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## EARLY CHILDHOOD MUSICAL EXPERIENCES

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### Anotacija

Straipsnyje teoriniu ir empiriniu lygiu nagrinėjama studentų, būsimų mokytojų, muzikinė patirtis, įgyta ankstyvoje vaikystėje. Pirmieji muzikiniai eksperimentai yra labai svarbūs lavinant dainavimo gebėjimus. Apklausos rezultatai rodo, kad muzika tiriamiesiems buvo antras pagal populiarumą laisvalaikio užsiėmimas. Namuose paprastai vaikams dainuoja mamos. Nuostatos į muziką buvo teigiamos. Muzikinė patirtis, įgyta vaikystėje, siejasi su suaugusio žmogaus savivoka, muzikine orientacija ir savigarpa.

**Raktažodžiai:** muzikinė patirtis ankstyvoje vaikystėje, muzikinė aplinka, studentai – būsimi pradinių klasių mokytojai, dainavimas, grojimas ir muzikos klausymas ankstyvoje vaikystėje.

### Abstract

The article focuses on students – teachers' early childhood musical experiences on theoretical and empirical level (N = 590). The early experiments in music are very important developing singing abilities. Music was the second most appreciated hobby in the respondents' childhood homes. Usually at home it is the mother who sings to children. Attitude to music was positive. Musical experiences in childhood appear to have connection with self-concept, music orientation and self-esteem at adult age too.

**Keywords:** Early childhood musical experiences, musical environment, pre-service elementary teachers, early childhood singing, playing, and music listening.

*"There are two values, which you can give your child as a present for Life. First of all: Roots, and then: Wings"*

(An American Indian proverb)

### Aim of the study

The specific problems were:

- 1) What is a child's musical development like? (According to research, on theoretical level);
- 2) What kind of musical environment do people (especially students – teachers in Finland) have in their childhood? The environment is observed in relation to the stimulating environment and musical experiences (empirical level);
- 3) How does the childhood musical stimulation environment contribute to musical progress in teacher education?

Data on early childhood musical experiences and the musical stimulation environment were collected through the questionnaire. The questions concerned early childhood singing, playing, and listening to music as well as home's interests and appreciation of art in general.

Target group (N = 660) included all second year pre-service elementary teachers enrolled in 10 Finnish teacher education institutes. It was an entire research to get reliable results. The students' are –

20–25 years. Their aim was to become elementary classroom teachers. 590 questionnaires were returned (88.6%), an extremely high figure. There were 222 men and 368 women in the group.

The data included both quantitative and qualitative information. Qualitative information was received through semi-structured questions. The evaluation of quantitative questions was made according to the 5-step Likert scale.

### The significance of music in the early stages of a child's life (our roots)

A child's musical experiences begin at an early age. According to many research results the human hearing mechanism is functional three to four months before birth. At the age of approximately six to seven months the foetus reacts to external sounds, so that clear changes in the frequency of the heart beat can be registered. The foetal habituation to certain sound stimuli develops sensitiveness to and preference for these sounds. This will be manifested after birth. The kinds of sound stimuli include, for instance, the mother's speech, and repeated songs and tunes (Lecanuet, 2000, 24–25).

It is shown (Hodges, 2004) that early musical experiences leave their imprint on the brain. There are growing indications that those, who study music, particularly beginning at an early age, show

neurological differences when compared to those, who have not had much training. Adult musicians have stronger and faster brain responses to musical tasks (Faita & Besson, 1994) and certain parts of their brains related to music processing are larger or more responsive. Research has also been done about musical aptitude and common intelligence.

Many researches strongly suggest that early musical experiences imprint themselves on the brain as all learning experiences, which have the potential for changing brain organization. Whether these changes have implications for other domains of learning is still being investigated. But it is certain that early musical experiences involving active participation allow for enhanced musical experiences later in life (Hodges, 2004). During the first year of life the child expands his/her perspectives on life and the surrounding world where movement, rhythm and the musical intonation of speech are very significant. The baby's ability to learn language is extremely refined (Björkvold, 1991, 28). According to the Suzuki Voice Program method teaching can be started in the fifth month of pregnancy (Kukkamäki, 2003). According to Näätänen's brain research (2003) only two hours sleep learning develops a baby's ability to differentiate between, for example, Finnish and Estonian vowels.

According to Custodera's et al. research (2003) mothers compared to fathers were more likely to sing/play music for their children; these activities occurred more frequently with infants (0–23 months) than with toddlers (24–36 months), with firstborn rather than latter-born children, and with parents who had more than a high school education. Emotional distress was negatively associated with musical engagement.

### **The development of children's singing abilities**

The development of young children's singing ability takes place as a part of enculturation without a conscious struggle to improve musical skills or to memorize songs. To a certain extent the development of skills happens all the time throughout childhood (Sloboda, 1994, 200, 215). Generally the developmental process proceeds from the babbling songs of children under the age of two years to outline songs. This period lasts for about three years (Hargreaves, 2000, 156). It is precisely during this phase that creativity in singing is found. It appears in children's spontaneous songs of different types such as imitations of learned songs, variations, fragments and improvised parts. At their longest they form potpourris or especially imaginative songs of four-year-old children.

(Moog, 1976, 114–117; Fredrikson, 1994, 50, 53–60; Sundin, 1979, 116–117; Sloboda, 1994, 209.)

Usually children sing their first draft songs at the age of 5 to 8. The ability to produce accurate intervals, to analyse and keep in tune develops up to the age of 15 (Hargreaves 2000, 156; Sloboda, 1994, 209–215). A small child's development in language is supported by music and especially songs. Songs expand vocabulary and also benefit to the beginning ability of reading (Nurmilaakso, 2004; Edward & Willis, 2000).

The level of skilfulness in singing varies significantly among children of the same age, as shown by Kelley and Sutton-Smith (1987) who have analysed the effect of environment. They compared the development of musical skills of three girls, each first born-daughters in their families, in musically very different home environments. The researchers observed the effect of home environment stimuli on the speed of musical development. Children may begin to sing at 9 months or in some cases not until the age of 2. They also concluded that the most important factor in environmental musical stimuli is parents' singing with their children. The researchers also noted the possible effect of genetics together with various other environmental factors (Kelley & Sutton-Smith, 1987, 35–53; Papousek, 2000, 196–107).

The earliest manifestation of a special musical talent is when a child sings his/her first songs at a younger age than might be expected. In their research Howe et al. (1995, 162–172) observed that the most advanced students in a special musical school sang approximately 6 months earlier than the control groups. The starting age of singing and the amount of musical stimuli given by the parents had a statistically positive correlation. Maybe the most important factor in environmental musical stimuli is parents' singing with their children. In another extensive research (Watts et al., 2003) it was suggested that intonation, timbre, and musicality were rated as the most important factors associated with the perception of a singing talent in an untrained individual. Environmental influences and genetics were rated as most important explaining why one individual would express a singing talent and another would not. In addition, the data suggested that abilities related to the control of pitch distinguished untrained talented individuals from those without singing talent more than other physiological variables.

From the therapeutic viewpoint a song can work as a transitional object to a young child whose symbol function has already developed. When the mother is away the child feels secure when singing, for example, the same lullaby as his/her mother did (Kurkela, 1994, 459–460). Lehtonen has pointed out

that the theory of transitional phenomena developed in the 1960s by Winnicott has in many cases been used to explain emotional impact in music especially because of its entertaining or loneliness and anxiety – diminishing function. Lehtonen (1996, 28, 75–76, 83) also sees music as a kind of “meta language”, which can be used to process any psychological or physical shade of emotion. There can, for example, be stages of deprivation in childhood or suffering in adulthood, which the subject can withstand through the help of music.

Early negative criticism of musical achievement as a child may have led many people to abandon their singing or playing (Sundin, 1989, 160; Ruismäki, 1996, 404–405). Obviously, self-concept in music is extremely vulnerable because of unconscious conflicts in early childhood and fear of authority. This makes the individual interpret the criticism of a teacher or parent as highly negative, even as a punishment. Lehtonen (1996, 20) remarks that it is also possible to deeply hurt a person who performs or talks about music. In such cases the person may entirely deny music and its emotional meaning for him/herself. Music educators in particular should be aware that considerable discretion is required in human relationships in their daily work.

### **The benefit of playing**

According to Vikman's study (2001) the figure notes (marked with different colours and symbols) support young children's learning in piano playing and help the child progress to real note-reading. Practising of playing skills develops a child's innate skills perhaps more than any other activity, although these skills later become an integrated entity for the player him/herself. Gardner (1993, 73–278) has noted that playing skills consist of seven types of talent; according to Vikman (2001, 48–51) in piano playing these dimensions are as follows:

Linguistic – comprehending the meaning of words and rules;

Logical-mathematical – understanding the theoretical structure of music;

Spatial – perceiving the structure of sound material and identifying note-reading (Karma 1986, 50–52);

Bodily kinaesthetic – controlling motor coordination in finger and body movements;

Musical – expressing oneself musically in rhythm, melody, harmony, and timbre;

Intrapersonal – analysing one's own emotions, developing better self-esteem and motivation;

Interpersonal – understanding others in group playing.

In Finland even pre-school children can begin their musical studies at music institutions founded in the 1950s and at music playschools connected with them. Later through entrance examinations children can pass on to study the main instrument in addition to school studies. The music institutions network nowadays covers the entire country. Nowadays there are approximately 150 music institutions and music schools and they have 86 000 students (Partanen, 2001).

Although the importance of the home's musical environment is emphasized, this should not diminish the significance of music education given in day care centres, at kindergartens and schools. Nowadays, the media are also important in the children's sound environment. However, it is useful for parents, kindergarten teachers, and educators to know about the connection between parental musical attitudes as well as the home's everyday musical activities and children's musical development (Brand, 1986, 118–119).

### **Musical development briefly in early childhood**

In his book “Musicality from Birth to Five” Hodges (2001) has done much research and describes musical development in childhood as follows: the following is presented as the merest outline of musical development. (For more detail see Andress, 1986; Davidson, McKernon, & Gardner, 1981; Dowling, 1999; Gembris, 2002; Gembris & Davidson, 2002; Imberty, 1996; McDonald & Simons, 1989; H. Papousek, 1996; M. Papousek, 1996; Pouthas, 1996; Simons, 1986).

Pre-natal: While more and more is being learned about fetal reactions to sound and music, less is known about the impact of these experiences on later musical development.

Birth to 1: Newborns of 1 to 5 days old have demonstrated an ability to discriminate differences in frequency. The onset of cooing and purposeful vocal sounds is 15–16 weeks. Five-month old babies have shown sensitivity to melodic contour and rhythmic changes. Six-month old babies have been successful in matching specific pitches. During the first year of life most babies are alert and responsive to musical stimuli; through babbling and cooing they engage in considerable melodic and intonational experimentation.

1–1.5: Activation to music through rocking, marching, rolling, and attending intently are more pronounced. Experimentation with pitch variations continues; movement between tones is by glissando, not discrete pitches.

1.5–2.5: The glissando technique for sliding between ambiguous pitches changes into a capacity of producing discrete pitches. The child begins

systematic drill of intervals in fragments, including seconds, minor thirds, and major thirds, gradually expanding to include fourths and fifths. This is a period of spontaneous song that is, improvised song fragments consisting of the selected intervals being practiced. These songs are not clearly organized and contain little tonality or regularity of rhythms.

2.5–3: Spontaneous songs gradually give over to a recognition and imitation of folk tunes in the environment, such as the ABC song, Old MacDonald, and Twinkle, Twinkle. Often these take the form of multiple repetitions of learned fragments and/or variations. During the next period the child must accommodate to the limitations of culturally-approved songs. By the end of the third year a rhythmic structure is learned.

3–4: By now the child is capable of reproducing an entire song in terms of the overall contour. However, accurate pitch representation, as opposed to contour, is not always possible.

5: An underlying pulse is extracted from surface rhythm so that a child is able to keep a steady beat. The child is now able to sing an entire song in the same key without modulating, with an increasing awareness of a set of pitches instead of just contour.

During the next five years most children increasingly acquire a stable, internal pitch framework. Critical to musical development in the earliest years is the home environment. Opportunities not just to hear music but to interact in musical games and activities is critical to emotional and psychological development (Dissanayake, 2000; Gembris & Davidson, 2002). Moreover, it is becoming increasingly apparent that all human beings are biologically predisposed to be musical and that this inborn predisposition for musicality has important consequences for us not only artistically but emotionally and socially as well (Hodges, 2000; Imberty, 2000; Trehub, 2000; according to Hodges, 2001).

### **The meaning of singing from an ethnomusical point of view (Saami joik tradition and Kalevala)**

In communities where culture is based on oral traditions music is experienced much more strongly than in most Western cultures. Among the Saami people in the Northern part of Scandinavia and among Australian Aborigines as well as the original native Indians in America, for example, occult powers can be linked to music. In such communities music has usually been a part of everyday life from birth until death.

According to Catherine J. Ellis (1989) Australian Aborigines have their own song for a difficult birth, which requires both male and female singers. Children's singing repertory includes both songs

produced spontaneously by themselves and adult's easier songs. The children participate in the performances of open songs with their families. The psychological aspects of mythic texts as well as their secret and spiritual content are revealed to the singers at a later age (Ellis, 1989, 52–56).

In her dissertation about the Northern Saami joik tradition Järvinen (1999) discussed a strong communal meaning of singing or joik chants. A joik can be connected to almost every life situation, from cradle songs to daily household chores. Every member of the Saami community has his/her joik, which bears his/her identity and whose performance is allowed only to the other members of the community (Järvinen, 1999, 72–80, 139–141).

The child receives his/her first own joik from his/her parents or relatives and begins joik chanting at 3–4 years old. The child is taught of the background of the chant and advice is given on performance. The children's instruction in joik chanting takes place as a music education process in a domestic circle (Järvinen, 1999, 82–83, 126–129).

According to Eriksson (2004) to tune a joik is a way of understanding life. The joik is the voice of female ancestors. To tune a joik is therefore to take care of the heritage from ancient mothers and fathers. A joik has no beginning or ending; it is moving like a circle in the same way as ecology of life. Life does not end with death but continues in paradise. The magic of joik is its continuity. The Sami joik sound more joyful than the songs of other native people in North America, New Zealand or Australia maybe because the Samic people have not been chased.

The character of a joik is always related to the situation and the person who is tuning it. It is always a creative product in a process between at least two persons. A joik is dedicated to a person, a place or an animal. You are not joiking about a person, but you are joiking the person. The lyrics of the joik is often very personal so that only the person who is joiking and the person who it is dedicated to understand the meaning of it. It is very important that the one who is joiked likes the joik of himself. You are not allowed to joik yourself because it contains a lot of compliments but if somebody starts to joik oneself you can join him. When you listen to a joik to a person you will get an impression of the nature of the person, for example, if she or he is joyful, quick or calm (Eriksson, 2004).

Dovna is a joik to a child. Eriksson describes (2004) that this kind of joik was not seen as sinful and was not forbidden by the Christian church. When the person grows older the person's joik is changing. Some joiks for adults are built upon the childhood joik. After the Christian confirmation you do not use the child's joik anymore. Then you get a new adult joik. You create a joik to someone you

like, your friends, colleagues or to your boy girlfriend. The joik must be accepted by the person

who is the object of it. In old days the joik was first presented at the market place.

**Personjoik fra nord-Finland**

Na Ovllas-                      Ov- lla go njuo- va                      njal- da go de jo  
 Ja ir- ga-                      lit maid mun geahcca-                      lei- den muh doaskka  
 go de jo                      laj lon go de jo                      lo- a go de jo  
 Na njuo- va-                      dit maid mun geahcca-                      lei- den muh i- at  
 go de jo                      laj lon go de jo                      lo- a go de jo

laj lon go de jo                      lo- a  
 ozz- on gal beal- je                      vuoll- ai-  
 laj lon go de jo                      lo- a  
 dat ge gal si- sa                      cas- kan.  
 laj lon go de jo                      lo- a

Finnish folk poetry singing has been an essential element of the *Kalevala* tradition as the poems were orally transmitted from one generation to the next. If we literally interpret the beginning of the *Kalevala*, it becomes evident that the fathers sang at work, but the mothers also taught their children to sing when they were busy in the house. These are our roots in folk poetry singing.

The roots of the *Kalevala* culture extend back to at least two or three thousand years, to the time when original forms of the poetry and music of the *Kalevala* evolved amongst the Baltic-Finnic peoples. Influences from the Baltic peoples (Lithuanians and Latvians) were imported. The first millennium AD at the latest saw the emergence of *runo* singing that flourished in Finland, Karelia, Ingria and Estonia. Finno-Karelian *runo* singing survived well into the 19th century in places, and some remnants of the old tradition can still be found today. There is no record, however, of laments in Finland, though they are well documented in Karelia and Ingria (Saha, 2001).

Why is it so important to know what kind of musical environment our children have? Because in childhood we are creating attitudes and relationship to music and self-concept and worldview in music (see Reynolds, 2004; Juvonen, 2000; Juvonen & Anttila, 1999; Anttila & Juvonen, 2002; Juvonen & Anttila, 2003). Literature, which specifically addresses self-

concept in music, is enriched by research pertaining to the attributional theory of motivation, and literature regarding self-concept of ability (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Covington, 1984; Dweck, Goetz, & Strauss, 1980; Dweck & Henderson, 1989; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Weiner, 1986; Anttila, 2000).

## Results

### Interests and art appreciation in the home

Table 1 shows that sports were the most popular hobby in childhood homes. Gardening and tourism were more common than the arts. Interest in sciences was least demonstrated.

Table 1  
The most common interests of students – teachers' childhood homes (N = 590)

Interests	M	s
Sports	3.43	1.26
Gardening	3.14	1.28
Tourism	2.89	1.11
Arts	2.62	1.24
Raising the standard of living	2.37	1.02
Sciences	1.77	0.96

The results concerning interest in different art forms are shown separately in Table 2.

Table 2

**The appreciation of art forms in childhood homes  
(N = 590)**

Art form	M	s
Art of crafts	3.68	1.06
Music	3.53	1.14
Literature	3.40	1.18
Art of physical education	3.24	1.22
Visual arts	2.92	1.18

Art of crafts was the most appreciated art form in childhood homes. Statistically handicraft in Finland is the most common creative cultural hobby (Arjen kulttuurina, 1993, 7). Music was the second most appreciated art form, a little higher than literature.

### Singing experiences

To gain data on the singing stimuli of musical experiences in childhood, students – teachers were asked how often they were sung to in childhood, and who these singers were. Of the homes which participated in the research 17 percent had given very much and 20 percent much vocal stimuli to their children. On the other hand, 3 percent of homes had never sung and in 20 percent of homes singing had been rather rare. According to earlier studies (e.g. Kelley & Sutton-Smith, 1987) scarcity of singing can lead to insecurity in the child's later music achievements. Precisely these pupils should receive tactful instruction from their teachers.

Table 3

**Parents singing with students – teachers in their  
childhood homes (N = 590)**

Singers	f	%
Both of the parents	179	30
Mother	279	47
Father	58	10
<u>Neither of them</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>12</u>
Total	588	100

The results indicated (Table 3) that the mothers sang to their children in clearly more cases than the fathers. The results are similar by Trehub et al. (1997). Though in the American research (Custodera et al., 2003) singing and playing music for children were not separated. Both of the parents sang to a third of the students in childhood. Most of the

respondents had usually enjoyed singing (4.00, s = 1.03).

66 percent (N = 590) of the respondents remembered their childhood songs by title. A half of the mentioned songs were well known children's songs. The rest of the songs consisted of light music, songs and pop/rock music as well as classical music. Usually these songs were hits of past decades, which the parents and grandparents had learned in their time.

Anestious about invented own songs were designed to assess the amount of possible creative activity among students – teachers. The age phase when songs might be invented was not directly inquired. It is known that 3–5-year-old children generally composed potpourri or imaginative songs. They often could not remember them themselves but with reasonable certainty the parents had later told them about it. More than a half of students – teachers stated that they had invented songs.

### Playing stimuli

The results about parents' playing interests proved that both of the parents played at home rather rarely (Table 4). Fathers participated distinctly more often in playing interests, contrary to the case of singing with their children (Table 4). This research conforms to earlier Finnish research (Jokinen, 1998, 473–478).

Table 4

**The number of parents who played in childhood  
homes (N = 590)**

Player	f	%
Both of the parents	29	5
Father	114	19
Mother	72	12
<u>Neither of them</u>	<u>375</u>	<u>64</u>
Total	590	100

In this research fathers played a greater variety of musical instruments than mothers, who mostly concentrated only on the piano or harmonium. Fathers often played guitars, mandolins, mouth-organs and accordions, as well as violins and the piano. Children think that their fathers can play "almost anything" or "every instrument".

### Music listening stimuli

The results proved (Table 5) that in students – teachers' childhood homes music was often listened to on the radio (M = 3.9). Although music listening has been considered as one of our most widespread pastimes, Seppänen (1993, 88) remarks, however, that some qualifications need be made, as music is

primarily used as a background rather than attentively listened to (Arjen kulttuuria, 1993, 88).

The families of students – teachers had taken a positive view to their children's music listening and/or singing. More than a half of them (57%) were allowed to practise their sound producing music activities without any limitations. There were, however, exceptions to this music-tolerating environment. 5 percent of the respondents reported that their family members often allowed only limited music practising. According to Jokinen's research (1998, 492), the reason for limiting music listening on the radio was different musical tastes in the family.

Responses also revealed that 92 percent of the students were able to play records or cassettes at home. 66 percent of the respondents remembered by title the records or types of music they had listened to. The remembered musical titles can in broad outline be divided into five groups (Table 5).

Table 5

**The type of records or cassettes listened to in childhood homes (N = 390)**

<b>The type of music</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Entertaining, popular, and traditional dance music</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Rockmusic</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Popmusic</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Classical music</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Children's music</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Total mentions</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>100</b>

Entertaining and rock/pop music was listened to more than children's music or classical compositions.

### **Early childhood music education experiences**

Our research also assesses how frequent and efficient music instruction had been in students – teachers' childhood, what they remembered about its content and how they had personally experienced it.

One third of students – teachers (N = 590) had been given music instruction at Sunday school or as a part of church life. Another third participated in music lessons at day care centres and 7 percent of these had in addition been instructed at music school. The final third had no music instruction at all in their childhood. Music school involves 20000 children under school age in Finland (Partanen, 2004).

Taken as a whole, the early childhood music education was considered to have been very favourable. The average of positive experiences

derived from the opinion poll was rather high (M = 4.1, s = .81).

Only 69 percent of those who had participated in music instruction (N = 386) answered the question about the possible content memories of music lessons. They gave one to three comments about the content, methods and sometimes also the atmosphere. The majority of the memories were songs, psalms and singing games (82%). Of the mentions 10 percent was applied to playing and the rest to dramatising songs and different kinds of performances. Most of individual memories emphasised the cosiness and joyfulness of music lessons, and were revealed in the following comments:

- \* **Warm moments, joy of singing.**
- \* **The lessons were too short.**
- \* **The songs were cheerful and rhythmical.**

The child's emotional sensibility and empathy with the content of the song was revealed in such statements as "sometimes a sad song made me cry". Another respondent remembered "singing games that touched the child's experience world". The experiences (comp. Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 72–75) of putting on short performances in a group had been remembered as positive achievements. They were described, for example, by the following responses:

- \* **The bell struck five already – I was a horse (a Finnish singing game)**
- \* **I was a Star boy and a Knight in the Star Boys (a historical song play)**
- \* **I played the triangle in a kindergarten performance.**

Accompanists and accompaniment were positively remembered. In the memories instructors were generally mentioned as accompanists, e. g. "the lady playing the piano" or "the guitar accompaniment to Sunday school songs". The expressed memories about early childhood music lessons were single comments or short references. However, they expressed features about the world of music education that the child had perceived and recollected at that age phase. Besides, they describe the first elements developing self-concept in music.

### **The connections of the musical stimulation environment to musical progress in teacher education**

This research also analyzed the correlations between early childhood musical experiences and musical achievements at adult age. The results proved that almost all of the variables of childhood singing and playing stimuli correlate statistically very significantly with the musical progress in

teacher education (Table 6). The strongest correlations were between the pleasure of singing and the score for singing (.44) and likewise a piano (or other keyboard instrument) at home and the score for playing (.47). The comprehensiveness of childhood musical stimuli emerges from the connections covering both singing and playing

progress. Generally the correlations of singing stimuli are higher with the score for singing and the correlations of playing stimuli correspondingly stronger with the score for playing. Only strings and school or toy instruments correlate slightly more strongly with singing skill.

Table 6

**The correlations between students – teachers' childhood musical stimuli background and the scores for singing and playing in music method courses**

	<b>r/score for singing</b>	<b>r/score for playing</b>
<b>Singing variables</b>		
<b>The amount of singing</b>	<b>.36***</b>	<b>.30***</b>
<b>The pleasure of singing</b>	<b>.44***</b>	<b>.30***</b>
<b>Songs remembered by name</b>	<b>.26***</b>	<b>.20***</b>
<b>Self-invented songs</b>	<b>.28***</b>	<b>.24***</b>
<b>The playing variables</b>		
<b>The total number of home musical instruments</b>	<b>.26***</b>	<b>.29***</b>
<b>The piano or other keyboard instruments at home</b>	<b>.28***</b>	<b>.47***</b>
<b>Stringed instruments at home</b>	<b>.18***</b>	<b>.14**</b>
<b>Wind instruments at home</b>	<b>n. s.</b>	<b>.09*</b>
<b>School or toy instruments at home</b>	<b>.11*</b>	<b>.09*</b>
<b>The number of persons who played at home</b>	<b>.29***</b>	<b>.38***</b>
<b>Remembered played pieces</b>	<b>.22***</b>	<b>.24***</b>

The research results obtained are along the same lines as those of Martin and Gordon in the reports by Brand (1985; 1986) as well as Shuter-Dyson and Gabriel (1981) and Anttila (2000). In these studies from the 1980s, however, correlations with the home background are assessed with regard to musical achievements at the school phase.

## Discussion

In the Finnish school system music has had an important role in the curriculum since the foundation of the elementary school system. In both kindergarten and primary school teacher education music has been considered an important part of schooling. Previously teacher education institutions gave their students a solid basic instruction in music, which worked as a good basis for a future musical career. This was also seen in the work of elementary classroom teachers in other fields of education besides schools. They often worked as cantors or choir conductors in small villages bringing the light of art into far away places too. Good examples of this music education work in teacher education are the internationally known Finnish singers Martti

Talvela and Jorma Hynninen, and composer Aulis Sallinen, who all are qualified elementary school teachers. Or Erkki Pohjola, former conductor and music director of Tapiola choir, who began his pedagogical work as an elementary school teacher.

Recently the proportion of music in Finnish kindergarten and primary school teacher education has diminished. This has been of special concern to many university-level music teachers and professors. On the other hand, research results show quite high correlations between childhood musical stimulation environment and scores for singing and playing given during teacher education. These results support the demand to intensify music education at both kindergartens and primary schools along with the need to increase music studies in teacher education.

This study emphasises the importance of early childhood in musical development, and raises the question whether musically-speaking it is the most important period in an individual's life. It takes many years to develop into a professional (music) teacher, and our study suggests that the foundation is created in the childhood home. On the basis of our research results the main principles that help the

development of a positive musical self-concept and a wide musical world view together with raising the love for music in childhood are:

### **Declaration of the child's musical legal protection (our wings to future)**

- Sing to your child
- Discover the song's atmosphere and let the song create security
- Let the child find surrounding sounds, review them and find the meaning of silence
- Let the child invent his/her own songs and express music through movement
- Play to your child
- Give the child the opportunity to study the instrument that he/she wants
- Allow the child to find his own music
- Let the child listen to different kinds of music and learn to understand it
- Let the singing, playing and making of music create experiences and bring memories
- Let the child experience the joy and delight of making music
- Let music connect children to their parents and to each other
- Let music connect nations and cultures with each other

These principles can be considered as a charter that helps protect and develop a child's musical education. It is to be used at all levels and in all countries, all learning and teaching philosophies of today as well as in the future.

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**Summary****EARLY CHILDHOOD MUSICAL EXPERIENCES****Heikki Ruismäki, Antti Juvonen, Tarja Tereska**

This article studies early childhood musical experiences – roots of Finnish pre-service elementary teachers (N = 590) *at theoretical (analysis of literature) and empirical level*. Research material was gathered by a questionnaire. The *empirical* research results are based on the material gathered in connection with the dissertation of Tarja Tereska (2003).

In the background the research focuses on the significance of music in the early stages of a child's life, the development of children's singing abilities and the meaning of singing from an ethnomusical point of view.

Sports was the most popular hobby in childhood homes. Art of crafts were the most appreciated art forms in childhood homes. Music was the second most appreciated art form, a little higher than literature. The results indicated that the mothers sang to their children in

clearly more cases than the fathers. Fathers participated distinctly more often in playing interests, contrary to the case of singing with their children. The families of students – teachers had taken a positive view to their children's music listening and/or singing.

The research results proved the importance of early childhood musical experiences because even at an adult age were still significantly correlate with the individual's musical progress and his/her self-concept in music. At the same time they form an important part of his/her total personality. On the basis of the research results the main principles that help the development of a positive self-concept in music and the love of music which is built in childhood experiences are proposed.

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