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Future Musicians

Children can develop an appreciation, and an ear for music early in life

Learning music is like learning a language - the earlier children start, the better, and there is no better way to jumpstart your child's interest in music, than at Musicians in the Making, featuring MUSIKGARTEN, a preschool program with that specific

By Michelle Walbaum goal in mind.

Very young children have the highest musical learning potential, said Linda M. Fields, owner of Musicians in the Making. "We train their ear and body starting at birth."

"The ear processes both sound and balance, so singing and moving to music creates a very

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Photos by Eric R. Carter

• (Above and Far-Left) Children listen to recorded music, move and dance in synchronized rhythm. (Right) From left to right, Jennifer Digioia, Teacher, Linda M. Fields, Founder & Director and Carolyn Keurajian, Teacher. Very young children have the highest musical learning potential and the Musikgarten program at Musicians in the Making aims to take advantage of that potential by exposing them to music early on in life.



MUSIC
from cover

effective foundation,” Fields explained. “Singing teaches pitch; moving teaches rhythm.”

Getting youngsters into music early enables them to pick up note-reading very effectively later on. More importantly, early music experiences allow students to express musical ideas, instead of repeating notes by rote.

Mrs. Fields believes from her own childhood experience that there is more to music than simply playing notes.

“When I started piano lessons, I learned everything by looking at the notes and finding them on piano,” she said about herself when she was five years old, “I was not thinking about the sound.”

That is the reason she decided to start the school in 1993.

“If you were going to recite a poem in an unfamiliar language, you might learn how to pronounce all the words,” she said. “But if you actually understand the meaning of phrases you are saying, it will be a much more effective performance.”

With this program, children learn to “use a musical instrument as a tool to express their ideas.” That way,

it’s more of a creative process, she said.

Musicians in the Making encourages learning the way babies learn best—by being immersed in, and exploring a fascinating, fun environment.

Parents are encouraged to sing together as they bounce the little ones on their knees.

The children are invited to use the simple instruments surrounding them. They enjoy everything, from tapping rhythm sticks together to ringing tone bars, singing and dancing.

“We bring the children from passive musical experience where they’re listening and absorbing a rich variety of sounds, to an active response to the music,” Mrs. Fields said.

But while students start playing instruments, the classes are still unstructured.

Like a toddler’s babbling, early attempts at matching pitch or keeping the beat may be inaccurate. In much the same way that parents wait for their toddler to mouth their first word, teachers know that music will emerge from repeated playful efforts.

Hua Chen, the proud mother of a student in the class is happy with the results

she has already begun to see in her baby. Just two months after joining a class as a 6-month-old, Joshua began showing a strong appreciation for music, she explained.

“We noticed that Joshua intentionally related to music with clapping hands. Whenever the music or song is on, he looks very happy or I should say, passionate about it. He clapped with rhythms, he held both of his hands and rocked his body,” she wrote in an e-mail to Fields. “It is just so amazing! I certainly could not know exactly what is going on in his mind, but I surely know that he is making sense of the music and he enjoys it very much.”

As they are initiated into the culture of music, children move from random response to structured sounds. Teachers vocalize brief tunes and rhythms, and children are invited to “echo”. They begin to learn the basics of pitch and rhythm this way, Mrs. Fields said. From there, many progress to reading groups of musical notes by Kindergarten or First Grade.

For more information about events and classes, go to <http://www.musiciansinthemaking.com>.