



European Network of Music Educators and Researchers of Young Children

## **12th Conference of the EuNet MERYC**

# **MUSICAL PLAY FOR AND BY CHILDREN**

Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, Klaipeda Faculty  
Klaipėda, Lithuania  
14-17 May, 2025



14-17 May, 2025

## **12th Conference of the EuNet MERYC in Klaipėda, Lithuania**

Four days of debates, keynotes, presentations, workshops and concerts

### **Panel of reviewers**

Julia Auer, University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna (Austria)  
Marta Dosaiguas, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain)  
Giedrė Gabnytė, Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (Lithuania)  
Rūta Girdzijauskienė, Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (Lithuania)  
Margré van Gestel, Zing en Doe Maar Mee (Netherlands)  
Claudia Gluschkof, Levinsky-Wingate Academic College (Israel)  
Helga Rut Gudmundsdottir, University of Iceland (Iceland)  
Arregocés Daniela Lerma, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain)  
Jèssica Pérez-Moreno, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain)  
José Margriet Retra, Art Centre The Monastery (Netherlands)  
Emilija Sakadolskis, Vilnius University (Lithuania)  
Susan Young, Centre for Research in Early Childhood, Birmingham (United Kingdom)

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**The conference is organised by Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre and the Lithuanian Music Teachers Association**  
**K. Donelaičio 4, Klaipėda**

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## WELCOME



It is a privilege to have the opportunity to meet colleagues in person, sharing research and experiences. On behalf of the MERYC board, I would like to express deep gratitude to our Lithuanian hosts for organising the 12th conference on research and practices in early childhood music. We learned during the past pandemic how precious these meetings are. In the recent months, we are more than ever reminded how important free exchanges of ideas are. As advocates for music in early childhood, we are all concerned with creating a just and humane society. Our role as music educators of young children is to find ways to create secure and playful musical childhoods for all children everywhere. Let us continue onward!

**Dr. Helga Rut Gudmundsdottir**

Chair of Eu-Net MERYC board

Professor of music education at the University of Iceland



We are delighted to welcome such a wonderful gathering of music education professionals from around the world to the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, Klaipėda Faculty. It is a great honor and a meaningful recognition for us to host this event. Sharing experiences, growing professionally, and building new connections will no doubt bring positive emotions and deepen mutual understanding. I warmly greet all participants and extend my sincere gratitude to the organizing committee for their dedicated efforts and outstanding work.

Wishing everyone an inspiring and memorable conference experience!

**Loreta Jonavičienė**

Dean of the Klaipėda Faculty, Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre



Dear Conference participants,

On behalf of the organizing team, I am delighted to welcome you to the 12th Conference of the European Network of Music Educators and Researchers of Young Children in Klaipėda, Lithuania. We are honoured to host participants from 22 countries and proud to share Lithuania's traditions in early childhood music education. This year's theme, *Musical play for and by children*, invites us to explore the powerful role of play in children's musical lives. We believe that musical play can transform learning, nurture creativity, and open pathways for emotional and social development. We look forward to four inspiring days filled with engaging presentations, meaningful conversations, and shared experiences – along with the warmth of Lithuanian culture, music, and hospitality. Welcome to Klaipėda!

**Dr. Rūta Girdzijauskienė**

The head of 12th Conference of the EuNet MERYC organizing committee, Board Member of EuNet MERYC

Professor at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, President of the Lithuanian Music Teachers' Association

## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

### Wednesday, May 14

10.00-11.00	Walking tour in Klaipeda city. Meeting point: Theatre Square	
11.00-12.30	Registration	
12.30-13.00	<b>Concert Hall.</b> Conference opening	
13.00-14.00	<b>Concert Hall.</b> Keynote presentation: Pitt Jessica (UK), <i>The Wild, Extravagant World of Musical Play: Learning with Young Children about what Matters for Music Education</i> . Chair: Sakadolskis Emilija	
14.00-14.30	Coffee break	
14.30-16.00	<b>Room 410.</b> Chair: Lunde Ingeborg	<b>Room 404.</b> Chair: Burrell Margareta
	Zhu Qi, Oswaldo Lorenzo-Quiles Solano-Sánchez, Ángel Miguel (ES), <i>Perceptions of primary music teachers in China on music activities in the classroom</i>	Anselmi Paola (IT), <i>Let's go off the stage– experiential interactive concert. An innovative pedagogical alternative to traditional concerts in collaboration with children</i>
	Gudmundsdottir Helga Rut (IS), <i>Music in Early Childhood Education in Japan: An outsider perspective</i>	
	Latvėnaitė-Kričienienė Sonata, Šeputienė Indrė (LT), <i>Music, literature, spontaneous dance – opportunities for play</i>	Girdzijauskaitė-Pocienė Jonė (LT), Żaczek Emilia (PL), <i>Sound in motion: playful learning through music and movement</i>
16.00-16.30	Coffee break	
16.30-18.00	<b>Room 410 / Room 404.</b> Interactive workshop for all: „Discover Lithuanian Folk Music“	
	Velička Eirimas (LT), <i>Lithuanian stringed instrument kanklės: possibilities for learning to play and improvise in kindergarten</i> ; Žylė Erika, Šaulienė Vaiva (LT), <i>Lithuanian folk songs, games, dances, instrumental music</i>	
18.00-18.30	<b>Concert Hall.</b> Vydūnas Gymnasium student concert “Lithuanian traditional music for and by children”. Teacher Ingrida Bertulienė	

### Thursday, May 15

8.45-9.00	<b>Room 410.</b> Morning warm-up by Lithuanian music teachers. Latvėnaitė-Kričienienė Sonata, Šeputienė Indrė	
09.00-10.00	<b>Room 410.</b> Keynote presentation: Lunde Ingeborg (SE), <i>Children's Singing Games and Bildung as a Sensitizing Tool</i> . Chair: Gudmundsdottir Helga Rut	
10.00-11.30	<b>Concert Hall</b> Budinavičienė Rūta, Girdzijauskaitė-Pocienė Jonė (LT), <i>We can do more by collaboration: The experience of Klaipeda kindergarten music teachers. Klaipeda kindergartens’ musical performance “On the earth hands”</i>	
11.30-12.00	Coffee break	
12.00-13.00	<b>Room 410.</b> Chair: Rūta Girdzijauskienė	<b>Room 404.</b> Chair: Domarkaitė Martyna
	Auer Julia (AT), <i>The Remains of the Lesson – Free Musical Play of Elementary School Children after Units of Elemental Music Making</i>	Aarnio Hanna-Maija (FI), <i>Let’s Play Treasure Hunt!</i>
	Gabnytė Giedrė (LT), <i>Music lesson in pre-school: building piano skills through play</i>	
13.00-14.00	Lunch	
14.00-15.30	<b>Room 410.</b> Chair: Young Susan	<b>Room 406.</b> Chair: Papazachariou-Christoforou Maria
	Niland Amanda (AU), <i>Singing, togetherness and emotional wellbeing</i>	Lamppu Minna (FI), <i>Musical play for and by Children - Looking for new tunes</i>
	Persson Aronson Mona (SE), <i>Musical play - a path to musical emancipation or a waste of time?</i>	Domarkaitė Martyna (LT), <i>Play, Sing, Grow: Musical Play in Early Childhood</i>
	Bačlija Sušić Blaženka, Bardun Iva, Kubelka Renata (HR), <i>Improvisation as Musical Play for and by Children</i>	Maxwell Janey (UK), <i>Vocal health issues in early years music professionals</i>
15.30-16.00	Coffee break	



16.00-17.30	<b>Room 410.</b> Chair: Pereira Ana Isabel	<b>Room 406.</b> Chair: Milda Brėdikytė
	Bruyninckx Loes (BE), <i>'The Beast', the origins of musical play with an innovative musical installation</i>	Papazachariou-Christoforou Maria (CY), <i>Musical interactions within a musically-oriented family: A case study</i>
	Savona Annamaria (CH), <i>From Symbolic Play to Musical Invention: Task Design Strategies for Children's Musical Narratives</i>	Keren Ilil (IL), <i>Repetition-Variation Cycles as a Tool in Vocal Interactions with Young Children</i>
	Haider Agnes (AT), <i>Kla4 - 4 children learn to play the piano through improvisation</i>	
19.00	Conference dinner. Old Mill hotel, Zveju G. 22, Klaipėda	

## Friday, May 16

8.45-12.00	Visit to kindergartens. 8.45 meeting point at the conference building, K. Donelaičio 4, Klaipėda	
12.00-13.00	Lunch	
13.00-14.00	<b>Room 410.</b> Discussion “Where theory and practice meet: Reflection on early childhood music education in different countries”. Chair: Gudmundsdottir Helga Rut	
	Zitkeviciene Daiva (LT), <i>Making Music Through Play: The Beginning of a Child's Piano Learning. Poster presentation</i>	
14.00-14.30	Coffee break	
14.30-16.00	<b>Room 410.</b> Chair: Bačlija Sušić Blaženka	<b>Room 404.</b> Chair: Aarnio Hanna-Maija
	Shuler Céline, Savona Annamaria (CH), <i>Creative Processes in Music Education: Analysing Task Design and Teaching Resources for Primary Schools</i>	Poskute-Grün Regina (DE), <i>The Sound of Balance: Music and Movement Play for Primitive Reflex Integration</i>
	Bôrras Sofia, Pereira Ana Isabel, Rodrigues Helena (PT), <i>Behavioral insights in early childhood through a playful artistic experience: Two microanalytic case studies</i>	Gudmundsdottir Helga Rut (IS), <i>Inclusive Family Musicking workshop: The Tonamus approach to parent-infant music sessions based on multiple languages</i>
	Thapa Joseph (ES), <i>Making Music with At-Risk Children</i>	
16.00-16.15	Coffee break	
16.15-17.45	<b>Room 410.</b> Chair: Girdzijauskienė Rūta	
	Young Susan (UK), <i>Musical Play: a historical overview and possible directions</i>	
	Bolton Beth (USA), <i>Interactive Musical Play with Infants</i>	
	Jackevičiūtė Ieva (LT), <i>What we can learn from drama: Creative Features of Performances for Children Under Five Years of Age</i>	
18.00-19.00	<b>Study theatre.</b> Kaunas Chamber theatre and No Shoes theatre performance for babies „Gaja Mara”. Director Ieva Jackevičiūtė	

## Saturday, May 17

8.45-9.00	Room 410. Morning warm-up with Lithuanian teachers. Martyna Domarkaitė		
09.00-10.00	Room 410. Keynote presentation. Sakadolskis Emilija, Brėdikytė Milda (LT), <i>Play is serious business</i> . Chair: Jessica Pitt		
10.00-10.30	Room 410. Concert – student folk group “Kuršiukai”		
10.30-11.00	Coffee break		
11.00-12.00	Room 410. Chair: Sakadolskis Emilija	Room 406. Chair: Giedrė Gabnytė	Room 404. Chair: Girdzijauskaitė-Pocienė Jonė
	Burrell Margareta (UK), <i>What are the therapeutic elements in Early Childhood Music Education?</i>	Hart Leslie, Brenova Klara (USA, CZ), <i>Afterlife of Watermelon Man: Supporting play in music through concerts</i>	Rohrer Werner (AT), <i>Composing with the body. Creative and playful approaches to body percussion for children</i>
	Duarte Jeremías Natalia (IS), <i>A Music Moment: playing with music babble</i>		
12.15-12.45	Room 410. Conference Closing		
13.00-19.00	Tour to Neringa. Starting point from the conference building		

**Lithuanian music teachers' section**  
**Thursday, May 15**

09.00-10.00	<b>Registration</b>
10.00-11.30	<b>Concert Hall</b> Budinavičienė Rūta, Girdzijauskaitė-Pocienė Jonė (LT), <i>We can do more by collaboration: The experience of Klaipėda kindergarten music teachers.</i> <b>Klaipėda kindergartens musical performance “On the earth hands”</b>
11.30-12.00	Lunch
12.00-13.30	<b>Room 303</b>
	<b>Presentations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gudmundsdottir Helga Rut (IS), <i>Looking Outward: Music in Early Childhood Education</i></li> <li>• Sakadolskis Emilija, Brėdikytė Milda (LT), <i>Play is serious business</i></li> <li>• Latvėnaitė-Kričėnienė Sonata, Sakadolskis Emilija (LT), <i>Towards a Common Vision: Guidelines for Preschool Music Education</i></li> </ul>
13.30-14.00	Coffee break
14.00-15.30	<b>Room 404</b>
	<b>Workshop 1:</b> “Musical play for and by children” Julija Auer (AT), Burrell Margareta (UK), Poskute-Grün Regina (DE)
15.30-16.00	Coffee break
16.00-17.30	<b>Room 404</b>
	<b>Workshop 2:</b> „Musical play for and by children” Aarnio Hanna-Maija (FI), Latvėnaitė-Kričėnienė Sonata (LT), Martyna Domarkaitė (LT) <b>Discussion</b> “Revisiting Musical Play: A Reflective View from the Conference”

## KEYNOTES



### Jessica Pitt

*I am an academic programmes professor at the Royal College of Music, I lead a master's module that explores young children's musicality and supervise doctoral and master's student dissertations. In addition, I am Co-Director of Magic Acorns, an arts development organisation for children aged 0-3 years. Current work includes developing a Creative Research Centre in the Magic Acorns space. I am also privileged to be a commissioner for ISME's Early Childhood Music Education Commission, and a board member for the UK-wide community music professional association Sound Sense. I serve on the editorial board for the Music Education Research journal, Music and Science journal, and write books and articles on music, education and young children.*

## THE WILD, EXTRAVAGANT WORLD OF MUSICAL PLAY: LEARNING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN ABOUT WHAT MATTERS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

As a music educator that works with musicians and music educators, I have realised that by giving attention to musical play with young children, and playfulness as a pedagogy, insights can be gained that prove fruitful for every level of music teaching and learning. As an early childhood music researcher embedded in an early year's arts organisation, I journey with materials, places, sounds, music and children; artists, caregivers and educators finding strands and threads to weave together to situate knowing and understanding of play and music as emergent phenomena that bring worlds into being. Young children's polyphonic embodied and playful utterances and movements communicate and express in ways that are beyond words. Their musical play world is wild, extravagant and unlike adult worlds of music. Wild sounds reach out and fill spaces as they travel across porous boundaries. In education contexts they can noisily affect humans and environments, interrupting or disrupting pedagogical moments and human thoughts and feelings. Is the taming of sound and young children perhaps the intention of music, and education?

The rich seam of early childhood musical play scholarship opens up ideas and theories for reading through with the more-than-human literacies of early childhood. Playful music making for adults and children is concerned with open-ended, process-led, intrinsically motivated experiences that are material and affective. For some, feelings of awkwardness and embarrassment are felt when playing in an immersive space with few words. Time and space can be experienced differently in the play sphere and new realms of understanding for practice are uncovered. Learning-teaching music in this context consists of tangible and intangible elements commingling to connect and compose in unexpected directions.

Music education with young children (and their caregivers) has diverse aims and purposes, takes place in a range of contexts, and has a variety of pedagogical approaches to suit each situation. Through exploration of the notions unfolding in musical play events discussion will be brought to the title theme of the conference: 'Musical play for and by children'. Its rich potential will be assessed for diverse early childhood music education contexts and approaches.



## Ingeborg Lunde

*I am a professor of music education and head of the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies at the University of Inland Norway (INN). My research interests include musical upbringing and education, children's musical cultures, and children's media and television music. My work also incorporates ethnography, discourse analysis, cultural studies, the sociology of childhood and the sociology of music education. Recently, I served as a senior researcher in DYNAMUS – The Social Dynamics of Musical Upbringing and Schooling in the Norwegian Welfare State (2018–2022), with funding from the Research Council of Norway. Currently I am working on a project focused on children's music on television in an international context.*

## CHILDREN'S SINGING GAMES: SIMPLY FUN OR SERIOUS BUSINESS? TRYING OUT *BILDUNG* AS A SENSITISING CONCEPT TO INTERPRET CHILDREN'S MUSICAL PLAY

There is a long tradition of children's singing games the world over. Such games are often described as short, repetitive, dramatised songs and rhymes; children participate in them via a range of modalities while following the rules of the game. Singing games can be recognised across cultures, but they also vary according to time and place. New kinds of singing games can be added to the repertoire; for instance, this occurs when children make them up as part of their everyday musical play or engage in new singing games offered in digital media. Given this diversity and complexity, how can we make sense of children's singing games?

This talk starts with two broad and reciprocally connected questions: *what do children do with music?* *What does music do for and with children?* More specifically, the talk incorporates two sets of data, one from ethnographic research into children's musical cultures and one from research into children's television music. Based on these data sets, it investigates how the concept of *Bildung* (formation) can contribute to a better understanding of children's musical play – in this case, singing games. The chosen approach to *Bildung* underscores several themes in terms of how humans thrive, become team players and develop autonomy. In addition, it underlines the necessity of combining reason and artistic practices, diversity and community to achieve this.

Applied as a sensitising concept for thick descriptions, *Bildung* was tested on three empirical cases from the data. In these cases, children engaged in the following activities: 1) a traditional singing game, 2) a singing game developed by a group of children while listening to the soundtrack from a children's television series and 3) a singing game on TikTok.

As outlined in the talk, the approach used in this study illustrates a range of musical participatory options. In the findings, the possibilities and constraints vary across the singing games, but the games all offer potentials for engagement, pleasure, community building, learning and 'fun'. With a view to analysing participation, as well as inclusion and exclusion, the empirical cases call for sociological perspectives on gender, ethnicity and class. Moreover, although 'free play' has several positive traits, the games that may have an advantage when it comes to the inclusion of all children are semi-complex, clear, rule-based singing games.





## **Milda Brėdikytė**

*I am a senior researcher and associate professor at Vytautas Magnus University in Lithuania. I teach child development and narrative learning in play, creative drama, and the Vygotskian theory of cultural development in childhood. I worked at Kajaani University Consortium, University of Oulu, Finland, from 2002 to 2010, where I was responsible for research activities at Play Lab “Silmu”. With Pentti Hakkarainen, I co-created the developmental play program in early childhood - Narrative Play and Learning Environments. My research interests include the cultural development of the child, the impact of creative activities on child development, and the role of imagination in play.*



## **Emilija Sakadolskis**

*I am an associate professor at the Vilnius University Institute of Educational Sciences in Lithuania. I prepare future preschool and primary school teachers to integrate music and the other arts in their practice. Bachelor's, Master's and Ph.D. degrees together with early childhood and primary teaching experience in the United States have allowed me to see a variety of perspectives regarding curriculum and instruction in Lithuania. My research interests include multiculturalism, qualitative research methods, teacher education and professional development. I am also employed by Lithuania's National Educational Agency where I consult on issues of cultural competence, music education, and early childhood curricula.*

## **PLAY IS SERIOUS BUSINESS**

Early childhood music educators remind us that sounds of early childhood are much more than the reproduction of children's songs and circle games. The facilitation of playful “arioso” utterances, exploration of sound resources or embodied and vocalized demonstration of emotions requires new spaces and integrated pedagogies.

Lithuania is revising early childhood education guidelines. What will we find that is new? There is recognition that play has been undervalued, often seen as taking a break from serious learning. We have all heard the quote “play is the work of children” (often attributed to Piaget, Montessori, or Froebel, although who knows who actually said it!), but studies show that not all teachers take play as seriously as Albert Einstein who claimed that “play is the highest form of research.” Few are aware of the many forms of play: directorial/literal play, socio-dramatic role play, and narrative play, which are particularly important for children's mental development and encouraging higher-level thinking. The teacher's role in facilitating play has also been misunderstood—resulting in either excessive intervention or none at all.

The function of music in the early childhood curriculum is also problematic. In some countries music specialists visit one or twice a week for mostly teacher-directed activities that directly contradict the espoused child-centred early childhood philosophy. Visiting specialists rarely integrate their contributions with what goes on throughout the day. In such cases the generalist teachers often do not feel responsible for children's musical experiences, relegating this obligation to the specialist. In cases where there is no visiting music or arts specialist, the generalist teacher does not have a sufficient grasp of music essentials to harness the highest potential for learning. This is not surprising since there is a worldwide decline in the credits dedicated to music during generalist teacher education. In both instances, the integration of music and play theory is not common in teacher education.

During this presentation we will explore ideas for teacher education and professional development that could open new horizons for both visiting music teachers and generalist teachers who want children to explore the languages of music and play.

## ABSTRACTS

**Aarnio Hanna-Maija**, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Finland

### **Let's Play Treasure Hunt!**

Workshop

*We were walking beneath the sun  
Through the lands till the day was done  
Up the hills I make my way  
In the forest I long to stay  
Through the fields of gold and grey  
I make my way*

Musical play is an engaging approach that can be easily integrated into early childhood music education in a variety of ways. This workshop aims to explore musical play through the theme of treasure hunting – offering participants a demonstration of how they can simultaneously learn about music and through music, while also having fun. The goal of this workshop is to demonstrate how a teaching process in early childhood music education can be both enjoyable and educational with plenty of play involved. Musical play or improvisation will be introduced through movement, singing and playing instruments.

This workshop encourages active participation, where all attendees will be involved in dancing and making music together. Various elements of music practice will be used: singing, dancing, playing instruments and listening. The elements of music practice work together to provide a holistic approach to music education, engaging different senses and fostering a deeper connection to music. The treasure hunting song used in the workshop has its origins in the Nordic polska tradition. The basic steps and rhythm of the polska will be explored in the workshop.

This workshop will provide an example of how a pedagogical process can be planned using the Orff Schulwerk approach as a starting point. Orff Schulwerk emphasises active music-making, creativity and social interaction. At the end of the workshop, there will be a discussion where participants can reflect on the activities, process and possible learning outcomes. Further implementations of the process and the song will also be discussed together.

**Keywords:** music education, musical play, orff schulwerk, elements of music practice, polska.

Anselmi Paola, professionista, Italy

## **Let's go off the stage– experiential interactive concert: An innovative pedagogical alternative to traditional concerts in collaboration with children**

### Workshop

This workshop's proposal includes two strictly connected parts – the first will be dedicated to an experiential interactive concert/show which will actively involve the participants; the second will be committed to the theorization of educational and pedagogical principles that underlie the preparation of this type of concert, by illustrating the various phases of their conception, highlighting both their educative and social benefits.

This innovative formula was indeed born more than 12 years ago, aiming to offer children from 0 to 6 years of age the opportunity to participate to concerts designed and created specifically for them; hence, the “fourth wall” which separates the musicians from the listeners is broken, by getting in fact “Let's go off the stage”. At the same time, families and teachers become aware of the innumerable benefits that musical practice brings to the person's development from a very young age.

The main characteristic of these concerts is the interaction between children and musicians. Together, they create a show integrating music, theatre, movement, voice, art instruments, everyday objects and illustrated books, in a succession of musical and motor actions which turn the concert into an experience of integrated artistic languages *for* and *with* the children.

Of main importance is the involvement of the adults, facilitated by the selection of a well-known repertoire, which involves them immediately in the shared musical practice. In this way, adults are transmitted a new way of interacting through music and get the hang of how simple everyday actions – as rubbing objects or hitting a bowl with a spoon – are actual musical actions, as F. Delalande explains in his *Musical Conducts*.

The interactions proposed during the workshop – also presented as music games – will be various so as to provide opportunity for everyone to participate in their own favoured ways, not only stimulating musicality but also creativity, both innate in each and every one, through a multisensory experience.

The workshop will employ practical experiences and theoretical sections, supported by the viewing of video clips selected from interactive concerts.

**Keywords:** relationship, cooperation, integrated activities, music community, social experience.

**Auer Julia**, University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, Austria

## **The Remains of the Lesson - Free Musical Play of Elementary School Children after Units of Elemental Music Making**

Spoken paper

What remains of the music created with children in Elemental Music units? What remains of all the didactic intentions, musical goals, and planned structures? What priorities do children themselves set when dealing with instruments and musical material? (Buchborn 2011, Oerter 2006)

This project aims to provide information on how children engage with music independently and whether previous guided music-making experiences influence free musical play. The research centers on what content, actions, and forms of music-making (in groups, solo, structured, sound-oriented, etc.) children in a 2nd grade primary school class (7-8 years old) take from an Elemental Music lesson into free musical play units.

In this research project, free musical play of children in a 2nd grade elementary classroom is observed (by video) following an hour of EM. As part of school lessons, there is an EM unit for the whole class in the morning. On four afternoons, children voluntarily decided whether to participate in free music-making. The same instruments used in class were provided with no further instructions. The free musical play units were recorded on video without the teacher present in the room.

Preliminary results:

1. **\*Extended experimentation phase with instruments\*\***: An initial analysis shows that the experimental phase with instruments was extended compared to regular classroom teaching. The duration was up to three times longer, indicating that children may need more time in class or would like more opportunities to familiarize themselves with and explore the possibilities of instruments and experiment creatively.
2. **\*\*Change in interaction dynamics\*\***: At the first session of the free play unit, children asked for input from the teacher several times. This behavior no longer occurred in subsequent sessions. Instead, children developed a performative intention and showed increased interest in presenting their musical actions.

**Keywords**: instrument experimentation, interaction dynamics, free musical play, performative intention.

**Bačlija Sušić Blaženka**, University of Zagreb, Croatia; **Bardun Iva**, University of Zagreb, Croatia;  
**Kubelka Renata**, Kindergarten Špansko, Zagreb, Croatia

## **Improvisation as Musical Play for and by Children**

Spoken paper

Starting from a framework that distinguishes between structured teacher-led and free child-led improvisation (Larsson & Georgii-Hemming, 2019), improvisation should be viewed holistically as musical play, emphasising balanced, inclusive interactions where children's actions are not overshadowed by adults (Pitt, 2024). Teacher-created stories within storytelling, as an arts-integrated pedagogy promote children's engagement and motivation by providing opportunities for interaction, allowing them to internalize these stories and gradually create their own (Maharjan et al., 2024).

The research, part of the Everyone Can Improvise (ECI) Erasmus project, aims to provide insight into process-oriented improvisation in the ECEC context, focusing on the roles of adults and children in improvisation as musical play for and by children. In line with this, the research utilised the relational dimension of narrative methodology (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007), viewing music and improvisation as narrative acts created through social interactions.

A group of 6-7 year old children (N=25), led by two music experts in collaboration with an educational rehabilitator in the kindergarten, participated in activities that were documented through video recordings and written notes. The analysis was based on the theoretical assumptions and research objectives, using a deductive research method (Barrett & Stauffer, 2012), supplemented by feedback from educators and parents and analysis of children's drawings using the draw-and-tell conversation method (Driessnack, 2006).

The codes identified (improvisation as musical play guided by storytelling, improvisation encouraged by roles in the story, and improvisation where the child takes full initiative prompted by previous experience) indicate a transformation within musical play and a shift in the roles of adults and children in improvisation. This transformation shifts improvisation from teacher-led musical play, with storytelling as the primary tool to structure the activity, to child-led independent improvisation as musical play resulting from sound abstractions, with or without a short story. Feedback from teachers and parents points to musical play based on storytelling, while children's drawings and comments also indicate the child's experience of the story and their role in it. The research findings highlight an important aspect of children's musical play, both for and by children, and provide implications for further research.

*Keywords:* children; early childhood education and care; improvisation; musical play; storytelling.



**Bôrras Sofia, Pereira Ana Isabel, Rodrigues Helena, CESEM / NOVA FCSH, Portugal**

## **Behavioral insights in early childhood through a playful artistic experience: Two microanalytic case studies**

Spoken paper

Music undeniably plays a role associated with the intrinsic social nature of every human being (Trevvarthen, 1999). This characteristic is present from childhood in response to social stimuli, especially positive ones (Trehub, 2003). Thus, engagement in musical performances in early childhood can reproduce beneficial effects regarding emotional regulation and the association of positive emotions with a musical experience (Trehub, 2003). This study aims to describe infants' behaviours when attending musical performances with their caregivers. To this end, two videos of performative sessions (both with a duration of 13 minutes) from the ZYG presentation – an artistic creation for infancy by Companhia de Música Teatral (CMT) - were selected, where the exploration of communication through movement, sound, and gaze is the guiding thread. Each of the two performed sessions analyzed involved one performer, one baby (with 5 and 6 months, respectively), and the mother. A micro-behavioral analysis study was conducted using the ELAN 6.8 coding program. Focusing primarily on analysing musical interaction arising from sound and movement, the study aimed to identify behavioral patterns underlying the three individuals present in each performance: the Performer, the Baby, and the Caregiver. Based on research previously conducted by CMT researchers (XXXX, 2021; XXXX, 2023), eight indicators were created for the microanalysis coding: Gaze, Positive Affect, Non-Positive Affect, Voice, Movement, Pointing, Self-Engagement, and Unscorable. Each of these indicators was coded with reference to a 1-second interval. It was possible to identify a predominance of the babies' gaze towards the performer/performance, with 53% and 64% in each coded video. Aspects such as the differentiated movement levels (high, medium, low) of each baby or the interaction between the baby and the caregiver/performer are key distinguishing elements between the two videos. It is also worth highlighting the prevalence of Positive Affect over Non-Positive Affect in the three subjects in both videos, a pattern that reveals a positive experience in relation to the musical performance of all participants. Other evidence found in the analysis also highlights the importance of the behavioral study of babies within the artistic experience as a dynamic and participatory element.

*Keywords:* microanalysis, music theater performance, babies' engagement, playful experience, behavioral observation.

Bruyninckx Loes, Musica Impulse Centre, Belgium

## **‘The Beast’, the origins of musical play with an innovative musical installation**

Spoken paper

The Beast is an interactive and movable sound installation, essentially nothing more than the soundboard of an upright piano laid horizontally with a wooden frame around it and set on four wheels. With its open landscape of easily played strings and accessibility from all sides, the entire instrument looks at once strange, impressive and inviting.

As children play The Beast, different modes of resonance may appear. In an initial encounter, they usually resonate with the instrument per se. How does the instrument feel and how can they make it sound? Later on, how can one diversify the sound palette? Besides the direct physical touch, the strings' vibrations may resonate in the participants' bodies as they sit really close or even bent over the instrument.

In a second stage the children may start listening to each other, they watch each other's gestures, or even make eye contact. This can lead to shared musical games or a playful exchange of ideas. From that, this can result in musical communication that gives rise to emerging musical structures. Some, but not all of the players resonate with each other, perhaps very gently at first, but often resulting in adventurous and shared musical play.

While exploring sounds in the first stage or interacting with others in the second stage, another layer is always present, the emotional. The Beast may reveal subtle mysterious, magical, wild and imposing sounds. Children are most of the time attracted to these differences, some of them can be even overwhelmed. They can express anger, fear, sadness, but also emotions that lean on triumph, fairy-likeness or romance. By exploring The Beast, children get to know their emotions better and learn how to express themselves without words.

Playing The Beast goes beyond creating sounds; it is a journey of exploration, connection, musical communication and so much more. This experience fosters physical, social, and emotional connections, while also stimulating a deeper resonance with others and the surrounding world. After engaging with The Beast, participants leave with renewed awareness and a fresh perspective, reconnecting with the origins of musical play.

*Keywords:* exploration, resonance, musical communication, emotions, innovative musical installation.

**Burrell Margareta**, Freelance, United Kingdom

## **What are the therapeutic elements in Early Childhood Music Education?**

Spoken paper

This presentation will ask: What are the therapeutic elements in ECME? What will strengthen the social and emotional wellbeing of a child today, often estranged of the natural world, torn between the pull and harm of the digital world, old, unsuitable, traditional teaching and overlooked by society? The world around the child can be confusing and demanding. Reality often shows that many children have a need for special attention and support. Individuals need individual support and approaches. In the overlap of music education and music therapy, how can we contribute towards meeting those needs?

The claims of the benefits of early childhood music education are manifold and are widely used to attract parents' attention, work opportunities, grant applications or even as a justification of the status and worth of the early childhood music practice itself? Are we pleasing ourselves by claiming that music education can influence the development of a resilient, well-regulated, confident, competent, creative, artistic and intelligent child? What about the actual need of the child? Do we respond to that appropriately?

As a music therapist, musician and music educator of longstanding experience (with a Dalcroze background) I will try and assemble basic, significant elements of playful approaches which support healthy regulation through a holistic Early Child Music Education. This will be supported by psychological models used in educational and therapeutic contexts (Korthagen, Bruner, Bowlby, Trevarthen, Dalcroze).

*Keywords:* music education, music therapy, overlap, child's needs, playfulness.

**Domarkaitė Martyna**, Music school MUZIKUTIS, Lithuania



## **Play, Sing, Grow: Musical Play in Early Childhood**

Demonstration

Musical play serves as a dynamic and essential element of early childhood education, fostering holistic development and nurturing a lifelong love of music. This presentation explores the vital role of musical play in preschool settings, with a focus on the innovative approaches implemented at *Muzikutis* ([www.muzikutis.lt](http://www.muzikutis.lt)).

Through interactive activities that integrate singing, movement, and creative exploration, musical play enhances cognitive, emotional, social, and motor skills in young learners. At *Muzikutis*, children experience a rich, play-centered curriculum that emphasizes the joy of music-making, the development of musicality, and the cultivation of expressive creativity.

The presentation highlights practical strategies for integrating musical play into preschool classrooms, supported by research that underscores its impact on language acquisition, social interaction, and early brain development. Attendees will gain insights into how playful musical activities can inspire curiosity, build confidence, and create a foundation for lifelong learning.

Join us to discover how *Muzikutis* empowers children to play, sing, and grow through the transformative power of music in early childhood education.

**Keywords:** interactive activities, musical games.

**Duarte Jeremías Natalia**, Independent researcher, Iceland



## **A Music Moment: playing with music babble**

Spoken paper

The growing international community in Iceland, estimated at 16.6% in 2024, presents social challenges for the integration and well-being of both Icelandic and newcomers families. On the other hand, this presents an opportunity to research how music-making can contribute to the creation of common spaces where families can interact and connect.

This paper describes the reflections and preliminary findings in developing and applying a participatory music concert for children ages 0 to 6 years old in Reykjavík, Iceland. The project called ‘Tónlistarstund’ or ‘Music Moment’ received support from the Children’s Culture Fund by the Icelandic Ministry of Culture and is hosted once a month by the Nordic House for the fall and winter months. The concerts are programmed in two groups according to age (ages 0 to 3 and 3 to 6). It draws from the work of Edwin Gordon’s Music Learning Theory (MLT), in particular the use of neutral syllables for singing without words, and from Helga Rut Guðmundsdóttir’s concept of ‘musical parenting’ as well as her long-standing project in Iceland, ‘Tónagull’. The focus of this project is on creating a ‘language neutral’ space where international families can communicate and interact through music and movement. During the activity I use neutral syllables and acculturation patterns in between songs as suggested by MLT. I also incorporate improvisation moments over a pedal sound, as well as varied rhythmic and modal ostinato bases for the families to sing along. Preliminary outcomes suggest that participants enjoy singing together and feel connected to the community and to their children. It also provides a space for international parents to meet and connect with each other.

The data has been gathered through participant observation, written questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with some of the recurrent participants.

*Keywords:* multicultural musical education, musical parenting, music learning theory, early childhood.



**Ferrari Laura**, Municipality of Bologna, Bologna, Italy; **Vitali Aura**, Private Primary School "Amici del Sacro Cuore", San Giovanni in Persiceto, Italy

## **Two stringed instruments: Guitar and voice for adults who play for/with young children**

Spoken paper

### Empirical questions

Two questions guided us in the design and implementation of this short musical training course (consisting of five workshops) for adults who play music with children: A) Sometimes children do not sing when the adult sings for them: Is he/she getting the repertoire or the key wrong? B) Is it possible in daily life using the guitar and voice to create an aesthetic situation of well-being with children and colleagues?

### Participants

In all, 32 participants (30 female, 2 male), aged 34-62 years ( $M= 49$ ;  $SD= 7.92$ ), participated by voluntarily enrolling; all participants were employees in public preprimary schools and nurseries: eight were teachers, nine members of supporting staff and 15 were nursery teachers. The participants were divided into two groups, and each group participated in five workshops: one per week (January-April 2024).

### Pedagogical Approach

We proposed group activities based on their experience, adopting a heuristic-participatory model. Our starting points were: a) the participants did not know how to play the guitar; b) participants expressed a strong desire to play the guitar to improve singing with/for young children in daily life.

### Aims

- Reflecting on the features of the children's voices in relationship with tonalities
- Creating an easily "playable" repertoire
- Learning some chords and simple rhythmic patterns
- Improving intonation skills

### Activities

The structure of each workshop was: the first part dedicated to intonation, breathing and group singing games. In the second part, some activities to play the guitar were proposed: a) To learn how to play chords and rhythms we chose a visual approach; b) To gain greater familiarity and agility in moving from one chord to another, we proposed to play song by dividing into groups (one group for each chord) in a collaborative way.

### Outcomes

At the end of this course, we noticed these outcomes: each group created its own repertoire (6-7 songs), studied 8-10 chords and three rhythmic patterns. Some have played at school declaring joy and satisfaction in "singing well" (i. e. in tune) with the children. All participants experienced well-being during the workshop. A second level of this training course was scheduled for February 2025.

**Keywords:** lifelong training, singing, wellbeing, guitar.

Gabnytė Giedrė, Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, Lithuania

## **Music lessons in pre-school: building piano skills through play**

Spoken paper

Between the ages of four and five, children develop an aesthetic need to learn about music and to participate in musical activities. According to researchers, play plays a crucial role in children's activities during this period. The importance of play is undisputed because of its ability to develop a wide range of physical and mental functions, to build experience and to acquire certain important skills (Wylie, 2009; Donnelly et al., 2016). According to psychologists, children's play is usually associated with the development of motor functions, such as finger dexterity and motor coordination (Vygotsky, 1994; Hakkarainen, 2008; Logan et al., 2011; Stodden et al., 2009). These skills are very valuable for a child's everyday life - they help him or her to carry out the most important daily activities smoothly, learn life roles and behavioural norms. A child's motor functions become very valuable when participating in artistic activities, especially learning to play the piano. However, an analysis of the realities of piano learning for four- to five-year-olds shows that this practice is quite rare: there is a lack of beginner's books to help educate children of this age, and a shortage of professionally trained pre-school specialists able and willing to teach piano. Research shows that children at this age have a very high level of receptivity and a pronounced plasticity of the brain, so it would be valuable to use this age period for the development of the pupil's playing skills, using play elements relevant to the child, engaging him/her in enjoyable and motivating musical activities. The aim of this paper is to present the results of an empirical study (interviews with piano teachers), which revealed attractive ways of building piano playing skills, applied in practice, using play-based learning elements.

*Keywords:* piano playing skills, piano lessons, pre-school music education.

**Girdzijauskaitė-Pocienė Jonė**, Klaipėda College of Applied Sciences, Vydūnas gymnasium, Lithuania;  
**Żaczek Emilia**, Samuel Bogumił Linde Primary School, Poland

## **Sound in motion: playful learning through music and movement** Workshop

Movement is a fundamental element of human expression and plays a vital role in music education, especially for children. This workshop explores the profound connection between movement and music, highlighting its significance in fostering cognitive, emotional, and physical development. Music and movement are inherently intertwined; rhythm, tempo, and dynamics are experienced viscerally through the body, allowing children to internalize musical concepts more deeply (Campbell, 2021; Salvador et al., 2022). Movement in music education engages multiple senses, promotes kinesthetic learning, and enhances creativity. For children, it supports motor skill development, social interaction, and emotional expression. Through playful activities, movement also cultivates a sense of joy and curiosity, key drivers of lifelong learning (Bautista & Ho, 2022).

This workshop introduces a structured yet flexible approach to integrating movement into music education. Participants will experience:

1. **Warm-Up Activities:** Icebreakers and body awareness exercises to establish a connection between movement and rhythm.
2. **Musical Storytelling:** Using gestures and improvised movement to narrate stories, linking sound and physical expression.
3. **Creative Improvisation:** Open-ended explorations where participants use movement to respond to various musical stimuli, fostering imagination and self-expression.
4. **Reflection and Discussion:** A closing session to reflect on the activities, share insights, and discuss practical applications in teaching.

This workshop is designed for music educators, early childhood professionals, and anyone interested in harnessing the power of movement to enrich music education. By embracing playful movement, we can inspire children to experience music as a holistic, joyful, and transformative art form.

**Keywords:** sound, motion, improvisation, storytelling, warm-up.

**Gluschankof Claudia**, Levinsky-Wingate Academic College, Israel; Beit AlMusica, Shafr'Amr, Israel

## **Are they playfully playing with sounds? On play and playfulness in the interactions of children with sounding objects in the preschool playground**

Spoken paper

This study aims to reexplore a collection of video recordings showing four- to six-year-old children in preschool interacting with objects or musical instruments, looking at their doing through the lens of play and playfulness. A preschool teacher – a former student and colleague, who considers herself amusical – enjoys sharing with me what she thinks I will find musically interesting. This sharing is possible since apps allow it, and parents and children gave her permission in advance. In previous studies (Author, 2018, 2020) the focus was on the movement representations of recorded music. In this study, I analyzed 18 videos, recorded during playground time. The analysis tool are the children's definitions of play in educational settings (Howard, Jenvey & Hill, 2006; Graue & Walsh, 1998; Wing, 1995), play scholars' definitions (Eberle, 2014; Garvey, 1990) and playfulness definitions (Duss, Rüdüsüli, Wustmann-Seiler & Lannen, 2023; Lieberman, 1977). These definitions include the absence of adults, children's agency, pleasure, joyfulness, intrinsic motivation, physical, social and cognitive spontaneity, active engagement and a sense of humor. To consider those interactions as musical play, I considered the place and function of the sounds. The challenge of this study is to identify the presence or absence of these characteristics, based only on a microanalysis of the videos and some contextual information. This challenge is also its limitation. The value of this re-exploration resides in developing the capacity and sensitivity to identify the play, playfulness and musical characteristics in real time, to build on them for music teaching-learning opportunities.

*Keywords:* musical play, playfulness, preschool, playground.

Gudmundsdottir Helga Rut, University of Iceland, Iceland

## **Inclusive Family Musicking workshop: The Tonamus approach to parent-infant music sessions based on multiple languages** Workshop

The target group for this family musicking workshop is 0–4-year-olds with accompanying adults. The workshop is based on a method based on an early childhood practice that has been developed for over 20 years in Iceland and is comprised of rhymes, chants, movement games, dances, and instrumental improvisation in safe and family-friendly settings.

In recent years the method includes both non-language specific materials as well culturally specific items (songs, rhymes etc.) in Icelandic, Polish, Ukrainian, and English to serve different language populations living in Iceland. Languages chosen depend on the composition of the group attending each time.

The demonstration workshop will introduce activities that are non-language specific as well as selected items in English. Recorded materials published by Tonamus which are accessible on all major streaming services in Icelandic, Ukrainian and Polish, will be introduced as well as the guidelines for implementing the Tonamus method in multi-cultural contexts with families of international origins. The workshop leaders will share the latest research and experiences in conducting family-musicking events with families of different backgrounds, such as ex-pats, recent immigrants, refugee populations along with local-native families.

Attendees of this workshop will benefit from the experience of sharing musicking in a group using a predetermined structure designed to facilitate musical enjoyment in mixed cultural groups. Participants interested in developing similar music sessions in other languages will receive helpful ideas and materials. The need for inclusive and cross-cultural materials is increasing with the growing mobility of populations. In Iceland, for example, the ratio of immigrants has risen from 8% to 18% within the last decade. Based on recent research, the Tonamus creators contend that the preservation of the heritage from original cultures of immigrant families is just as important for a safe and sustainable integration as the learning of the language and culture of the new homeland. A family musicking workshop provides the safe space necessary to foster respect for different musical backgrounds and cultures for the enrichment and benefit of humanity.

*Keywords:* cross-cultural, family musicking, multi-cultural, immigrant populations, inclusion.



Gudmundsdottir Helga Rut, University of Iceland, Iceland

## **Music in Early Childhood Education in Japan: An outsider perspective**

Spoken paper

This paper examines data collected during visits to Japanese day-cares and preschools during the spring of 2024. The visits were in the company of university teachers of music in teacher education programs in Tokyo and Yokohama. The author and researcher collecting the data was a visitor from an outside culture looking into Japanese early childhood facilities with the lens of an Icelandic scholar and music educator. The author herself is responsible for the music education of preschool teachers in Iceland and was in Japan in the capacity of visiting professor at Yokohama National University at the time of the data collection. The paper builds on field trips to three early childhood facilities attached to teacher training colleges. One of the preschools visited is the oldest preschool in Japan and was established in 1876.

The data consists of observations during operating hours of the early childhood facilities, as well as interviews and conversations with day-care and preschool directors and personnel. The approach of narrative anthropology was applied, as the researcher makes observations and comparisons to similar situations in her own country and culture. Findings indicate distinct differences in the musical training and preparation of early childhood specialists between Japan and Iceland. However, there were several surprising similarities to Iceland, found in the concerns of teachers regarding quality of early childhood education. Findings also revealed an unexpected strong emphasis on a pro-child environment and child centred attitudes in the Japanese institutions. Despite completely different programs and expectations towards the musical skills of preschool teachers in Iceland and Japan, the concerns for the quality of music in early childhood education seem to be of eminent concern in both countries. Some of these concerns will be detailed in the paper. The presentation will include several informative photos and videos from the field trips to the Japanese early childhood institutions displaying everyday activities and classroom singing of children as young as 3 years old.

*Keywords:* narrative anthropology, early childhood, Japan, singing, preschool teacher training

**Haider Agnes**, University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, Austria



## **Kla4 - 4 children learn to play the piano through improvisation**

Spoken paper

Young pianists often spend years playing and practicing in isolation before they have the opportunity to engage with other musicians and gain experience in chamber music. Since improvisation is frequently a core component of early music education, we incorporate this element into our approach to early childhood piano instruction.

Collaborative music-making, especially on the piano, significantly influences children's understanding of musical experiences. It enhances their auditory development and promotes musical interaction. In our setting, four children improvise and play together. Previous experience with the piano is beneficial but not a strict requirement. Starting with simple tones, rhythms, and scales, the children improvise and perform in pairs, trios, and quartets. The improvisations are typically presented without sheet music, although the use of notation or the creation of a visual score can be incorporated into the course.

From the outset, children learn to improvise, create, and compose on the piano in a playful manner, expressing themselves through sounds, rhythms, meters, and musical impulses in various scales. They explore the full range of the 88 piano keys and incorporate singing as well.

The foundation of the classes is the development of attentive listening and collaborative response, which sharpens auditory perception. The acquisition of technical piano skills is seamlessly integrated into the learning process through play.

In this paper, we will demonstrate how four six-year-old children experience independent music-making. Additional instruments, such as mallet percussion and other small percussion instruments, are used to enrich the musical experience. Rather than one-to-one lessons, a group setting enhances the children's musical education, allowing them to compose and create small musical pieces from the beginning, playing by ear and building a collective musical experience without relying on sheet music.

*Keywords:* improvisation on the piano from the very beginning.

**Hart Leslie**, Bing Nursery School, Stanford University, United States; **Etkin Oran**, Timbalooloo, United States; **Brenova Klara**, Mladi Ladi Detem, Czech Republic

## **Afterlife of Watermelon Man: Supporting play in music through concerts**

### Workshop

This interactive workshop will provide participants with practical strategies for connecting concerts to play in music. Concerts offer a unique opportunity for young children to engage with musicians across a variety of styles and cultures. Thoughtful concert planning allows for depth in music learning through re-visiting and play—inspiring music creativity long before and after a performance. Participants will sing and move and gain resources for creating concert experiences that support play in music for young children. Participants will also view video and photo documentation of classroom play in music related to recent performances from practitioners, performers, and administrators.

#### Rationale:

Oran Etkin recently performed at Bing Nursery School at Stanford University, a play-based program where Leslie Hart is the music specialist. After the concert, Leslie noticed that children were engaging with Herbie Hancock’s “Watermelon Man,” a tune Oran performed, long after the performance. Children played with the tune and changed the lyrics, the fruit available for sale, the type of seller etc. Simultaneously, Oran’s work with Klara Brenova in the Czech Republic has had a similar effect—demonstrating that play emerges from concerts. This workshop will explore the idea that concerts contribute to play in music for young children and show footage of emergent play in music in play-based settings after concerts.

*Keywords:* play, concerts, re-visiting, documentation.

**Hefer Michal**, Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance, Israel

## **Opera is Children's Play** Workshop

Opera as an art form combines theater and music, with dramatic content typically conveyed through singing. As a multidisciplinary art form, it offers opportunities for teachers from various fields to collaborate and work together.

Although teachers frequently combine story telling with musical listening—especially in their use of program music for example, *Peter and the Wolf* or *Carnival of the Animals*, they often shy away from teaching Opera. They worry about finding child appropriate ways to tell the story, worry about how children will react to operatic singing.

The prevailing societal perception portrays opera as a "hard nut to crack" when it comes to introducing it to children in schools. Yet our experience with teaching opera to children, even in preschool challenges this perception.

In our project of prepared concerts, children are learning the musical pieces prior to attending the concert. In our kindergarten and elementary schools, one out of the yearly series of concert is devoted to the staging of a chamber performance of an opera performed by professional singers and a pianist.

The key to teaching opera, much like the essence of music education in general, lies in emphasizing what is fundamental and meaningful rather than what is merely obvious or superficial. The story line may be complex and at time not appropriate for young children, but the underlying content touches on issues significant for all human beings regardless of age. When approached in this manner, opera, as a fusion of drama and music, serves as an ideal medium for integrated studies. The story creates the concrete framework, the music provides the emotional overtones, deepens the experience.

During the workshop, participants will explore various teaching techniques, including musical mirrors developed by Cohen (1997, 2015), graphs, creative projects, and performance-based activities, all aimed at connecting children to the music of a selected opera. Additionally, video excerpts from lessons and scenes of children attending performances of Opera will be shared, demonstrating children's active engagement with and genuine appreciation for this genre.

**Keywords:** opera, musical mirrors, schools, complex music, musical graphs.

Ieva Jackevičiūtė, No Shoes Theatre, Lithuania

## Creative Features of Performances for Children Under Five Years of Age

Spoken paper

There are many plays for children in Lithuanian theatres; however, most are designed for whole families, often overlooking the specific perception needs of children of various ages. This leads to challenges in guiding children on how to assess the suitability of a play for their age group. A significant factor contributing to this issue is the absence of specialized theatre schools in Lithuania dedicated to training individuals to create for the youngest audiences.

Moreover, a troubling aspect lies in the lack of professional assessment criteria for evaluating plays aimed at the youngest viewers. In the few reviews available, some evident shortcomings are mistakenly praised as strengths, while noteworthy qualities of children's theatre may be overlooked. Reviews are typically crafted according to the standards of adult theatre, which reflects an authoritative perspective toward young audiences. This not only contradicts the Convention on the Rights of the Child but also indicates a gap in understanding this unique theatrical form.

How do we create a performance for an audience who rushes onto the stage during the performance, walks on it, runs around, takes props from the actors, talks, eats, cries or just sleeps? The question is whether there is a need for theatre at all for children under five. The answer is unequivocal – it is necessary. The need for theatre for very young children is linked to the developmental processes taking place at an early age. Theatre, as an art form that unites different expressions, can contribute to these development processes.

*Keywords:* theater, music, baby, TYA.



**Young Susan**, Centre for Research in Early Childhood, Birmingham, United Kingdom

## **Musical Play: a historical overview and possible directions**

Spoken paper

There can be no fixed definition of musical play for it covers a range of phenomena in different contexts. In this presentation my aim will be to review and discuss conceptualisations of musical play: historical, current and possible. I will trace a history of interest in musical play, starting in the first years of the last century and giving particular mention to work from European countries, mainly North West European with which I am most familiar. I will aim to show how conceptions of musical play have been congruent with prevailing conceptions of childhood and theories of how children learn; from recapitulationist, behaviourist, psychoanalytic, cognitive, developmental, sociocultural and communicative musicality through to some contemporary theories such as 4E and predictive cognition, recent versions of sociocultural theory, and new materialisms. I will also discuss how wider political and cultural contexts play a part in these conceptualisations. These contexts include views of childhood as innocent, post second-world-war progressive ideals, the 1960s-70s creativity movement, the dominance of developmental psychology, neoliberalism's capture of childhood and the current period of crises and anxieties. Today we have an array of trends, technical innovations, practices and policies forming a landscape which is fluid, but also divergent, often confusing and even conflictual.

Finally, I offer my thoughts about possible directions at a time when the future is not perceived with optimism as opportunities to be grasped, but as a clash between increasingly rigid viewpoints. Rather than turn to arcane theories as an escape route from the current situation, I suggest we need to be grounded in children's musical lives, to do so in ways that avoid dominant and restricting images of childhood and seek to embrace what I might call 'ordinariness'. By ordinariness I propose an open-minded pragmatism that aims to increase our knowledge of contemporary childhoods and children's own, everyday experiences of music and to take account of cultural diversity, economic disparity, musical parenting practices, new technologies and children's popular media culture in our conceptualising of musical play.

*Keywords:* musical play, early childhood, historical overview, conceptions of play, possible futures.

Keren Ilil, Oranim College, Israel

## **Repetition-Variation Cycles as a Tool in Vocal Interactions with Young Children**

Spoken paper

E. Gordon's developmental music learning theory (1997) teaches us that, after the initial acculturation phase, children enter an imitation phase where they vocally echo the musical patterns we present. The "whole-part-whole" method, developed by Gordon, allows music practitioners and caregivers to sing or chant whole songs, then break them down into smaller segments, providing children while spontaneously imitating with initial musical "building blocks". However, close observation of children aged 1-4 shows an intriguing cycle in their responses to vocal patterns: they first imitate, then introduce their own variations, and then return to imitation, continuing this back-and-forth cycle.

The fact that children who demonstrate a strong ability to imitate move on to creating their own variations suggests that the Repetition-Variation cycle—discussed by Delalande (2009) and others in the context of instrumental improvisation—also applies to early vocal play during interactions. The rich musical vocal play, as described in S. Young's work, highlights children's creativity in blending imitations of previously learned songs with their own vocal inventions.

This practice paper introduces a repetition-variation tool for playful singing and interaction, building on Gordon's "whole-part-whole" approach but placing more emphasis on the variations. The tool begins with an imitation cycle, where children echo patterns. After this, the children are encouraged to vary the patterns, allowing each child the opportunity to create their own variation. This cycle fosters vocal musical creativity, encourages musical understanding, and helps move children into the assimilation phase of musical development through musical dialogue.

Using this approach with children aged 1-6 encourages creativity while providing a way for music practitioners and early childhood educators to integrate natural vocal play into formal classroom settings, offering insight into children's musical abilities through playful interaction.

*Keywords:* vocal play, repetition variation, early singing, musical dialogue, musical interactions.

Lamppu Minna, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Finland

## **Musical play for and by Children – Looking for new tunes**

Spoken paper

How can an interdisciplinary approach that integrates social and healthcare and music education fields reduce loneliness and enhance the mental well-being of children and families in informal care situations? In Finland, there are many reasons why caregiving families are not included in the standard early childhood music classes provided by music schools. In the 'Looking for New Tunes' research and innovation project (2021-2023), a multidisciplinary musical activity concept met the needs of families in informal care situations and promoted community-building.

Children and families in informal care situations have different needs and require music activities tailored specifically for them. In 'Looking for New Tunes' music-making strengthened families' resources and well-being and reduced their loneliness.

This interdisciplinary dialogue between music professionals and social and healthcare professionals helped us understand the potential of music activities to promote the well-being of children and families in informal care situations, and develop their services and collaboration among service providers.

When implemented this way the activities met needs of these children and families, and participants felt comfortable and accepted in the group activities, regardless of their illness and without fear of being stigmatized by others.

In the project, a structural model of cooperation between municipalities and regional social and cultural actors was built to implement health-promoting arts activities. Project 'Looking for New Tunes' was funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's, States aid for health promotion.

*Keywords:* equality, inclusion, multidisciplinary, needs-based music activities, music pedagogy, field study.

**Latvėnaitė-Kričienienė Sonata, Šeputienė Indrė, Kindergarten "Strazdanėlės", Lithuania**

## **Music, literature, spontaneous dance – opportunities for play**

Spoken paper

The topic revolves around experiential learning and its application through music, dance, storytelling, and spontaneous play in early childhood education. It emphasizes the importance of natural self-expression and how sensory experiences can shape children's understanding of the world. Rooted in the principles of play-based learning, the approach focuses on process over outcomes, allowing children to explore freely, develop critical skills, and foster emotional well-being.

This framework allows children to choose their activities and interact with their environment intuitively, supported by adults who inspire and guide without imposing structure. Creative freedom within a safe and enriching environment encourages self-confidence, social skills, and cognitive development. Through music, theater, and art integration, children experience a holistic growth process that engages their senses and cultivates lifelong learning enthusiasm.

Practical applications include musical performances and projects, where children actively participate as creators and performers. Unique initiatives, such as introducing infants to theater alongside their families, highlight the universal potential for creative expression. The spontaneous and unpolished nature of children's performance brings authenticity and genuine emotional engagement.

The efforts to preserve and disseminate these practices are evident in publications by "Muzikija," a publishing house that compiles music, folklore, and literary resources tailored for children. These works, often developed collaboratively with young learners, extend the impact of professional art to broader audiences.

In conclusion, the theme underscores the transformative power of experiential learning through play and creativity. It showcases how sensory-based exploration and artistic expression foster meaningful connections, enhance personal growth, and provide a joyful approach to education. The interplay of music, literature, and storytelling within this method creates a vibrant pathway for children to navigate their developmental journey.

**Keywords:** experiential learning, music, dance, storytelling, spontaneous play.

Maxwell Janey, Newcastle University, United Kingdom



## Vocal health issues in early years' music professionals

Spoken paper

### Background

My research explores the prevalence of vocal health issues in early childhood educators, the level of support available and the measures that can be put in place to protect their vocal health.

### Aim

The aim of this presentation is to provide a brief outline of MA and early PhD findings, and to initiate discussion about how the situation can be improved within the early years music sector.

### Main contribution

Due to my vocal health problems, data for my MA was gathered via an online questionnaire. Responses were received from individuals from England and further afield, participation was voluntary and consent forms were received. The information gathered was analysed in respect of the research questions and related to available information about vocal health issues experienced by teachers generally, as minimal information had been previously published about vocal health issues in the early years music sector. The results of this small-scale research project showed vocal issues are common amongst early years practitioners. Few had received vocal training specifically for teaching professionals prior to starting their careers and most participants thought their working environment had a negative impact upon their vocal well-being. For those who had experienced vocal problems, most had difficulties obtaining the professional advice and support required in a timely manner.

### Implications

The small MA research project indicated the profession needs greater knowledge and understanding of vocal health to minimise issues, and provide healthy working environments, plus free and easily accessible medical support needs to be available when required. My doctoral research is clarifying the data collected in the previous study, expanding this field of expertise, with the aim of improving the profile of vocal health awareness for early and mid-career early years music professionals by creating and delivering a vocal health training programme.

*Keywords:* vocal health, practitioner training, early childhood music

**Niland Amanda**, University of Sydney, Australia

## **Singing, togetherness and emotional wellbeing**

Spoken paper

The paper reports on one dataset drawn from several larger studies of adult singing and musical play with infants and toddlers conducted across several continents. This research investigated mothers' and educators' perceptions of singing and musical play through a socio-cultural lens. Overall, findings indicated that singing can play a positive role in infant/adult relationships and daily life. Consequently, I undertook a content analysis of the Australian dataset, to specifically explore how mothers' and educators' singing with infants and toddlers can support emotional wellbeing.

The foundations of children's emotional wellbeing are laid down in the first two years of life (Bradford, 2021). Initially, primary attachment develops between mothers and/or other primary carers and their infants (Bowlby, 1982). Research shows that mother/infant singing can contribute to this attachment (Fancourt & Perkins, 2018). It seems that the qualities of music itself have a role to play in the feelings of emotional closeness that develop as part of a secure attachment.

Many infants and toddlers also attend early childhood settings and develop secondary attachments with their educators. Singing and musical play are common occurrences in such settings. Unfortunately, it is well-documented that stress and burnout are increasingly common amongst early childhood educators in Australia and elsewhere (Ng, Rogers & McNamara, 2023). Thus, the content analysis (Neuendorf, 2017) explored indicators of both child and adult emotional wellbeing.

The Australian dataset comprised interviews with 10 mothers and 14 educators. Findings of the content analysis indicated that singing and musical play support feelings of togetherness and emotion regulation, contributing to the emotional wellbeing of the children and their adult carers. This study adds to the important body of evidence on the value of music in young children's lives, particularly in the light of growing anecdotal evidence that digital music platforms may be gradually taking the place of person-to-person a capella singing, removing the relational aspects of traditional singing practices.

**Keywords:** singing, infants, toddlers, mothers, educators, emotional wellbeing.



**Papazachariou-Christoforou Maria**, European University Cyprus, Cyprus

## **Musical interactions within a musically-oriented family: A case study**

Spoken paper

### Background

The investigation of musical interactions in family settings has become more important in recent years, due to an acknowledgment that it expands our conceptions of children's unfolding musicality highlighting the complex matrix of musical parenting and enhances our understanding on the functions of music within the family unit. McLean et al. (2019) defined the musical engagement within families as "the well-established intrinsic and innate human interaction, where parents interact musically in different multi-modal ways with their baby" (p. 2). The family musicking framework proposed by Koops (2020) provides a useful perspective to examine the objectives of specific musical activities incorporated in musical parenting and the benefits they offer.

### Aims

Aiming to offer new insights about musical parenting, this qualitative study examined the case of a musically-oriented family (a mother with formal music training and an informally-trained father) engaged in musical interactions during the day to day care of their infant. The questions posed were: (1) How do the parents use music during the day to day care of their infant? (2) How do the parents perceive the value of musical interactions within the family setting?

### Method

This research was set in a constructivist paradigm, over a period of 5 months. Data included interviews, informal discussions with the parents and excerpts from the parents' weekly journal entries.

### Findings

The findings showed that multifaceted musical engagements, intentional or spontaneous, occurred as an integral part of the family's daily routine. The parents' differing musical backgrounds and strong appreciation for music promoted the creation of a rich musical environment for the infant, that was perceived to be beneficial for the care of the infant, for the social interaction between family members, and for the overall flourishing of the family.

### Conclusions

Recognising the fluid, multimodal, diverse way that music was used in this specific musically-oriented family, this study offers an indication that music remains a powerful parenting tool.

**Keywords:** family flourishing, infant-adult musical interactions, musically-oriented family, musical parenting.

Persson Aronson Mona, Karlstads Universitet, Sweden

## **Musical play - a path to musical emancipation or a waste of time?** **Preschool teachers and preschool teacher educators' understanding of participating in spontaneous play with sound and voice that is similar to how children express themselves musically**

Spoken paper

Music in preschool is expected to adhere to certain rules and ideals, particularly regarding the voice and how it should sound. Preschool teachers' use of their voices is rarely personalized or explored spontaneously. This dissertation challenges these preconceived notions about music by examining preschool teachers' and preschool teacher educators' experiences of engaging in musical play outside of work hours with colleagues. Musical play resembles children's musical expressions that arise during play. However, research on preschool teachers' and preschool teacher educators' spontaneous vocalization is limited.

The main objective of this qualitative study was to introduce musical play where the process itself and the desire to participate were the focus. The study examines how preschool teachers, preschool teacher educators, and music educators construct meaning around musical play and interaction with sound and voice. The study also aims to increase understanding of what hinders or enables preschool teachers and educators to participate in musical play. Data were collected through staged musical play sessions followed by group discussions and analyzed using reflective thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke) inspired by Ranci re's concepts of emancipation and dissensus.

The dissertation shows that preschool teachers and educators can easily engage in musical play. The participants felt free to act in their own ways but were hindered by a repressive argument that only certain especially suited individuals can and should create music and improvise with their voices. The study reveals a difference between how preschool teachers and educators act in private compared to how they believe they can act in their professional roles. Preschool teachers' participation in musical play can challenge the existing conditions for musical expression in preschool, but also raise questions about the attitudes and norms taken for granted in the context of preschool teacher education.

I argue that children's interest in voice, sound, and musical communication should be taken seriously. Musical play creates opportunities for communication and participation for both children and preschool teachers, who are compelled to rely on their own musical judgment but who can legitimize the play?

*Keywords:* Musical play, spontaneous vocalization, emancipation, preschool teachers, preschool teacher educators'

Poskute-Grün Regina, Musik school "Musik und Spiel", Germany

## **The Sound of Balance: Music and Movement Play for Primitive Reflex Integration**

### Workshop

The integration of primitive reflexes is crucial for a child's physical, cognitive, and emotional growth. These reflexes, present at birth, must be properly integrated for the child to develop motor skills, coordination, and sensory processing. Music and movement play can support this integration by engaging both auditory and motor systems in a multisensory way. By incorporating music play into early childhood education, we offer a holistic approach that promotes reflex integration while fostering cognitive and physical development.

In this workshop, participants will explore strategies for integrating two specific reflexes: the Symmetric Tonic Neck Reflex (STNR) and the Asymmetric Tonic Neck Reflex (ATNR). Using multitonal songs, multimetric chants, and classical music, we will create variations that promote reflex integration through movement. Participants will learn to design music-based activities that enhance coordination, balance, and enjoyment.

Workshop activities include:

1. Recognizing signs of the STNR and guiding children through movements that improve upper-lower body coordination and posture while engaging in music listening and making.
2. Identifying signs of the ATNR and promoting opposite limb movements and balance through playful activities, using props to enhance hand-eye coordination and dynamic movement.
3. Reflection and Discussion: The workshop will conclude with a session to reflect on the activities, share teaching strategies, and discuss how a playful approach benefits both children and teachers through music and movement.

This workshop is ideal for music educators, early childhood professionals, and movement specialists interested in using music and movement to support reflex integration and overall development. By fostering playful movement and creativity, we can inspire children to experience music and movement as a holistic journey toward balance and growth.

*Keywords:* music, play, integration, reflex, multisensory.

**Rohrer Werner**, University of music and performing Arts, Austria

## **Composing with the body. Creative and playful approaches to body percussion for children**

### Workshop

To use sound gestures and body percussion is often the starting point or the goal of many movement-oriented musical games. Body percussion can be a fascinating and powerful aspect in the music classroom. Such ‘powerful’ examples quite literally throw material into the hands of the children, inviting them to experiment, practice, work and improvise. Creative self-expression with body sounds and material can accompany an artistic process of playing and developing elemental compositions with hand, foot and voice sounds (cf. Rohrer, 2015).

From the first volume onwards, Carl Orff focuses on sound gestures in the form of corporeal body compositions in the Orff-Schulwerk ‘Music for Children’, which he developed together with Gunild Keetman. His work and that of his colleagues focusses on full-body experiences for connecting moments between movement, language and music. By joining in and imitating, discovering and inventing, playing with sounds, improvisation takes centre stage (cf. Orff, 1932; Orff, 1963). Exploration, improvisation and composition as well as a multimodal perception of the content are emphasised (cf. Kalcher, 2017, p. 209). Based on movement games with sound gestures, body percussion patterns and materials (such as dice or balls), we will develop rhythm compositions and our own game variations, which can also be transferred to our work with children. The aims of the workshop include developing an understanding of basic musical phenomena, echo as a formal principle, sound and pause, beat and emphasis, and repetition (ostinato).

*Keywords:* body percussion, body music, Orff-Schulwerk, elemental music pedagogy.

Savona Annamaria, The Schwyz University of Teacher Education, Switzerland

## **From Symbolic Play to Musical Invention: Task Design Strategies for Children's Musical Narratives**

Spoken paper

Musical invention, the capacity to organise sounds into symbolic structures, engages children deeply with music as participants and creators. However, generalist teachers often face challenges in implementing these activities due to limited resources and uncertainty about task design and teaching strategies. Prior studies indicate that existing teaching resources often provide tasks that initiate musical invention but rarely progress further, missing opportunities to fully develop children's creativity. This project explores the design of tasks that foster the invention of musical narratives by primary school children (6–8 years), using symbolic associations between objects and sounds to initiate and support the creative process. The study addresses three key questions: (1) How can task design encourage children to explore symbolic sound associations through objects? (2) What role do teachers play in guiding these creative processes? (3) How can tasks evolve to support the development of musical narratives over time? This research aims to provide activities that not only spark invention but also sustain its progression, empowering teachers as facilitators.

Adopting an action-research approach, the study involves collaboration between children, teachers, and researchers over a several-week programme. Objects with varied sensory properties inspire children's musical narratives. The co-development process includes iterative prototyping, where teachers and researchers refine task frameworks based on classroom interactions. Some tasks also emerge organically from children's interactions with objects, ensuring flexibility and a child-centred approach. Data collection includes video recordings, reflective journals, task documentation, and transcriptions of the children's musical narratives.

The project aims to inform practical teacher training resources by offering strategies and examples to integrate musical invention into classrooms. Its findings underscore the potential of musical play to foster children's creativity while enhancing teachers' confidence and competence in leading these processes.

*Keywords:* musical narratives, task design, children's creative processes, primary education, teacher facilitation.

Shuler Céline, Savona Annamaria, The Schwyz University of Teacher Education, Switzerland

## **Creative Processes in Music Education: Analysing Task Design and Teaching Resources for Primary Schools**

Spoken paper

In our study, we investigate creative processes in primary school music education (aged 5 - 8). Music involves various creative processes, ranging from reproduction and interpretation, such as singing songs, to the creation of something entirely new. Our research focuses specifically on improvisation and composition. Based on our literature review, which highlights uncertainty among primary school teachers about implementing improvisation and composition activities, we examine how teaching resources support generalist teachers in initiating these activities and facilitating creative processes. Our analysis aims to structure and provide an overview of tasks designed to foster improvisation and composition within existing teaching resources for primary schools.

We conducted a content analysis using both deductive and inductive category systems. Drawing on our literature review and conceptual studies, we defined the creative process phases for the deductive system and clarified the terms "improvisation" and "composition" within the context of school music education. Through the analysis of teaching resources, we developed new categories for the inductive system, identifying, for example, subject-specific competences, actions, musical parameters, and tools.

Our results show that most activities act as preparatory phases of a creative process but often lack the development needed to fully realise improvisation or composition. As an outcome of this study, we aim to develop a guide to complement the analysed teaching resources, offering an overview of activities for improvising and composing. This tool seeks to help generalist teachers identify suitable activities and recognise the musical domains they promote. In this paper, we present examples from the teaching resources and discuss our findings, addressing the key question: How can tasks for improvisation and composition be designed to fully activate creative processes in primary school music education?

*Keywords:* task design, teaching resources, creative processes, primary education, generalist teachers.



**Thapa Joseph**, Barenboim-Said Foundation, Spain

## **Making Music with At-Risk Children**

Spoken paper

Children from low socioeconomic backgrounds often face greater challenges in developing essential skills compared to their peers from more advantaged backgrounds. However, recent studies suggest that music education can play a key role in bridging these gaps by fostering cognitive, social, and emotional development.

The present paper is part of a larger research project based on the Barenboim-Said Foundation's Early Childhood Music Education Project in Seville, Spain. It explores the impact of music education on children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Using a quasi-experimental design, the study compares two groups of children: one from a low socioeconomic background and one from a middle-to-high socioeconomic background. Each group is further divided into an experimental group, and a control group, which does not receive the intervention.

The aim of the study is to compare the developmental progress of children from low socioeconomic neighborhoods with those from middle-to-high socioeconomic backgrounds. The results highlight differences between the experimental and control groups, with the most pronounced effects observed among children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. These findings emphasize the potential of music education as a transformative tool for enhancing child development, especially for those facing socioeconomic challenges.

**Keywords:** Barenboim-Said Foundation, early childhood music education, at-risk children.

Velička Eirimas, Vilnius University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania

## **Lithuanian stringed instrument kanklės: possibilities for learning to play and improvise in kindergarten**

### Workshop

A Lithuanian stringed instrument known as *kanklės* belongs to the zither family. Similar instruments are prevalent in the other Baltic countries: in Latvia – *kokles*, in Estonia – *kannel* and in Finland – *kantele*. Their common name is baltic psaltery. The traditional Lithuanian *kanklės* are of a trapezoidal shape, and have from 5 to 12 strings. This instrument is used to play traditional dance melodies, archaic polyphonic pieces (called *sutartinės*), for accompaniment of songs, as well as for solo improvisation. The renaissance of traditional *kanklės* in Lithuania began at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. It has been played solo and in folk ensembles. In the 1990s, it began to be more widely used in general education schools. Today, in schools *kanklės* can be used as a teacher's instrument for accompanying songs (particularly in primary schools, when there is no piano in the classroom) and for learning to improvise.

The goal of the workshop – to introduce the Lithuanian instrument *kanklės*, reveal the possibilities for its practical use in kindergarten (for accompaniment of songs, for improvisation). The participants of the workshop will be able to become practically acquainted with the basics of playing *kanklės*, learn to play the basic chords, accompany some songs and improvise.

The structure of the workshop:

- Typology of *kanklės*; construction of *kanklės*; review of the traditional repertoire of *kanklės*.
- Technique of playing *kanklės*, schemes for string muting.
- Playing of major (C, F and G7) and minor (Dm, Am, Gm) chords; we will learn to play an old Lithuanian folk song, the melody of which was used by Igor Stravinsky in his 1913 ballet *The Rite of Spring*.
- Possibilities and basic principles of improvisation on kankles.
- Discussion: how to use zithers in kindergarten.

Methods: demonstration, practical music-making.

Keywords: kanklės, folk music, chords, accompaniment, improvisation.

**Zhu Qi**, University of Granada, Spain; **Lorenzo-Quiles Oswaldo**, University of Granada, Spain; **Solano-Sánchez Ángel Miguel**, University of Cordoba, Spain

## **Perceptions of primary music teachers in China on music activities in the classroom**

Spoken paper

Curriculum standards for compulsory education stipulates that the compulsory education curriculum lasts nine years and is distributed and ordered according to the '6+3' system (six years of primary and three years of junior high school) or the '5+4' system (five years of primary and four years of junior high school). The National Curriculum includes: ethics and the rule of law, Chinese, mathematics, foreign languages (English, Japanese and Russian), history, geography, science, physics, chemistry, biology, computer science, physical education and health, arts, work and integrated practical activities. The description of the arts curriculum is as follows: arts courses must be offered in years 1 to 9, with years 1 to 2 including singing music and visual arts; years 3 to 7 are mainly music and arts, integrated with dance, drama (including opera) and film and television (including digital media arts); years 8 to 9 include music, painting, dance, drama (including opera) and film and television (including digital media arts), and students must choose at least two studies. The nine years of the arts curriculum are divided into three phases, following the laws of arts learning and students' physical and mental development, reflecting both the staggered nature of the curriculum and the holistic nature of arts learning. This research carries out an empirical exploratory and diagnostic analysis of the current situation of music education in primary schools in the city of Wuhan (China) from the perspective and opinion of music teachers in these schools. The research approach uses an empirical-analytical method of a cross-sectional-descriptive nature. Four hundred and twenty-three primary music teachers from Wuhan participated in the research. Data analysis of the questionnaire survey results identified Wuhan primary music teachers' use and perceptions of music activities in the classroom and concluded that music appreciation, vocal training and singing, theory and solfège, and body movement with music dominated the music content of primary music.

*Keywords:* music education, primary education, music teachers, people's republic of China; Wuhan.

Zitkeviciene Daiva, Vytautas Magnus University Education Academy, Lithuania

## **Making Music Through Play: The Beginning of a Child's Piano Learning**

Poster presentation

The possibilities and specific features of improving and the interaction between a proactive teacher and a child in the process of teaching young children to play an individual musical instrument (piano) remain a relatively underexplored area in Lithuania. For pre-school and pre-primary children, the system of musical notation is often too complex and may alienate them from music and weaken their desire to play.

Therefore, by playing by ear, imitating the teacher's performance, improvising, and engaging in musical games, the child naturally learns music and its expressive possibilities. The aim of this study is to identify educational approaches to engaging children in the initial stages of learning to play the piano through musical and imitative games, as well as the exploration and experimentation with musical sounds in an individual piano lesson. Eight children aged 5 to 6 years, who attended a kindergarten in Vilnius (Lithuania), participated in the study. A qualitative case study revealed three educational approaches to engaging children in the playful beginnings of individual piano learning: 1) the music teacher, as an active moderator of learning situations, involves the child in a playful context for learning to play the piano; 2) by playing and demonstrating songs with body movements, the music teacher encourages the child to experiment spontaneously and mimic the song-game by performing it with contrasting tempos (slow-fast), articulations (legato-staccato), dynamic nuances (soft-loud) and different moods (happy-sad); 3) while playing and singing songs, the music teacher motivates the child to "play here and now" using piano sounds, their tones, and combinations, engaging the child in a deeper exploration of various rhythmic patterns and the creation of short melodic motifs.

These approaches are considered synthesised and conceptualised findings of the study, enriching the didactics of early childhood music education through the proactive role of the music teacher, an engaging musical learning context, playful instrumental musical activities and metacommentaries.

*Keywords:* early childhood music education, educational approaches to engaging the child in playful instrumental learning, child's play, exploration, proactive activity of music teacher.

Klaipėdos universiteto leidykla

European Network of Music Educators and Researchers of Young Children  
**12th Conference of the EuNet MERYC**

## **MUSICAL PLAY FOR AND BY CHILDREN**

Tezių rinkinys (Elektroninis leidinys).

Sudarė: Rūta Girdzijauskienė, Emilija Sakadolskis

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