



Learn how to nurture your child's natural musical abilities in this series of articles for families & teachers.

Article 7

Keep the Music Alive

By Lauren McDougale

As the academic year winds down, your child will have more free time during the summer months. Use that time for joyful, relaxed music making in your own community. There are many benefits to participating in local music programs. Often because the summer session is shorter in length, the cost is minimal. This means your child will have an opportunity to experience and experiment with a variety of artistic endeavors, before making a large commitment. Many parents know too well the struggle of completing an extracurricular activity that the child is no longer interested in, so look for a summer activity! Visit your local library or check the local newspapers for more information about what may be going on in your community.

Some of the most accessible music programs are community-based ensembles. Usually, these groups have no audition requirements and may only come with a small fee to join the association. When joining an instrumental ensemble, musicians will have to provide their own instrument. These groups are often comprised of other amateur musicians that also have a love and passion for music making and perform two to four concerts per year. A majority of suburban and metropolitan areas will have community choirs, bands, and orchestras. If you're in a more rural area, then churches are wonderful resources for music making. Usually joining the church choir is free, and there will be weekly opportunities to perform, with several larger performances on or during religious holidays. Community ensembles are wonderful for older children in middle and high school, but younger musicians will need more developmentally appropriate performance activities. Join a youth orchestra or a children's choir. The conductors and teachers

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In these ensembles are specifically trained to meet the cognitive, social and emotional needs of a growing child, allowing them to thrive in their musical environment. Depending on the ensemble, these organizations will often charge a fee and meet throughout the school year. However, if committing to that is still too intimidating, look for a summer camp!

Many local music ensembles and musicians will offer summer sessions or summer camp. Sometimes these camps will have themes, or work towards creating some type of culminating performance experience. Depending on the type of camp attended, children can hone their skills in group work, or in solo study. Music camps often offer ensemble performance opportunities with some private lessons. Some of these camps are highly competitive, designed for a child who may consider a future career in music, while others are more experiential in nature. Local universities and colleges will often provide these camps, or can be helpful when looking for a good fit for your child. If you're looking for something more like long term training after a great experience at camp, local music professors and graduate students usually have private studios and offer private lessons and music theory tutoring in the evenings and on weekends.

Music performance isn't limited to choral, band, and string experience ensembles. Music abounds in other areas of the arts, and there are so many opportunities available to your child. Community musical theater is yet another budget-friendly activity that your child can pursue. There are opportunities to help back stage, act on stage, and even play in the pit band. Often exposure to musical theater also means dance, and most communities have access to dance studio classes. Ballet, jazz, tap, hip-hop, and contemporary dance classes are abundant with the rising popularity of T.V. hits like *So You Think You Can Dance*, and the publicized success of Misty Copland. Dance allows people to express music through their body, and some of the best musicians in the world have studied dance or Dalcroze to increase their expressivity, creativity, and even relaxation and posture. Dance is collaborative and disciplined, also culminating in a final ensemble and often solo performance.

Solo performance is sometimes what makes people feel most comfortable, but often it can be cause for anxiety. While ensemble work is wonderful, performing alone is an entirely new level of independence and self-reliance. Private lessons were mentioned earlier, and it's worth noting that professional musicians will be quite rigorous in their methods. If a teacher's guidance is adhered to, and ample practice is done, solo work will become a point of pride. Music is meant to be shared, and there are a number of ways to do just that.

Local sports teams, both minor and major league, often need performers to sing the national anthem. Contact your local sports team for more information on how to audition or get invited to perform. In addition to local sports events, local festivals also often have talent shows or performance venues for musicians. Apple Festivals, Art Festivals, Craft Fairs, and even the State Fair are usually looking for talent to entertain the crowds. The performers are responsible for providing their own accompaniment tracks and selecting their music, and sometimes auditioning is required. Some fairs have talent contests, and prizes are even awarded.

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Last, but not least, senior centers and care facilities are other wonderful venues in which to perform. Organize a small concert, lasting a minimum of 30 minutes, and share your talent in a way that benefits humanity and the human spirit. These individuals are a kind and appreciative audience, and you'll find yourself wanting to do more than one show! Do be sure to visit in the "off-season" as well – holidays can be busy, but music is for all year round. If you're not sure that you can arrange for 30 minutes of a performance, then you can invite other friends and family to join you in performing.

Music abounds and thrives in so many segments of our lives. Take some time to find ways for your child to get involved. Use your local paper and internet advertising to your advantage, and visit your local church or community center for other potential opportunities. No matter what you do to keep the music alive, the most important thing you can do is continue to make music every day.



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Further Reading

Music in your child's life is more than just fun, it's good for them too! Here are several articles that may be of further interest to you.

How Music Benefits Children

<http://theconversation.com/how-music-benefits-children-69682>

Music Training Improves Adolescent Brain Development

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-athletes-way/201507/music-training-improves-adolescent-brain-development>

Why School Students Benefit Hugely from Playing in an Orchestra

<https://www.oxford-royale.co.uk/articles/playing-orchestra-achieve.html>

Choir Singing Improves Health and Happiness

<http://theconversation.com/choir-singing-improves-health-happiness-and-is-the-perfect-icebreaker-47619>

Parent Resources

We hope these family-friendly resources provide ideas that encourage your child's musical abilities. All the articles in this series are written by the Children's Chorus of Maryland's music faculty and supported through a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. For more information about music programs at Children's Chorus of Maryland, call us at 410-494-1480 or email ccm@ccmsings.org.



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Children's Chorus of Maryland & School of Music *Nurturing Voices, Minds & Hearts for over 40 Years*

Under the direction of Artistic Director Susan Bialek, our music Conservatory program features highly qualified teachers, small classes, and in-depth vocal enrichment to provide children with a complete musical education and choral experience. Children as young as 5 ½ are encouraged to audition for one of the Conservatory's three choirs. Classes and rehearsals are offered twice weekly from September to May at CCM's facility near Towson, and performances are held each semester. We welcome families whose children attend public, private and parochial schools as well as those who are homeschooled. Scholarships are available. In addition to our Conservatory, CCM offers a summer camp, and music and play classes for 4 to 6 year olds. For more information, visit www.ccmsings.org, call 410-494-1480 or email ccm@ccmsings.org

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