Music and learning for the young child.

Dr Lucy Bainger
Overview of the webinar

- Music in ECE settings
- Music play is more than music
- How music skills and understandings link to other learning areas (numeracy, literacy, physical co-ordination, social skills, etc).
Before we start

• Music is something we do - take part in the short activities throughout this webinar to get a first hand experience of how the learning happens
• Use songs to extend activities that develop skills and learning
• Chanting is the ideal prelude to singing
• Use simple songs
• Notice how actions to the beat and other challenges help us learn a song in small steps
• Notice the sequence of learning steps and use them to facilitate the learning of new song materials.
Myth-busting music

• Music is ‘part of our built-in, biological design’, and plays a role in developing essential neurobiological systems (Jensen. 2001, p13)
• Humans are a musical species; everyone is born musical to some degree
• A minority excel, having a strong musical intelligence, but everyone is musical (eg: I can run ... not as fast as Cathy Freeman perhaps, but I can still run!)
• Our brains are already primed (even before birth) to learn and recognise melodies and to remember things through melody. (That’s why music is used in advertising so much. Do you use the alphabet song when looking through the phone book? abcd, efg ...)
• We don’t need to spend lots of money - we can make basic instruments ourselves and/or with the children.
These were made out of chip and drinking chocolate containers, corks and chopsticks. The blue silk sheet makes a wonderful sea or river when needed.
A musical species

• Very young infants can detect changes in the melodic contour of a familiar song (Jensen. 2001, p17)
• From a young age, children make up little ‘songlets’ and rhythmic patterns, singing words or parts of words repetitively, which supports the development of speech
• For the young child, music making is a natural part of general play, almost always connected to movement, vocalising, role play, and pretend play, etc
• Children are experts at play - so when we introduce music games, we need to sing and do - no explanations!
• We do not have to be musically talented, or have a performance-standard voice.
Understanding music

Music involves other learning skills, including:

- listening
- counting
- recognising and reproducing words
- using rhyming words
- physical balance
- micro/macro physical skills to produce and control sounds and movements
- memory
- opportunities to create, compose, and improvise
- problem solving through listening
- social skills - taking turns, sharing and valuing ideas, playing together
- and much more.

Music and learning for the young child
Dr Lucy Bainger
Music is not just music

- Music is based on a beat - beats occur with mathematical regularity
- The beat is the most accessible part of music - we can join in with it instantly
- Children need plenty of beat activities to do while hearing a song sung many times - this is the natural way to learn a song
- Children have little bodies so their natural beat is faster than an adults
- Enjoy the experience of learning a song now simply by joining in with each small task - don’t even think about singing yet - just listen and join in with the actions
Music work

• Many teachers are shy about singing and doing music – you are not alone
• If you can tap your foot in time with any music, you can keep a beat
• If you can talk you can sing
• The more you sing, the more you can sing!
• Tuneful singing is about active listening
• Songs are learned with ears, not mouths! (this is true for both you and the children)
• Learning a song takes time, and begins with listening to many repetitions
• Let’s start!
Song steps

- ‘I’ll Sing a Song’ by Ella Jenkins (https://youtu.be/KTmoAobX5mY)
- We (and children) need to hear a song many times in order to learn to sing it ourselves
- Focus on either the actions and/or the beat first
- Look for ways to challenge and extend skills by gradually introducing new challenges
- Use imaginative contexts rather than explanation
- Invite the children’s input and ideas
- As we go - notice how you have been learning the song while focusing on other things
Learning a song

• Allow yourself time to hear many repetitions (6-7x), while doing actions (not singing); (your brain will memorise a short melody without any effort, if you relax and simply listen)

• Get involved in the beat and actions before trying to sing (this is what children do)

• If a song is too high or too low for your voice, change the starting note - the same song can be sung from any starting note.

• Don’t judge yourself - encourage yourself! (Be as kind to yourself as you would be to a child - you don’t need to sound like a recording artist!)
Music and numeracy

Music is built on reoccurring beats, which marks out time in equal portions. Rhythms are numerically connected to the beat. Exploring beat and rhythm introduces the young child to mathematical concepts in a simple form:

- **number songs** *(5 little ducks, Ten fat sausages*, Hickory Dickory Dock*, Five little ducks)*
- **counting sounds** *(Higgeldy Piggeldy)*
- **counting beats** *(Roly Poly*, Jingle Jive*)
- **creating and recognising patterns**
- **recognising shapes** *(Run run up the hill*, Let’s make a circle)*
- **counting down** *(I’m a little rocket).*
Beats and counting

• The beat in music is a mathematical concept
• Beats are usually in groups of 2, 3 or 4 (4 is the most common)
• The first beat (no. 1) usually feels stronger
• Count the beat with actions to help develop concentration, memory and coordination

• 1 2 3 | 1 2 3 | ea-sy to | 1 2 3 |
• 1 2 3 4 | 1 2 3 4 | pat, clap a little more | 1 2 3 4 |
• Get creative with beats, making up patterns using body percussion.
Beat patterns

- 1-3 yrs: simple claps or pats, then start to differentiate, with a 2-beat pattern:
  - pat - clap I pat - clap
- 3+ yrs: older children can develop beats with body percussion; from a simple 4-beat pattern ...
  - 1:pat 2:clap 3:clap 4:clap
  - to more complicated patterns ...
  - 1:clap 2:pat 3:tap head 4:clap
- At every stage invite the children to make up their own patterns for everyone to join in with.
Music and literacy

Music is a symbol system with its own markings that carry meanings. Developing listening skills and learning to read rhythm symbols and identify syllables* are valuable pre-reading skills.

- Repeated words and phrases
  (*Run, run up the hill*, *Miss Polly, I’ll sing a song*)
- Sentence structure
  (*This is the way we ..., How much is that doggie*)
- Word rhythms
  (*Baa baa blacksheep, Thousand hairy caterpillars*)
- Pronunciation and syllables
  (*Twinkle twinkle, We’re going up*, *Ten fat sausages*)
- Rhyming words
  (*Miss Polly, Miss Mary Mack, Hickory Dickory*)

*see tutorials in Music Magic

Music and learning for the young child
Dr Lucy Bainger
Music & physical co-ordination

For the young child, music and movement are always connected. Learning to move the body using both gross and fine motor skills develops the child’s physical coordination:

- crossing the mid-line songs (*Ha-ha this-a-way*, *Innanay*, *Hokey Pokey*)
- hand-eye co-ordination (playing instruments in songs like *Play and stop!*, *Big bass drum*, *I am a fine musician*)
- locomotive skills (*Let’s go jumping*, *Can you hop as fast as I can*, *Zibbedy Doo*)
- healthy breathing (*Whoosh!* and singing with movement in general)
- balancing (*Freeze!*, *Balancing the bean-bag*, *Five grey elephants*).
Music & social skills

Group music time is an opportunity for children to play games that require their cooperation and participation, and the ability to share attention and take turns:

• greeting, eye contact, (Welcome Song, Let’s make a circle, Whoosh!*)
• hand holding and cooperation (We all walk in*)
• listening to each other (Bee bee*)
• appropriate touching (The old grey cat*, Tap tap tap)
• sharing and taking turns (If you’re name is ..., Jingle Jive*, Freeze!*)
• taking a leading role (Welcome Song*, Freeze!, I’ll sing a song).

(* = in Music Magic, L. Bainger, 2007 (Inscript Pub.)
Have you felt like joining in with the singing yet? Here are some other songs you can learn in the same way:

- Stopping and starting: Learning how to play with sounds in a manageable way is essential for music to flourish in EC settings: make it fun to stop! and develop self-control. Here are some useful songs to develop this.
  
  1. Let’s make a circle
  2. Walking song
Introducing a song

• Have a theme for the music session; eg: the sea, that will connect materials with an imaginative link
• Involve the children as doers straight away - eg: ‘my hands can talk! what are they saying?’ ... you, me, all of us ...
• Keep a beat on your body, or do actions the children can copy
• Create an imaginative context: we are all on an island - how did we get there?
• Things that happen on the island: a storm over the sea .... “I hear thunder ...”. Sailing in a boat: “A sailor went to sea, sea, sea ...” or Row, row, row your boat, gently out to sea ...”
Imaginative context (e.g.)

- Eg: go out in a boat / shipwrecked, or raided by pirates / stranded on a desert island ...sand, palm trees, sea winds; Can you be a palm tree? ...Here comes the wind - whoosh, whoosh!” (movement challenge: explore how the palm tree is stuck fast, growing in the sand, but it can bend its trunk in the wind - how far can it bend over?)
- “There’s not much to do on this tiny island - what could we do?” (listen to children’s ideas, act on them and include this game.)
- “Let’s make a circle, and who ever is in the middle can show us what to do”. Demonstrate if needed - by jumping or twirling etc, and singing: I’ll jump up and down, so you jump up and down, we’ll all jump up and down together ... etc.
- Ask; who has an action we could all do? “What do you call that? - ‘twirling?’ and change the lyrics using the child’s words. Continue with each child having a turn. Encourage different actions.

Music and learning for the young child
Dr Lucy Bainger
Group music: a place to start

- Use a starting song to support active listening (*Welcome Song, It’s time for us to start, etc.*)
- Introduce a theme
- Play with stopping and starting (*Walking Song, Freeze! etc.*)
- Energy games; (*Jingle Jive, We all walk in, Can you jump as fast as I can? etc.*)
- Playing instruments: (*If your name is Milly, get your drum, Play and Stop, Play! etc.*)
- Animate your voice, always play a beat on the body, and move!
Some useful basics

- Think of music as a time to play, relax and learn
- Create opportunities to breath deeply to support singing (*Whoosh!*)
- Repeat activities and songs as long as the children enjoy them
- Prepare to use some songs over a long time span, developing them to match the learning needs of the children
- Feel free to change and/or make up songs as needed!
Developing music skills

- Your own music skills can be developed like any other skill; with practice and over time
- Be prepared to learn what you want the children to learn
- Be prepared to move as much as they do
- All skill development requires some practice - take some time to learn songs, and develop games
- Think of yourself as a play facilitator, rather than as a teacher who has to be expert in music.
Being a co-player

• Leave room for children to utilise their listening, comprehension and problem solving skills (ie: create problem solving opportunities)

• Value improvisation; children are expert improvisors and have great ideas; an invaluable resource for you

• Acknowledge, value and utilise children’s ideas as they come up.
Music play/learning

- Manage noise levels - maximum of 10 children at a time
- Be willing to explore and learn about music alongside and with children
- Be prepared for physical play, getting down on the floor, taking part
- Embed the pedagogy; teach by example
- Don’t explain, *demonstrate!* (explanations are not part of play).
Preparation

• Give yourself at least 2 weeks to learn a new song before presenting it
• Play/think through the associated activities in your imagination;
• How much room will you need?
• What props will you need?
• What actions will you use to introduce the new song?
• What is the imaginative context?
• What extensions - what is the learning focus? (eg: beat, counting, syllables, new vocabulary, colours, shapes, social skills, physical co-ordination challenges, etc.)
A world in song

- **Movement songs** *(Run, run up the hill*, Humpty Dumpty, Open shut them, etc)*
- **Role play songs** *(Hop little rabbits, 5 Currant Buns, Swim little fish, Mama Warano*, Miss Polly etc)*
- **Instrument songs** *(Play and Stop, Play!, I am a fine musician, Roly Poly*, etc.)*
- **Problem solving songs** *(Run run up the hill*, The Shape Magician, I’m a little rocket, etc)*
- **Counting songs** *(3 little elephants, There were 5 in the bed, 5 little ducks, etc)*
- **Rhyming songs** *(This old man, Miss Mary Mack, etc)*
- **Always look for the imaginative possibilities in any song.*
Remembering Copyright

• It’s important to remember copyright when you use other people’s content at your education and care service
• Using other people’s content – like music – requires their permission in the form of a license
• The Copyright Act has given creators the exclusive right to determine how their work is used
• A license allows you to use it in certain ways with their permission
• You can obtain licensing from APRA AMCOS and ARIA PPCA to use music
• By September you will be able to obtain this licensing in one go directly through ECA, instead of through the four organisations.
Acknowledgements

- ‘You’ll sing a song’ by Ella Jenkins: https://youtu.be/KTmoAobX5mY
- Jensen, E. (2001) Arts with the brain in mind. ASCD USA
- Wright, S. (2013)