This article series is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and created by the music faculty of the Children’s Chorus of Maryland and School of Music. The series is intended to support parents who endeavor to awaken musicality in their children and to recognize and nurture that musicality, both at home and in their communities and schools. We also hope to share with you our collective fervor for how very important this is to your children’s development, not just musically, or academically, but as citizens of our world.

From the moment your child found his or her own voice as an infant, every coo or shriek or babble seemed to elicit a response of glee, wonder, amazement or just plain laughter in both your child and in you. From the very beginning, children have a natural curiosity about and interest in sound. Some children seem to chatter all the time and some seem to sing everything they might otherwise just say.

**Love for Music at a Young Age**

Does your young child chant, sing or dance at every opportunity? Does hearing a favorite familiar song elicit an instant smile or giggle or wiggle or “I love this!”? Does he or she keep time with a fork on the dinner table to the music playing in your home or tap his or her foot against the back of your seat in the car to the beat of

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the music playing as you drive together? Does your child remember lyrics to all kinds of songs, from the silly to the hauntingly thoughtful and sing those songs independently just because it’s fun? If yes to any of the above, the window is open!

“Children must receive music instruction as naturally as food, with as much pleasure as they derive from a ball game, and this must happen from the beginning of their lives.”

World renowned composer and conductor, Leonard Bernstein

Most children gain whatever music education they will receive in the school they attend. This can range from as much as two 45 minute classes each week to as little as once a week for just 10 weeks of the 40-week school year. Some primary grade children have no music instruction in school at all. Although some children have the opportunity to sing with a group of peers after school in a club or a house of worship, many do not.

Music Education at Home

In reality, the readiness for music education truly begins at home. Children learn language at home first, by being spoken to and read to, and thus learning to speak. They learn to walk and run at home. They learn the joy of silly stories and the pure fun of dancing around at home. If babies are fortunate enough to have parents, caregivers and family members who shared chants such as *Itsy Bitsy Spider* and *Patty Cake* and other similar games, or who introduced the alphabet by singing the *ABC song*, the musical awakening is already well underway! There is abundant research from many cultures in multiple languages attesting to the value and critical importance of awakening this awareness in young children!

“It since music has so much to do with the molding of character, it is necessary that we teach it to our children.”

Aristotle

It is heartening then to think that these first musical awakenings in children happen with you, the parents and caregivers. Your active participation is important. You don’t have to sing well or be an instrumentalist. What you must share with your young children is the curiosity about sound. Shared participation in musically related play and light hearted music making catches children when their window of opportunity for musical discovery and learning is open at its widest. Young children are uninhibited and not yet disheartened by ‘not getting it’. It’s just fun to sing, keep a beat, play a clapping game or dance. Their musicality is organic and true.

Tips from this Issue

◆ Find musical programs and events for your young child at your library, preschool, house of worship or even online.

◆ Attend vibrant, live performances by children’s choirs, youth orchestras and children’s theater companies.

◆ Show your child the exciting world beyond the screen. Explore sound in your everyday play. Sing, dance, keep a beat, play a clapping game, make silly noises, imitate birdsongs, drum on the furniture! Music is everywhere.

◆ Supplement your child’s school music experience with an extracurricular music class.

◆ Encourage your older child to try out for a community-based children’s choir, where children share their love of singing and welcome and support each other. A chorus is another kind of team, with comparable benefits and rewards.

Visit www.ccmsings.org and click on Educational Series to receive future articles by email or mail. Or contact Children’s Chorus of Maryland at ccm@ccmsings.org.
Awakening the Natural Musician in Your Child
Learn how to nurture your child's natural musical abilities in this series of articles for families & teachers.

The Importance of Exposure to Music and Musical Play in the Early Years

Creating a Musical Culture

Listening to music together, talking about it, singing songs you know as a family together, dancing in the kitchen, tapping on pots, or trying out a kazoo to play a familiar song are all relaxed ways to nourish musicality in your children from the start, without pressure or expectation. Once this culture is created, moving on to more formal instruction is just a logical next step, with interest, curiosity, and genuine excitement to learn already in place. If you feel you haven’t quite created that at home, there are programs in your community specifically for these younger children, many designed for parents to attend and participate right along with the children! Imagine the joy and value of sitting side by side with your toddler, learning something new together!

If you feel your child shows an affinity for music, you will likely know better than anyone when to seek further enrichment and instruction. Your school music teacher will also prove to be a tremendous resource helping you to find the right match for your child.

As research clearly shows, children learn in different ways and have different kinds of intelligences. Knowing your child as a learner will help you best set up your child for a situation in which “everyone wins when we match the nurture portion of our children’s development to what nature has already provided.”

Jessica Baron Turner

In my next article, I will outline the standard types of learners and intelligences, and then try to help direct you to musical activities that may match best to each.

Examples of Music Programs for young children:
- Kindermusik
- Music Together
- Musikgarten
- Crickets (at Children’s Chorus of Maryland in Towson)

Further Reading
- Sound Choices
  By Wilma Machover and Marienne Uszler
- Your Musical Child
  By Jessica Baron Turner, M.A.

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.

Susan Bialek, Artistic Director of Children’s Chorus of Maryland, has over 22 years of experience as a choral music teacher, BA in Music from Vassar College, MA in Teaching, Music Education from Manhattanville College, and Kodály certification from the Hartt School of Music.

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Article 1

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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.