

Music Education III

Growing Up Complete

By Lu Lee Hui

Just as there can be no music without learning, no education is complete without music. Music makes the difference. --- Unknown

Emphasis on just math and science leaves our next generation half-educated. Depriving church music education in the curriculum of Christian Education will only result in many becoming “music-blind,” unable to perceive the beauty that music brings. Are you shortchanging the next generation's general education? Let them grow up complete!

The Right Moment

Kodály, upon being asked, “When is it best to begin teaching music to a child?” answered, “Music education begins nine months before the birth of the parents.” Hopeless? Nay! It's genius, and so true! Kodály believed that musical aptitude is intrinsic to every person and therefore, music education should begin as early as possible in a person's life - first from the home, and later from the school curriculum.

Early musical training and music-making offer tremendous benefits to children academically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. As Dr. John Feierabend, director of education at the Hartt School of Music in Hartford, Connecticut, says, “Music in early childhood develops lifelong abilities and sensitivities which enrich everyday life for all people. The neglect of that development in early childhood causes an irreversible loss of that potential.”

Children who are exposed to musical experience at an early age, whether through hearing parents sing, or being led to sing and move in rhythm, develop a much greater sensitivity to hear and respond to music. The first three years are most critical for musical stimulation. It is a time when parents should be singing and dancing with their child, listen to the best recordings, and even play musical games. The effect of musical aptitude nurturing may lessen as children progress with age but, and until the age of nine when audiation stabilizes, nurturing should not stop.

Audiation, the foundation of musicianship, is the process of mentally hearing and comprehending music, even when physical sound is not present. It is a cognitive process by which the brain gives meaning to musical sounds. One who is able to audiate can notice and correct a misplayed note, sing or play the root melody or chords to a familiar song, create a song or chant with a given text, sing the last note to a familiar and unfamiliar song and identifying the macro beat and micro beats of a song, chant, or instrumental piece.

The ability to hear and respond to tunes at the age of nine more or less determine how clearly you can hear and perceive tunes in adulthood. This very reason spells the importance of integrating music and movement into children's daily routine in the early years.

Start Early ...from Home

Musical experience attained from school and church are good, but still, the best place would be the child's home. Parents should sing frequently, point out pleasing sounds from nature, and play a variety of music in the

house or car. Psychologists found listening to songs as one of the fundamental ways in which babies learn to recognize tones, which later add up to the spoken language.

Try incorporating the following shared music activities into your child's world, enriching parent-child bond at the same time:

- ⤴ Try listening to different pieces of music everyday for a few minutes and repeat them over the next few weeks until the music sinks in.
- ⤴ Encourage your child to bang on a can, move his limbs and dance! Encourage creativity by making homemade percussive instruments.
- ⤴ Listen with new ears. If you have been a pop song fan for most of your life, try listening to orchestral music with your family.
- ⤴ Attend recitals, or live musical events that are child friendly. Look out for pre-concert activities that offer opportunities to try out different instruments. Activities like these get children excited about the concert itself.
- ⤴ Familiarize yourself with Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*. Explain how the music might tell a story, even without words. Point out the instruments or animals while listening to the recording. You could also try Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake* or *Carnival of the Animals* by Camille Saint-Saëns.
- ⤴ Ask your child questions about the music both of you are listening to: Does it sound happy or sad? Is the sound high or low? Loud or soft? Can you hum or sing along with it? Can you play that rhythm? Very young children delight in repetition, so it is alright to repeat the same song a zillion times. Note that at this stage, your child may sometimes sing out of tune, but you need not be overly concerned about it.
- ⤴ Playing conductor to recordings! Kids will love it.
- ⤴ Sing, sing, sing! Make singing part of your child's daily routine.
- ⤴ Choose a hymn that expresses your love for God, and share it with your child. In the long run, your child will learn to evaluate his own music for "ministry-value" and meaning, not just as entertainment.

Involving your child in musical activities at an early age is really kind of an investment in his or her future. By doing so, we build a foundation for good taste, discernment and create opportunities for them to enjoy a gift that is not just for themselves, but something they can give back to God again and again. With music we can lift our hearts to praise and worship our Creator and Savior.

Let your child grow up complete!

(to be continued)

About the author

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Upon graduation from the Singapore Bible College School of Church Music, University of Melbourne and from the University of Queensland with Master of Music Studies in Choral Conducting, Lee Hui further studied and obtained Diploma in Choral Conducting from the Zoltan Kodaly Pedagogical Institute of Music, under Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music in Hungary in 2009. Currently, she is the Principal Conductor of the International Christian Festival Singers (ICFS) and the Music Educator of International Christian Choral Conducting Society (ICCCS).