Capriol Suite

Vaughan Williams: *Romanza* (II) from Tuba Concerto in F Minor

Vaughan Williams: *Fantasia on Greensleeves*

What do I have to do?

Having chosen your piece of music, which should be around five minutes in length

- listen to the recording every day, while resting
 - babies remember experiences that have a strong impact and that are repeated often

This 'music time' will develop an early bond between you and your baby.

The Science

Researchers using modern technology to measure the responses of the developing foetus to outside stimulation have discovered that the brain of the unborn child has four states of being:

- Quiet sleep
- Active sleep
- Quiet awareness
- Active awareness

Scientists now know that by six months the foetus can hear, and they know for sure that at this stage learning is definitely taking place, as a result of this ability to listen.

In his book, *The Secret life of the Unborn Child*, Thomas Verni tells the story of the conductor, Boris Brott, who accredited his excellent sight-reading ability to pre-natal learning: "All the scores I knew sight unseen were ones my mum (who was a professional cellist) had played while she was pregnant with me." (p 9)

The Outcomes

Parents who have given their unborn children the experience of music in this way find that, after birth, their babies exhibit astonishing abilities very early:

- an uncanny ability to listen
- early language acquisition
- vocalization and matching pitches within weeks of being born
- good physical co-ordination
- heightened sensitivity
- general contentment
- the ability to concentrate for a length of time well beyond that normally expected of a child so young

Parents also notice that they develop a particularly strong relationship with their child, and that they share a deep understanding of one another.