



Early Excellence  
Inspirational Learning

# Shake Rattle and Roll

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## Musical Development Matters in the Early Years

By Nicola Burke



**Early Education**  
The British Association for Early Childhood Education



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Music can be a way of **exploring, communicating and responding** to experience. Making music with others can be a **social** experience whether this be parent-baby/carer-baby exchanging coos, or two or more children making music with pots, pans or traditional instruments. This interaction with others, whether this be with one other person or a group, is personal to each individual and is often an expression of feelings.



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All vocal communication is comprised of musical elements such as pitch, rhythm and timbre, demonstrating that musicality is an intrinsic part of being human.

Music should be seen as a core component of children's learning and should be shared with young children to ensure they have broad, balanced and rounded experiences in early childhood and beyond.



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## Musical terms

- Pulse/beat: like a heartbeat, a steady beat underlying the music
- Rhythm: pattern of sound
- Pitch: high sounds, low sounds
- Structure: how a piece of music/song is built up, eg verse-chorus-verse-chorus
- Dynamics: loud, quiet, getting louder, getting quieter
- Timbre: the character of a sound, eg smooth sound, spikey sound, scratchy sound
- Texture: layers in the music, eg one sound or several sounds
- Tempo: speed
- Melodic shape: this is a little like the outline of the song or piece of music, picture a line that goes up steeply when the melody suddenly jumps to a much higher sound, or that goes down slowly when the melody gently falls. This “line” gives the contour or shape of the melodic line
- Genre: the type of music, eg pop, jazz, folk, classical



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## Aspects of musical learning and development

Hearing and Listening


Vocalising and Singing

Moving and Dancing

Exploring and Playing



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Aspects of musical learning and development
Hearing and Listening
Vocalising and Singing
Moving and Dancing
Exploring and Playing

- **Listen** • To different genres of music • To other children performing • Explore different sounds of instruments • To musicians
- **Respond** • Move in response to music • Join in with dancing and ring games • Move rhythmically and create own dances
- **Compose** • Make up simple songs and rhythms • Explore and change sounds • Explore instruments
- **Perform** • Favourite songs • Tapping out rhythms • Accompaniment to songs

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## Listen, respond, compose, perform

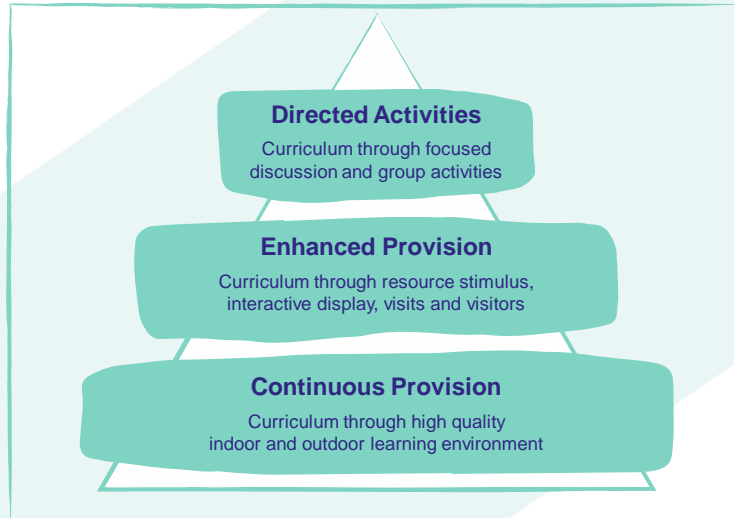
- ...can form the basis of a short music session
- ...can be offered every day through continuous provision and sensitive interactions
- ...can be both adult and child initiated

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## Curriculum Development Model 3-5yrs



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## Listen

- To different genres of music • To other children performing • Explore different sounds of instruments • To musicians

### Listening to different styles:

- How many different styles do you expose your children to? List the possibilities
- How do you encourage the children to tune in and notice different parts of the music?



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## Listening to different instruments:

- Playing call and response games
- Guess the instrument game
- Instrument of the week? (vocabulary)



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## Listening to different musicians:

- Invite local musicians to come and play – start/during/end of day
  - Parents / family members
  - Members of staff
  - Other children
  - Local students (school/college/university)
  - Music teachers from local schools
  - Local performers



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## Listening in different venues:

- Take the children to a children's concert
- Local buskers?



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## Respond

- Move in response to music • Join in with dancing and ring games • Move rhythmically and create own dances

“Music and movement are inseparable. We physically sense the movement in music and ‘hear’ the music silently made by movement. The qualities of timing, rhythmic patterning, phrasing and intensity are shared by both. So it makes sense to work with children in music and movement together both in musical terms and in terms of children’s learning.”  
(Young and Glover 1998, p.36)

- Aeryn responds to the beat and the “hum”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDZB0KoeSGE&list=PL7914115EB65911A5&index=15&t=0s>



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## Respond

- Create space for responding to music ensuring it doesn't disturb others
- As a group (large or small)
- Variety of responses: dance/movement, painting and drawing,
- Provide/make props for response:
  - Percussion
  - Ribbons and streamers
  - Chiffon scarves
  - ...



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## Respond

- Teach some movements eg. Country dancing, actions to songs...
- Create own dances based on structures taught



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Walking, walking,  
walking, walking  
Hop hop hop!  
Hop hop hop!  
Running, running, running  
Running, running, running  
Now we stop  
Now we stop



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Shake those shakers,  
shake those shakers  
Bang those drums bang those drums  
All the bells are ringing,  
all the bells are ringing  
Shake bang ring  
Shake bang ring



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## Compose

• Make up simple songs and rhythms • Explore and change sounds • Explore instruments

- Freely exploring sounds and instruments to create own music
- Dependent on some adult instruction:
  - How to use different instruments
  - Call and response games
  - Modelling



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## Music as continuous provision

Space

Inside or outside?

Introduce little by little

Involve the children in sorting



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- Is it possible that you can create a music space or music area?
- If you do have a music space/area does it have to be static or can it be a moveable feast, i.e. can you change the area regularly?
- Can you place instruments in many areas so that you can create many musical environments at any one time?
- Think about the provision that you have for visual art in your settings and compare it to the music provision that you have – can children independently make music and are they encouraged to play instruments?
- What instruments do you get out and why?
- Experiment with different sets of instruments
- Experiment with placing instruments on different levels
- When instruments are laid out in the environment it is key to have adult observation
- Musical adult intervention and modelling is necessary at times to encourage, nurture and extend children's musical play
- Bear in mind that sometimes less can be more – you do not need to present all instruments at any given time
- Think carefully about the types of instruments that you offer within the environment; for example xylobars with beaters next to drums will encourage children to use beaters on drums. Drums played with beaters can be extremely noisy and using hands can be far more desirable.



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## Perform

- Favourite songs • Tapping out rhythms • Accompaniment to songs

Perform to...

- Each other
- Other children outside the group
- Parents
- Local community (homes for the elderly?)
- Online audience?



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## Singing is good for you.

When we plan to sing with children we need to carefully consider what the purpose is.

There can be many purposes, for example:

- Songs to develop singing skills
- Songs for children to listen to
- Songs to move to
- Songs for relaxation
- Songs to share stories
- Songs to teach (maths, PSED, phonics)
- Songs to explore elements of music, e.g. dynamics (loud/quiet), tempo (fast/slow)



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## What songs?

Create a list of the songs you want all your children to know by the end of their time with you.



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## Tune: She'll be coming round the mountain

Oh it's time to go home now  
So say goodbye (wave)  
We've been busy all the day  
We don't want to go away  
But it's time to go home now so say  
goodbye



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