



Windows of Opportunity: The Rewards of **Enlightened Music Choices**

“Let there be music in the home. If you have teenagers who have their own recordings, you will be prone to describe the sound as something other than music. Let them hear something better occasionally. Expose them to it. It will speak for itself. More appreciation will come than you may think. It may not be spoken, but it will be felt, and its influence will become increasingly manifest as the years pass.”

- Gordon B. Hinckley



The Thirty-Minute Solution

In **thirty minutes** or less you can significantly impact the amount of **good music** in your home



Helping your family learn to love great music is essentially a matter of exposing them to it. Here are some thirty-minute ideas adapted from information provided by Andrew H. Dabczynski, Ph.D., Professor of Music Education at Brigham Young University:

- ⌚ **Make opportunities for active listening.** Set aside a specific Family Home Evening any afternoon to throw some pillows on the floor in front of the stereo speakers. Listen together, free from other distractions, as each family member shares one or two *favorite* musical selections. You don't have to do anything but listen.
- ⌚ **Start a music library.** Begin by checking out 4 or 5 recordings every time you visit the library, listen to them during breakfast, then purchase the ones you enjoy for your own library or media store. Check internet sites and music libraries for lists of “must have” recordings from a variety of musical styles and genres. Ask your friends and neighbors, “If you were on a desert island with a CD player and only ten recordings, what would you have?” You'll get some great suggestions for your own library.
- ⌚ **Build a tolerance for different kinds of music** by playing “music of the month” in your home. Focus on a particular composer (Beethoven, Gershwin, etc) or a particular genre (Irish fiddling, big band swing, or Baroque), or even a particular artist (Yo Yo Ma, Benny Goodman, Mark O'Connor). Musical taste will expand as family members listen for a relatively extended period of time.
- ⌚ **Find an opportunity to listen to live music.** Find a live performance for your family to attend. Watch for formal concerts as well as informal events, such as “Sunday in the park” performances or local recitals.
- ⌚ **Make music in the car.** On your next road trip, choose music to play in the car whose “mood” matches the scenery. Or, create your own rhythm game to the tempo of the windshield wiper. Each family member could improvise a different rhythm using a different method (clapping, pounding on the dashboard, etc.)

Additional ideas:

Sing, Sing, Sing! Parents should sing whenever possible (try not to worry too much about the quality of your voice). Acquaint your child with lullabies, traditional children's songs, folk songs, show tunes, and more.

Make practicing an instrument a listening experience. Purchase or download a high-quality recording of any song your children are learning as part of their regular instrumental practice. (See <http://www.rhapsody.com>) "Listening time" should be part of every music teacher's required curriculum, because this is how children learn to hear and imitate beautiful phrasing, articulation and technique. (If you are concerned that your child will only imitate and play by ear, wait until the piece is learned before introducing the recorded version).

Encourage youth to prepare multimedia presentations that use music. Ask your teenager to create their own PowerPoint or video montage presentation about the creation of the world (or the Priesthood, or temples, or Joseph Smith, or...) and set it to appropriate music. Have them make a "highlights video" of favorite family video footage and dub in music and show his presentation for Family Home Evening. For extra impact, you can borrow a video projector (check with your public library) and show the presentation on a large wall in your home. Voila! You've inspired new appreciation for music *and* helped him complete a Duty to God requirement.

Don't miss Christmas! The Christmas season is a terrific time to start exposing wary teens to all different kinds of music. Most of them will tolerate everything from classical guitar to jazz when the tunes are connected to the good feelings associated with Christmas.

FIVE TO TRY:

Five great websites that promote great music

Online music resources (www.mp3.com, www.itunes.com.) allow us to "try before we buy," which gives us the opportunity to be informed consumers, and pay for only the best music. Some services (www.rhapsody.com) provide unlimited access to millions of songs for a modest monthly fee, others charge per song download. Since these libraries don't "censor" content. Parents should supervise carefully.

www.lds.org/churchmusic is a superb resource for families to fill their homes with worthy music. Learn to conduct music, access printable downloads of award-winning submissions to the Church music contest, or download an MP3 version of your favorite church hymns and children's songs. The interactive music player allows you to listen to *just* the soprano, alto, tenor, or bass notes (or any combination of the four) so you can teach your family to sing in parts. You can even transpose a piece of music to a different key and print it out.

Get an idea about the content of that new album is before you purchase it. Visit www.commonensemedia.org and click on the "Music" link. Albums are rated based on the content of sex, violence, language, and overall message. Teens who submit their own

reviews often disagree with the “official” reviews on this site—a fact you’ll encounter in your own home as well. Still, this is a good starting place as you work to help your teen choose appropriate music.

For families with access to a digital keyboard, **family sing-alongs** with help from the Internet are the next best thing to the old player piano in the parlor. Download some of your favorite midi files (with lyrics) from www.vanbasco.com. (Most midi files are created by others and made available on the Internet free of charge). Once you have linked to the appropriate site, right click your mouse over the title of the song you want to copy and choose “Save Target As.” The midi file can be copied to a floppy disk, which can then be inserted in your own keyboard and played back. Hook up a TV monitor to your keyboard so that you can follow along with the “karaoke” lyrics.

Children can meet the musicians, composers and instruments of the New York Philharmonic. Build your own instruments and listen to lots of samples of great music. <http://www.nyphilkids.org/main.phtml> Many symphonies or orchestras have similar sites for kids.

Some additional suggestions:

- ξ Try <http://tantararecords.com> to access great music in a variety of musical styles. Tantara is an LDS Church-owned record label that primarily produces recordings for BYU groups.
- ξ <http://www.musictheory.net/index.html> provides easy-to-understand lessons on everything you ever wanted to know about music theory.
- ξ If you need a break from the music pumped through the speakers at your workplace, or at the gym, or if you’d like to listen to something inspirational as you take your morning jog, consider purchasing a personal MP3 player and downloading conference addresses, BYU devotional speeches, or Education Week presentations. Visit www.byubroadcasting.org or www.lds.org (and click on “Broadcasts”).
- ξ Visit www.artsalive.ca/en/mus/index.asp for a delightful online resource for classical music lovers of all ages.
- ξ http://www.pbs.org/teachersource/recommended/arts_lit/lk_music.shtm lists archived recommendations of great music websites from PBS. You’ll find links to everything from jazz and Motown to sing-along songsheets.
- ξ If you serve as a choir director in your ward or stake, (or if you love great choral sing-alongs in your own living room), you’ll want to become acquainted with <http://www.cpd.org/>. This is a website devoted to free choral sheet music. There are several LDS composers/arrangers that contribute to this site. Sally DeFord is a favorite. Music at this site is free.
- ξ <http://www.mysheetmusic.com/publicdomain.asp> is another great site for families who sing together. Choose from over 750 selections of free sheet music. The “free selections” are listed in the public domain (most were composed before the 1920s, so the copyrights have expired). You’ll find hymns, ragtime, children’s, and Christmas songs, among others. There are also thousands of “pay and play” selections available for a small fee.

ξ *A word about copyright issues:* Keep in mind that it is illegal to make copies of most music, even for your own or for church use. Music that can be legally copied always carries a notice stating this fact.