

The secret power of music education

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Abstract

Music touches the heart; it makes one happy, sad, upbeat or relaxed. It touches us on an emotional level and influences our mood. Music enfolds one in a blanket of comfort, giving you inspiration in moments of loneliness and sorrow. It is the harmonious articulation of people's thoughts and passions utilized as a meaningful and complex expression of universal communication. Music is an important component for all people to possess in their lives. Music education has such an important impact on students' academic and personal growth. Based on this, the study attempted to ascertain the secret power of music education. The study proves that music is a very powerful and awesome tool that can have positive effects on the brain, personality development, creativity and also on physical body.

Keywords: comfort, harmonious articulation, personality development, creativity and physical body

1. Introduction

Music is the purest forms of art... therefore true poets, they who are seers, seek to express the universe in terms of music... The singer has everything within him. The notes come out from his very life. They are not materials gathered from outside.

~Rabindranath Tagore

Music is truly one of the most expressive art forms, which has a universal appeal. As long as one can feel the rhythm and the harmony of the beats, one can comprehend and enjoy any type of music around the world. Society without music has never been discovered. Anthropologists have also found the marks of musical instruments far back in 18,000 BCE, and some theorists believe that music is that much closely related to our humanness, that, like language, it developed in every culture [1]. Music is so closely related to our cultural identity, that societies throughout history have had some basic form of music education to pass on musical culture to the future ones. It beholds us, to a general extent to understand our roots and answer to questions like; where we came from; what our struggles and concerns have been; why we believe what we do.

Throughout history, philosophers, educators, politicians, and activists have recognized the power of schooling and ideas to enlighten and transform society according to the changing needs. Plato and Aristotle debated the merits and contents of education, and recognized the power of musical study to shape social values [2].

Music education has an important impact on students' academic and personal growth. "Music education opens doors that help children pass from school into the world around them a world of work, culture, intellectual activity, and human involvement. The future of our nation depends on providing our children with a complete education that includes music", said Gerald Ford, former President, United States of America

[3]. Similarly U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, July 1999 remarked that "Studying music and the arts elevates children's education, expands students' horizons, and teaches them to appreciate the wonder of life [4].

The secret power of music has been known to all major civilizations going back to antiquity, where music was considered to be the most important of the sciences, the most important path to religious enlightenment, the very basis of harmonious development and the character of the man. Plato wrote, "I would teach children music, physics, and philosophy; but most importantly music for in the patterns of music and all the arts are the keys to learning".

2. Music and Physical Body

Science has found that most functions of the body are affected by music. Music is a very powerful transformational tool for the human body and soul. Research suggests that music can benefit heart disease patients by reducing their blood pressure, heart rate and anxiety [5]. Music is thought to link all of the emotional, spiritual, and physical elements of the universe. It has the ability to change a person's mood and also to strengthen or weaken emotions of an individual.

Responses to music are easy to be detected in the human body. In a research in Classical music from the baroque period shows that the heart beat and pulse rate relaxes to the beat of the music [6]. As the body becomes relaxed and alert, the mind is able to concentrate more easily. Furthermore, baroque music decreases blood pressure and enhances the ability to learn. Music also affects breathing rate and electrical resistance of the skin [7]. It has been observed to cause the pupils to dilate, increase blood pressure, and increase the heart rate [8].

3. Brain Research

Scientists have long known that when music and other sounds enter the ear, they're converted to electrical signals. The

signals travel up the auditory nerve to the brain's auditory cortex, which processes sound. From there, the brain's responses to music become much more complex^[9].

Music activates many regions of the brain, including auditory, motor and limbic (associated with emotions)^[10]. Such widespread activation of brain explains many beneficial emotional and cognitive music effects^[11]. The power of music to affect memory is quite intriguing. Mozart's music and baroque music, with a 60 beats per minute beat pattern, activate the left and right brain. The simultaneous left and right brain action maximizes learning and retention of information. The information being studied activates the left brain while the music activates the right brain. Also, activities which engage both sides of the brain at the same time, such as playing an instrument or singing, causes the brain to be more capable of processing information^[12].

Over the past decade, new brain imaging techniques have shown that music activates many unexpected brain regions. It can turn on areas involved in emotion and memory. It can also activate the brain's motor regions, which prepare for and coordinate physical movement^[13].

4. Musical performance enhances intelligence

The idea that music makes one smarter received considerable attention from scientists and the media. Listening to music or playing an instrument can actually make one learn better. And research confirms this. Music has the power to enhance some kinds of higher brain function:

- Reading and literacy skills^[14]
- Spatial-temporal reasoning^[15]
- Mathematical abilities - Even children with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder benefit in mathematics tests from listening to music beforehand^[16].
- Emotional intelligence
- Recall of autobiographical and episodic information^[17]

5. Language and Literary Skills

Scientifically based research supports the use of music and musical instruction to build literacy skills of an individual^[18]. Researchers and practitioners recognize that musical activities reinforce many aspects of language development. Chanting and rhythmic speaking, singing, and listening are all experiences that support language development. Activities involving chanting and rhythmic speaking are helpful in the practice of elements of speech that parallel musical elements and in the exploration of oral reading skills. The singing and chanting activities provide practice in rhythm, form, dynamics, and mood, which are concepts and skills common to language and music. The impact of music and musical instruction on early language and literacy development for young children is examined in the following areas:

- Reading Comprehension and Verbal Memory
- Listening Skills
- Vocabulary, including for English Language Learners
- Phonological and Phonemic Awareness
- Writing and Print Awareness
- Impact on Children with Disabilities
- Family Involvement^[19]

6. Creativity and Music

Music can help contribute to the development of a more

creative mind. Einstein considered to be one of the most creative geniuses of the past century, often turned to music to help with his creative process^[20]. Einstein told creativity scholar Max Wertheimer that he never came up with new ideas or scientific breakthroughs by thinking in logical symbols or mathematical equations, but in images, feelings and even musical architectures. Parag Chordia, Director of the Music Intelligence Lab at Georgia Tech, confers that music is a significant, if not essential contributor, to the development and cultivation of creativity. Playing music -- especially improvisation, and creating music -- musical composition, are highly engaging processes that activate multiple areas of the brain and help us to develop greater creative capacity. Simply listening to music can help relax us, and relaxation is key to creativity^[21].

7. Conclusion

There is no downside to bringing children and music together. An attempt was made in this study to prove that music is a very powerful and awesome tool that has positive effects on the brain, personality development, creativity and also on physical body. From the pure pleasure of listening to soothing sounds and rhythmic harmonies, to gaining new language and social skills, whatever the setting - a quiet room at home with mom and dad, a large grassy field filled with people, or a busy classroom - music can enliven and enrich the lives of children and the people who care for them.

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