

# Music in the Home: All I Want is Peace and Quiet

By Jim Kasen

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# Inspiring Music—Worthy Thoughts

Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve, "Inspiring Music—Worthy Thoughts," *Ensign*, Jan. 1974, 25

President Lee concluded our last conference in April with the statement that in his 32 years as a General Authority he had learned that the most inspired preaching is always accompanied by beautiful, inspired music. I am grateful this morning to be sustained by the beautiful renditions of the choir.

"Music," Addison said, "is the only sensual gratification in which mankind may indulge to excess without injury to their moral or religious feelings."

If that were true in his day, it is not in ours. Music, once that innocent, now is often used for wicked purposes.

It has been obvious for centuries that lyrics of the worst kind can be set to music that is innocent of itself. Words which are bad can be set to music which is otherwise good, and lead men astray.

Recently the First Presidency restated this counsel:

"Through music, man's ability to express himself extends beyond the limits of the spoken language in both subtlety and power. Music can be used to exalt and inspire or to carry messages of degradation and destruction. It is therefore important that as Latter-day Saints we at all times apply the principles of the gospel and seek the guidance of the Spirit in selecting the music with which we surround ourselves." (*Priesthood Bulletin*, August, 1973.)

In our day music itself has been corrupted. Music can, by its tempo, by its beat, by its intensity, dull the spiritual sensitivity of men.

Studies citing physiological effects from some of the extreme music of today neglect the most serious thing concerning it.

Our youth have been brought up on a diet of music that is loud and fast, more intended to agitate than to pacify, more intended to excite than to calm. Even so, there is a breadth of it. Some soft enough to be innocent and appealing to our youth, and that which is hard, and that is where the problem is.

One of the signs of apostasy in the Christian churches today is the willingness of their ministers to compromise and introduce into what had been, theretofore, the most sacred religious meetings the music of the drug and the hard rock culture. Such music has little virtue and it is repellent to the Spirit of God.

The pity of it is, their foolishness has not accomplished the ends they sought. Their young people

are not drawn to them as they hoped and expected. Rather, young people are inventing so-called churches of their own, groping and seeking for something that they find missing in their lives.

Some have been critical when *our* leaders have exercised restraint on the kind of music we will allow at Church activities.

"Do you want to lose your youth?" they ask.

I would remind all such that it is not the privilege of those called as leaders to slide the Church about as though it were on casters, hoping to put it into the path that men or youth will be safe within it.

President J. Reuben Clark said:

"We may not, under our duty, provide or tolerate an unwholesome amusement on the theory that if we do not provide it the youth will go elsewhere to get it. We could hardly set up a roulette table in the Church amusement hall for gambling purposes, with the excuse that if we do not provide it the youth would go to a gambling hall to gamble. We can never really hold our youth thus. Our task is to help the home to plant better standards in the minds of the youth."

And so we urge parents in the Church to show as much interest in the records and tapes their children purchase as they would the books and magazines they bring into the home. There are many parents who would not for one moment tolerate a pornographic magazine in their homes who unwittingly provide money for music, some of which in its influence can be quite as damaging.

Someone said recently that no music could be degrading, that music in and of itself is harmless and innocent.

If that be true, then there should be some explanation for circumstances where local leaders have provided a building—expansive, light, and inviting—and have assembled a party of young people dressed modestly, well-groomed, with manners to match. Then overamplified sounds of hard music are introduced and an influence pours into the room that is repellent to the Spirit of God.

The youth of the Church, by and large, have found a sensible and reasonable adjustment to the grooming and dress styles of our day. Our young men and women can dress with decency and modesty and yet not be unstylish or look all that different or odd.

We have said a good deal through our youth organizations and at our Church schools about dress and grooming standards and have been successful.

By comparison, we have not given sufficient counsel and attention, I think, to the music that our young people consume. And “consume” is a proper word. There is much of today’s music that they may well enjoy, if they avoid the hard kind.

Parents and Church leaders who counsel young people in this area soon learn that they must move very wisely.

If a little child picks up a sharp object, sometimes a foolish adult will grab for it, frightened for the safety of the child. Instinctively, the child will grip it more tightly and perhaps be injured. The wise parent will trade him for it—some equally appealing, but harmless object, given in exchange, so that he lets go willingly and without tears.

Keep that in mind when you have a problem with young people and their music. To change it may take some time and require inspiration.

In the Church we have great confidence in our youth; and, particularly in the last year or two, we have moved to a pattern of programming where their desires and wishes are more dominant in our activities.

This places great responsibility on you, our young people. Pay careful attention to the music you program for your activities.

It is not that we lack confidence in you. However, the breach between the world and the extremes of its music and the Church is wider in our day than ever in generations past. And the middle of the road runs through an entirely different valley now than it did a few years ago.

Remember, young leaders, He is your Lord, and it is your Church quite as much as it is ours.

I would recommend that you go through your record albums and set aside those records that promote the so-called new morality, the drug, or the hard rock culture. Such music ought not to belong to young people concerned about spiritual development.

Why not go through your collection? Get rid of the worst of it. Keep just the best of it. Be selective in what you consume and what you produce. It becomes a part of you.

If you are blessed with musical talent, develop a wide range of good music.

There is so much wonderful, uplifting music available that we can experience to our advantage. Our people ought to be surrounded by good music of all kinds.

Parents ought to foster good music in the home and cultivate a desire to have their children learn the hymns of inspiration.

The time for music lessons seems to come along when there are so many other expenses for the family with little children. But we encourage parents to include musical training in the lives of their children.

Somehow Andrew and Olive Kimball did, and Spencer learned to play. Somehow Samuel and Louisa Lee managed to do it, and Harold learned to play. And now, as the leaders of the Church assemble for our sacred meetings in the upper room of the temple, we always sing a hymn. At the organ is President Spencer W. Kimball or President Harold B. Lee.

How wonderful is the music instructor who will teach children and youth to play and will acquaint them with good music in their formative years, including the music of worship. To have such music as a part of one’s life is a great blessing.

The Lord has said, “For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads.” (*D&C 25:12.*)

I think I would like to share with the young people something about how such music has been very important in my life, although I am not trained as a musician.

Probably the greatest challenge to people of any age, particularly young people, and the most difficult thing you will face in mortal life is to learn to control your thoughts. As a man “thinketh in his heart, so is he.” (*Prov. 23:7.*) One who can control his thoughts has conquered himself.

When I was about ten years old, we lived in a home surrounded by an orchard. There never seemed to be enough water for the trees. The ditches, always fresh-plowed in the spring, would soon be filled with weeds. One day, in charge of the irrigating turn, I found myself in trouble.

As the water moved down the rows choked with weeds, it would flood in every direction. I raced through the puddles trying to build up the bank. As soon as I had one break patched up, there would be another.

A neighbor came through the orchard. He watched for a moment, and then with a few vigorous strokes of the shovel he cleared the ditch bottom and allowed the water to course through the channel he had made.

"If you want the water to stay in its course, you'll have to make a place for it to go," he said.

I have come to know that thoughts, like water, will stay on course if we make a place for them to go. Otherwise our thoughts follow the course of least resistance, always seeking the lower levels.

I had been told a hundred times or more as I grew up that thoughts must be controlled. But no one told me how.

I want to tell you young people about one way you can learn to control your thoughts, and it has to do with music.

The mind is like a stage. Except when we are asleep the curtain is always up. There is always some act being performed on that stage. It may be a comedy, a tragedy, interesting or dull, good or bad; but always there is some act playing on the stage of the mind.

Have you noticed that without any real intent on your part, in the middle of almost any performance, a shady little thought may creep in from the wings and attract your attention? These delinquent thoughts will try to upstage everybody.

If you permit them to go on, all thoughts of any virtue will leave the stage. You will be left, because you consented to it, to the influence of unrighteous thoughts.

If you yield to them, they will enact for you on the stage of your mind anything to the limits of your toleration. They may enact a theme of bitterness, jealousy, or hatred. It may be vulgar, immoral, even depraved.

When they have the stage, if you let them, they will devise the most clever persuasions to hold your attention. They can make it interesting all right, even convince you that it is innocent—for they are but thoughts.

What do you do at a time like that, when the stage of your mind is commandeered by the imps of unclean thinking?—whether they be the gray ones that seem almost clean or the filthy ones which leave no room for doubt.

If you can control your thoughts, you can overcome habits, even degrading personal habits. If you can learn to master them you will have a happy life.

This is what I would teach you. Choose from among the sacred music of the Church a favorite hymn, one with words that are uplifting and music that is reverent, one that makes you feel something akin to inspiration. Remember President Lee's counsel; perhaps "I Am A Child of God" would do. Go over it in your mind carefully. Memorize it. Even though you have had no musical training, you can think through a hymn.

Now, use this hymn as the place for your thoughts to go. Make it your emergency channel. Whenever you find these shady actors have slipped from the sidelines of your thinking onto the stage of your mind, put on this record, as it were.

As the music begins and as the words form in your thoughts, the unworthy ones will slip shamefully away. It will change the whole mood on the stage of your mind. Because it is uplifting and clean, the baser thoughts will disappear. For while virtue, by choice, *will not* associate with filth, evil *cannot* tolerate the presence of light.

In due time you will find yourself, on occasion, humming the music inwardly. As you retrace your thoughts, you discover some influence from the world about you encouraged an unworthy thought to move on stage in your mind, and the music almost automatically began.

"Music," said Gladstone, "is one of the most forceful instruments for governing the mind and spirit of man."

I am so grateful for music that is worthy and uplifting and inspiring.

Once you learn to clear the stage of your mind from unworthy thoughts, keep it busy with learning worthwhile things. Change your environment so that you have things about you that will inspire good and uplifting thoughts. Keep busy with things that are righteous.

Young people, you cannot afford to fill your mind with the unworthy hard music of our day. It is *not* harmless. It can welcome onto the stage of your mind unworthy thoughts and set the tempo to which they dance and to which you may act.

You degrade yourself when you identify with all of those things which seem now to surround such extremes in music: the shabbiness, the irreverence, the immorality, and the addictions. Such music as that is not worthy of you. You should have self-respect.

You are a son or a daughter of Almighty God. He has inspired a world full of wonderful things to learn and to do, uplifting music of many kinds that you may enjoy.

The choir, I think, will sing in conclusion, that pioneer hymn, "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

I have a brother who became a brigadier general in the Air Force. During World War II he was a bomber pilot and took part in some of the most dangerous and desperate raids in Europe. He returned to an assignment in Washington, D.C., about the time I finished pilot training in the same B-24 bombers and was heading for the Pacific. We had a day or two together in Washington before I left for overseas.

We talked of courage and of fear. I asked how he had held himself together in the face of all that he had endured.

He said, "I have a favorite hymn—'Come, Come, Ye Saints,' and when it was desperate, when there was little hope that we would return, I would keep that on my mind and it was as though the engines of the aircraft would sing back to me:

*'Come, come, ye saints,  
No toil nor labor fear;  
But with joy wend your way.  
Though hard to you  
This journey may appear,  
Grace shall be as your day.'* ”  
—*Hymns*, no. 13

From this he clung to faith, the one essential ingredient to courage.

There are many references in the scriptures, both ancient and modern, that attest to the influence of righteous music. The Lord, Himself, was prepared for His greatest test through its influence, for the scripture records: "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives." (*Mark 14:26.*)

I bear witness that God is our Father, that we are His children, that He loves us and has provided great and glorious things in this life. I know this, and I thank Him for the uplifting influence of good music in my life and in the lives of my children. There are many things we can do together as a family; inspired music we can feel together. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

# Worship and Performance

James C. Kasen, *Worship and Performance: Music in the Sacramental Services of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Brigham Young University School of Music, August 1999

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After returning home from the mission field and having obtained employment at the Missionary Training Center (MTC) in Provo, Utah, I was asked to assist in the organization of a choir. Traditionally, branch choirs had been assigned to sing at the weekly devotionals, and their preparation and presentation was far from stellar. This new choir was to sing at the weekly devotionals as well as monthly mission conferences. Membership would be drawn from all of the branches, and turnover would occur weekly due to the number of incoming and outgoing missionaries. Rehearsals would be very few, as the main purpose of the center was to prepare those who came to teach the gospel and learn numerous languages.

As the choir began to assemble, the most rehearsal time we could obtain was one and a half hours per week. We had to rely heavily on our faith, and as a result we had many significant spiritual experiences. This opportunity lasted for over seven years. It was toward the middle of my tenure that I had an experience that caused me to become keenly aware of the stark difference between worship and performance. I came to know of that contrast while conducting the choir at a devotional in which Elder Neal A. Maxwell was asked to speak.

Many times my thoughts had turned to the idea of performing Mack Wilberg's arrangement of "Redeemer of Israel,"<sup>1</sup> but the circumstances never seemed quite right. I had had the opportunity of playing the organ part at its première in the Provo Tabernacle. Since then, I wanted to perform it, and with this particular speaker, I believed this would be the perfect chance.

I decided to use the original instrumental accompaniment consisting of brass, percussion, and organ. The instrumentalists were willing students from Brigham Young University. I knew that the use of such accompaniment in combination with the chance to sing for this particular General Authority would result in many singers at the rehearsals. My assumption was correct, as over 235 attended the rehearsals. After preparing both the singers and the instrumentalists and memorizing the score, I came to the final rehearsal and invited the congregation to join in singing the first and last verses of the hymn.

There were well over 1,500 in attendance that night. We were very prepared musically. The choir and the instrumentalists were honed for a dynamic performance. At the appointed time, I walked to the podium, stood the choir, cued the brass, and we began. What I had hoped and prepared for transformed into something very different. I first became aware of the difference when the choir and congregation seemed to be pleading as they sang the words, "Redeemer of Israel . . . on whom for a blessing we call." The singing had turned to prayer. As I turned to conduct the choir verses, I glanced over where Elder Maxwell was seated, and what I witnessed surprised and even startled me. He had rested his hymnbook in his lap, and was looking down, with tears flowing freely down his cheeks as he sang. What I witnessed had nothing to do with a mere stellar performance standard. This was worship. The Spirit of the Lord had entered the hall and those present had prayed him there. The effects of the music culminated in Elder Maxwell answering the initial plea as he pronounced upon us one of the most glorious apostolic blessings that I had ever heard.

That singular experience convinced me that never again could I use the word "performance" in referring to music that dealt with worship. I learned that there is a marked and significant difference between worship and performance. As a result of this event, several questions flooded my mind centering in the uncertainty as to what the function of music really is in a worship setting, as well as how one prepares a choir for such an experience. Since that time, I have studied, pondered, and practiced skills and principles as a musician whose opportunities have been rich in worship service participation.

<sup>1</sup> "Redeemer of Israel", in *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 6.

# Blessing Your Home with Music

Sally Peterson Brinton, *Ensign*, March 1983, 37

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One year ago I once again had the privilege of participating in God's greatest miracle—the birth of a baby, complete with fingers and toes, a rosy complexion, a wailing cry, and a sweet spirit fresh from the presence of our Father in Heaven.

Oh, the emotions of overwhelming joy that flooded my soul as I thanked my Father in Heaven for the divine calling of being a mother! As I held that little bundle in my arms for the first time, I reflected upon the decisions along life's path that had brought me to that very moment—decisions made when the lure of an exciting career in music dangled in front of me.

I pondered the day I auditioned for entrance to the master's degree program at the Juilliard School of Music in New York City. I felt the Spirit bless my performance, and when I received the news that I had been accepted to study with a renowned teacher and concert pianist, I knew the Spirit was guiding my path. I had set a goal early in life to study music at Juilliard, to obtain a master's degree, and to bless the lives of others with the talents the Lord had given me. Those two years of intensive study and performance were the fulfillment of a lifelong dream.

But there were other dreams in my life as well, nurtured from early childhood. As I approached completion of my degree, I spent many hours in prayer to my Father in Heaven, seeking his guidance once again in a major decision. Should I continue in New York City where I had had so many choice opportunities, or was there something greater in store?

Prayer, fasting, and pondering my patriarchal blessing brought the answer; I decided to return to Utah upon completion of my degree. I will never forget the expression of shock and disbelief on the face of my piano teacher in New York as I announced to her my decision. But it was a decision I have never regretted, for shortly after I returned I met a young man who met every criteria—and then some—of the person I had always wanted to marry. This was Heavenly Father's answer. What great joy and happiness Greg and I have shared in our marriage!

I have a deep conviction that nothing in my life, not even a concert career, can surpass the divine calling of being a mother. I have learned that all the honors, awards, trophies, and crowns in the world cannot compare to the rewards of motherhood. This is not to say that I have given up music to rear a family—far from it. Music is a very important part of my life

and the lives of my family. It has richly blessed our home and the lives of others.

Two special people provided the opportunities for me to study music, sacrificed so that I might reap the benefits, and lovingly encouraged me to develop discipline early in life. There were many tearful moments learning the great lesson of discipline when I longed to play kick soccer with the neighborhood children rather than practice the piano—but I learned that practicing came first, then kick soccer. I remember the many times my father took time off from work to drive me to a performance in the far reaches of the state. I remember my mother faithfully attending my piano lessons week after week, and the many hours she practiced with me, though there were other pressing matters that needed her attention.

Thus, I have learned that music can bless the lives of children, and in turn can richly bless the home. We are striving to surround our children with beautiful music, ranging from the classic composers to the rich heritage of our Latter-day Saint hymns. What a thrill it was one night in family home evening to hear our 2<sup>1/2</sup>-year-old sing the first verse of "The Spirit of God Like a Fire" (*Hymns*, no. 213.) Not all the words were correct, but he sang it with the spirit and fervor that he had heard so many times on the Mormon Youth Symphony and Chorus record, in our family home evenings, and in sacrament meetings. How exciting it is to see our children choose the sacred hymns of the Church over songs heard on TV or the radio. As I watch our children gain appreciation for Beethoven and the other great masters, I'm convinced that it's not that they're musical geniuses, but simply that they are developing a love for beautiful music through constant exposure. For it is true that the more we become acquainted with good music, the more we enjoy and appreciate it. One is never too old or too young to enjoy good music; even a young baby loves the hum of a lullaby.

We have discovered that listening to classical music during mealtimes adds a special spirit to our home. The boys take their naps as they listen through the intercom to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir or the Mormon Youth Symphony and Chorus records. At night Greg and I sing the children's favorite Primary songs during "cuddle time." We use these times to plant the tiny seed of testimony, the seed of love for our Heavenly Father and our fellowmen.

We've found that our children are responding positively to our efforts to instill a love for things good and uplifting.

When you encourage your children to be music-minded, you are making an investment that will yield dividends for a lifetime. Some psychologists and musical educators feel that the study of music has a beneficial influence in the training of the mind. They believe, for example, that children who enjoy music rate higher scholastically and develop more active imaginations. In a poll of two hundred American college and university staff members, 196 felt that youngsters with some musical training were definitely superior students to those who had no experience with music.

Music improves coordination between thought and action, encourages creative and orderly thinking, fosters mental alertness and, most important, builds what I call "staying power." Music is often the first artistic activity that makes a child realize he must work hard to accomplish what he wants. It requires self-control.

Musical training develops concentration and memory, as well as the senses of sight, hearing, and touch. Arithmetic and abstract concepts are also better understood. Trained to understand the complexities of rhythm and the exact relationship of harmonics, a youngster is more thoroughly prepared to absorb the abstract principles of physics and mathematics.

There are deep satisfactions in the world of music. Certain compositions can exhilarate and excite, others can soothe. This can be seen in the reactions of a child on hearing the stirring melodies of a march or the softer tones of a lullaby or gentle hymn. Music is not only a natural stimulus, but a natural outlet. Creative musical experience provides an effective means of gaining release from tension—and this has been especially true during the extremely cold winter months in our home in Wisconsin. There have been days on end when we have not ventured outside. My little children, filled with the typical energy of childhood, have enjoyed playing rhythm instruments such as the toy drum, rhythm sticks, and song bells. Then they will dance as I play favorite little songs for them at the piano. This is a wonderful energy release for them. Often they dance until their rosy cheeks indicate to me that a quieter activity will do.

I am reminded that there are some parents who regard musical ability as a special gift and think none but the talented should study. Not long ago a child's musical training was abandoned if he did not show signs of talent by age seven. Today, many parents realize that finding out where a child's talent lies can be achieved only by consistent study. It is sad to think how many great talents have never been developed simply because the people never knew they had them. The French composer Claude Debussy showed little promise as a child; he lacked even the beginner's enthusiasm at the start of his training. Neither of his parents was musical, and it was not until a former pupil of Chopin heard the boy's half-hearted playing that any real effort was made to encourage him. For a long time, Claude found difficulty in mastering certain techniques of music, and his teachers were not impressed by his endeavors. But when he became interested, he developed into a serious and dedicated student, and his perseverance won out. Today he is recognized as the foremost pioneer of musical impressionism.

I believe that parents are the key influence in their children's attitude toward music. It lies within their power to make music an investment their children will enjoy throughout their lives, providing them with beauty, variety, inspiration, and comfort.

Let me emphasize that a mother need not be a music major to teach her children a love for good music. If a mother feels musically inadequate, she could simply turn on a record of hymns and sing along with her children. I would encourage families to sing together—sing in family home evenings, sing before bedtime, sing when someone is in a bad mood. The spirit of a home can quickly be set on the right course with good music because it has a unifying effect. A child will long remember the hours spent singing with parents and brothers and sisters in the warmth of the family circle.

I have a personal testimony of the power of music to teach, to edify, to bring the human spirit into harmony with God. I know that with Him as our source of power, we can provide our homes with stability and direction. And as we do so, we can surround our children with the beauty and happiness that abounds in life and that eternity holds in store for them.

# Appreciating Music

31106, Family Home Evening Resource Book, Family Activities, Appreciating Music, 295

There are many kinds of good music, and each has its place. Even very small children enjoy listening to music that expresses different feelings.

## Materials Needed

Collect some music by well-known classical composers. Many libraries have records and tapes you can check out with a library card. And many radio stations play music written by these composers. If you live in a western culture, you may want to select one of the following compositions:

- Peter and the Wolf (Prokofiev)
- Nutcracker Suite (Tchaikovsky)
- Scheherazade (Rimsky-Korsakov)
- Sorcerer's Apprentice (Dukas)
- Sixth Symphony (Beethoven)
- Messiah (Handel)
- Fireworks Music (Handel)
- Grand Canyon Suite (Grofe)
- Mother Goose Suite (Ravel)
- Carnival of the Animals (Saint-Saens)
- Peer Gynt Suites (Grieg)
- Pines of Rome (Respighi)

Ask the librarian or salesman at the record store to help you find descriptive music, music that tells a story or creates a mood.

## Preparation

Select a piece of music to listen to as a family. Have a family member summarize the information on the jacket of the record. If you are using the radio, the announcer may give a brief summary before playing each selection.

Family members might want to sit on pillows on the floor or just on comfortable chairs. Very young children might be encouraged to move quietly to the music. Shorter selections will hold their attention best.

## Activity

When the music begins, ask each person to close his eyes and imagine what the music might be expressing. Tell the others that we are almost always surrounded by sounds, but we learn to "tune them out." Tonight we want to "tune them in."

After listening to the music for a few minutes, ask the following questions:

1. How does this music make you feel?
2. What colors do you think of when you listen to this music?

3. Can you imagine what might be happening?
4. Is it fast or slow? Loud or soft?
5. Can you hear a melody? Is it played more than two times?
6. Can you tell when the melody changes a little bit?
7. Can you hear the sounds that are made by the different instruments?
8. Do you feel like quietly moving your hand to the beat of the music? Do it if you like.

Do not expect immediate answers. Tell family members to think about their answers while the rest of the music plays. Let them sit back and relax. Avoid loud talking, which could be distracting.

Ask the same questions when the music is finished. Respect each person's answer. Each family member is unique and will have a unique response to the same music.

## Additional Activities

1. Repeat the activity described above on another night. One of the pleasures of listening to music more than once is that the melodies become familiar to us. We enjoy recognizing a melody and anticipating what comes next.
2. Choose a kind of music other than classical—perhaps jazz or folk music. Bring some examples to enjoy together.
3. Have a "Name That Tune" night. Guess the names of songs played by the family member in charge.
4. Pick one composer and bring several recorded examples to listen to. Or you could bring several records featuring the same instrument—the piano, guitar, or violin, for example. Or bring several examples of music from one country or one historical period.
5. Attend a concert as a family.
6. Take a walk in the country and pay attention to the sounds of birds, babbling brooks, the wind, and even silence. Talk about the sounds. Go home and listen to the third movement of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony.
7. Take a walk on a busy street in town. Listen to the horns honking, cars screeching, and jackhammers working. Go home and listen to George Gershwin's An American in Paris.

# Managing Music in the Home

Media Awareness Network, *Managing Music in the Home*, [www.media-awareness.ca](http://www.media-awareness.ca)

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- ❖ Listen to the music your children like. Read the lyrics and discuss them with your kids. But keep in mind that studies have shown that many kids don't pay a lot of attention to lyrics, so putting too much emphasis on the words of favorite songs may be counterproductive.
- ❖ Broaden your kids' musical tastes by exposing them to different kinds of music: jazz, classical, folk, country, blues, show tunes, etc., through recording and live concerts. Show them how the music they enjoy didn't develop in a void, but is a culmination of many different earlier musical influences.
- ❖ When your kids are young, you have the right to ban music you find inappropriate from your house. Talk to your kids about your decision and explain why you find the music objectionable. Even if they disagree, your kids will probably respect your decision if you explain your motivation.  
  
Teens will object to censorship of their music, and they have the right to defend their viewpoint. Discuss freedom of expression versus censorship, and try to come up with a compromise that respects everyone's feelings.
- ❖ When purchasing music for your kids, look for Parental Advisory labels that warn of explicit lyrics. Keep in mind that labeling is voluntary for recording companies, so you can't assume that music without a label will be appropriate for all ages.
- ❖ If a CD or tape purchased by your child has objectionable lyrics and doesn't have an advisory label, return it to the store. Most stores have a "hassle-free" return policy if a parent disapproves of a child's purchase.
- ❖ Ask music store staff for information about specific artists. Most music store employees are very willing to guide parents when they choose music for their kids.
- ❖ Supervise your kids' access to music on the Internet. The music and lyrics for virtually any song can be freely downloaded from the Internet by anyone, regardless of age. In some cases there are even additional lyrics that have been censored in the retail version.

## Recent Music and Brain Research

From *The Journal of Neuroscience*, November 10, 2003 • [www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2003-11/sfn-nss111003.php](http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2003-11/sfn-nss111003.php)

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In new studies, scientists are uncovering the factors responsible for an enhanced brain electrical response to music; the effects on the brain of growing up in a musical or non-musical environment; and which areas of the brain process different aspects of music including speaking and singing. One study finds that positive emotions induced by pleasant music can have an analgesic effect on people, pointing to a possible role for music in pain management therapy.

“Music touches almost every cognitive ability that neuroscientists are interested in—not only the obvious auditory and motor systems involved in perceiving and playing music, but also multisensory interactions, memory, learning, attention, planning, creativity and emotion,” says Robert Zatorre, PhD, of the Montreal Neurological Institute.

Researchers are investigating many different aspects of music and its effect on the brain. A great deal of work has already been done to characterize the brain’s response to musical patterns, but now researchers are beginning to focus on more complex issues, such as how the patterns may change as a function of a person’s knowledge or training in music. “Among the most promising research is that involving the development of musical abilities, because this will tell scientists how the nervous system adapts to influences from the environment,” says Zatorre.

“In turn, the way that training and learning interact with genetic factors that predispose certain neural traits to develop will clearly be a source of much interest for future study.” All of this research may one day lead to new rehabilitation therapies for people recovering from stroke or neurological disorders—and to more effective methods of educating children.

Young children, especially those who grow up in homes where music is often heard, can develop an enhanced brain response to musical stimuli—a response characteristic of other children about two years older, according to a recent study from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. The study also found that one year of formal music training does not increase the response.

“Our findings indicate that enhanced responses to musical stimuli can be expressed at a very early age,” says Larry Roberts, PhD, a professor at McMaster University. But this doesn’t necessarily mean that genetic or prenatal factors are the cause of the

response, he adds. Such responses are known to be neuroplastic—in other words, people, even non-musical ones, can be trained to develop them.

“Most of the children that we observed with an enhanced brain response to music came from homes where their parents or sibling played a musical instrument, so that they had heard a lot of music before they began playing an instrument themselves,” Roberts says. “Their early exposure to music in the home may have been responsible for the enhanced responses we observed in their brains.”

For their study, the researchers enlisted seven 4- and 5-year-old children who were enrolled in Suzuki music training. Six of the children received training in piano and one on the violin. Before the music lessons began and again a year later, after each child’s first recital, the researchers measured the children for a brain response known as the P2 auditory evoked potential, which is detected in brain waves recorded from sensors placed on the scalp. Neurons that generate the P2 response are located in a region of the auditory cortex known as the secondary auditory cortex, and are activated about 0.15 seconds after acoustic signals have reached the brain.

Previous research has shown that P2 brain responses evoked by musical tones are enhanced in adult professional musicians and in adult amateur musicians who play an instrument for personal enjoyment. The study is the first one to examine these brain responses in children receiving musical training.

“We found that P2 brain responses evoked by piano tones in our pianists were larger than those seen in control children, but that P2 responses to violin and pure tones did not differ between musical and non-musical children,” says Roberts. “On the other hand, the P2 response of our one violinist to the violin tone was two times larger than responses evoked by the violin tone in any other subject in the experiment.”

Interestingly, the responses in the Suzuki group of children were the same on the first and second measurements, which meant that one year of formal music training had no effect. At both measurements, however, the Suzuki children showed responses that were equal to children about two years older than them.

The next step in this research is to determine whether enhanced P2 responses are observed when children are trained on novel auditory tasks with which they have had no prior listening experience. Experiments of this type can separate the effects of acoustic experience on auditory brain development from those of intrinsic genetic or prenatal factors. By using appropriate auditory stimuli, it's also possible to evaluate whether acoustic experience modifies neural activity in the primary auditory cortex as well as in the secondary auditory cortex.

Last year, scientists from Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts, launched a first-of-its-kind study that will be following children for at least three years as they begin and advance through musical studies. "We seek to understand what happens in the brain both structurally and functionally as the children grow and develop and achieve varying levels of musical expertise," says Gottfried Schlaug, MD, PhD, the principal investigator of this research.

This study may help determine whether early music training has any effect on the brains of children and their cognitive development. Previous research in adults has shown that the brains of musicians are structurally different from those of non-musicians, but it's not known whether these differences have been there since birth or developed over time as a result of the musicians' specialized training. Prior research in children has shown that music training can heighten certain visual-spatial skills, yet the neural basis of this enhancement is also unknown.

Schlaug and his colleagues are tracking the children's progress through a series of cognitive and musical tests and through periodic, high-resolution structural and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). fMRI measures regional changes in oxygen concentration levels in the blood, thus indicating which parts of the brain are being used for particular mental tasks. Structural MRI measures regional volume of gray and white matter in the brain. A total of 73 five- to seven-year-old children were enrolled in the study and divided into three groups:

An "Instrumental" group, consisting of 41 children (17 girls and 24 boys) who were just beginning to study piano or a string instrument;

A "Non-instrumental" group, consisting of 14 children (5 girls and 9 boys) who either participate in singing/movement and music theory (fundamentals of music) classes or receive intensive music instruction in school, but do not study or practice a particular instrument; and

A "Basic" music group, consisting of 18 children (8 girls and 10 boys) who receive only one, standard, 30- to 45-minute general music class per week and do not participate in any other musical activities.

So far, baseline data gathered from subjects as they began their various music studies show no behavioral or cognitive differences among the groups. In addition, no structural or functional brain differences have been seen among groups. "This means that it is unlikely that the cognitive and brain differences described in adult musician/non-musician comparisons exist in children before they begin music training," says Schlaug. "Further, these results make it more likely that we will be able to detect the effects of music training during subsequent intervals of data collection." The first of the study's annual follow-up sessions will take place later this fall.

One portion of this study is being conducted by Katie Overy, PhD, at Harvard Medical School. She and her colleagues have designed an fMRI experiment that examines which parts of the brains of young children (aged 5 to 7 years) are activated when the children attempt to discriminate between simple rhythms and melodies. This is the first brain imaging study to make such a comparison in young children.

Previous studies involving adults have suggested that rhythmic aspects of music are processed predominantly in the left hemisphere of the brain, while harmonic and melodic aspects of music are processed predominantly in the right hemisphere. "Our results show some support for the idea that different regions of the brain are specialized for processing different aspects of music," says Overy. "We found that children show signs of this hemispheric specialization, although the pattern doesn't appear to be as strong as that reported in adults."

The lateralization effect may grow stronger as the children grow older, Overy adds. "Their brains may not be fully specialized yet," she says. The next stage of this research will be to examine the musical listening skills of older children and adults, with and without musical training, to see if their activation patterns differ from those of young children. "We'll be very interested to see whether or not the brain becomes more lateralized for rhythmic and melodic processing with age and level of musical experience," Overy says.

At the Tokyo Metropolitan University of Health Sciences, researchers have discovered that although the left hemisphere of the brain may be important for language and the right for music, singing and speaking share a common neural network that includes many different areas of the brain.

“Language has some musical components and vocal music has some language components,” explains Yoko Saito, lead author of the study. “They share a common network in the brain.” These findings may help scientists develop more effective methods of rehabilitation for people recovering from illnesses and injuries that affect the brain.

For their recent studies, Saito and her colleagues used fMRI to record the brain function of 20 right-handed volunteers as they performed different singing/ speaking tasks: 1) singing along with a singing voice; 2) singing alone; 3) listening to a singing voice; 4) speaking along with a speaking voice; 5) speaking alone; and 6) listening to a speaking voice. The song used in the study was “Sea Song,” which is commonly known in Japan.

“The aim of our study was to disclose the neural networks involved in singing and speaking,” says Saito. The researchers found that singing and speaking share many areas of the brain, including the auditory area (temporal lobe) in both hemispheres, the motor area for the mouth and face (frontal lobe) in both hemispheres, and language-specific areas in the left hemisphere. They plan to next examine which areas of the brain are involved when music is performed without words—such as when humming a melody or playing an instrument.

Other scientists are discovering why music has the ability, as the playwright William Congreve wrote, “to soothe the savage breast.” New research from the University of Montreal has demonstrated that positive emotions induced by pleasant music can have an analgesic effect on people, helping reduce their perception of pain. These findings suggest that music may have a role to play in clinical settings.

For their most recent study, the Montreal researchers enlisted 25 volunteers to evaluate 30 musical excerpts for their pleasantness/unpleasantness (valence) and their calming/ stimulating properties (levels of arousal). The three most pleasant and the three most unpleasant excerpts, matched to have similar levels of arousal, were then selected. The pleasant excerpts included classical, pop and jazz/pop music; the unpleasant excerpts mainly consisted of contemporary dissonant music.

The selected musical excerpts were then played for 12 new volunteers while they received 6-second applications of various degrees of heat (from 40.0 C to 48.5 C) to their forearms. The volunteers were asked to rate the intensity and unpleasantness of each application of the heat.

“Our subjects felt as much as 20 percent less pain when they were listening to the pleasant music than when they were listening to the unpleasant music—or when no music was played,” says Mathieu Roy, a doctoral candidate at the University of Montreal and lead author of the study. “Interestingly, however, listening to pleasant music didn’t affect how they rated the non-painful stimulation [40.0 C]—a finding that rules out the possibility that the pleasant music was more distracting than the unpleasant music.”

The implications of these findings are two-fold, Roy says. “They obviously strengthen the notion that emotions can modulate our pain experience,” he says. “They also support the idea that listeners really feel the emotions expressed by music rather than just coldly perceiving the sounds—an issue that is far from reaching consensus in music psychology.”

## Summary

- Researchers at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, tested the brain activity of 4- and 5-year-old students who were studying piano and violin. After a year of musical study, the pianists showed a response of specific auditory “P2” brain waves twice that of other children when they listened to piano sounds. The violinist in the study showed the same response when listening to violin sounds.
- Yoko Saito and other researchers at the Tokyo Metropolitan University of Health Sciences measured the brain activity of 20 volunteers while they performed various tasks using singing, speaking, and listening. Researchers found that singing and speaking use many of the same areas of the brain including the temporal lobes that handle hearing and listening, the frontal lobes that control mouth and face movements, and a specific language-processing area in the left hemisphere.
- Test subjects felt up to 20 percent less pain when they were listening to pleasant music versus unpleasant music. In this test, volunteers selected three “most pleasant” and three “most unpleasant” excerpts of music, and they listened to these excerpts and rated the pain level while researchers applied various degrees of heat, from 104–119 degrees F, to their forearms. (The study was done at the University of Montreal.)