

ChildreninScotland

every child - every childhood

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Now is the time

Consultation begins on the Children
and Young People Bill

Sweet sounds

How music breaks down barriers

editorial

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Now is the time

As the summer holidays draw to a close some parents, at least, will already be breathing a sigh of relief.

Recent stories in the press have highlighted how a patchwork, piecemeal approach to childcare provision outside the school term can once again mean the onus is on families to somehow engineer safe, age-appropriate and manageable childcare – often for children of different ages – while at the same time trying to meet employers' demands.

With this in mind, shouldn't out of school care be something that at least gets a mention in the Government's forthcoming Children and Young People Bill? Of course the proposals have much to recommend them, and an extension of the education and childcare entitlement for younger children is a welcome step forward. But out of school care for older children, who still are not of an age to look after themselves for extended periods, is something that remains to be addressed.

With consultation on the Bill's proposals now well under way, we look at what the suggestions are. There are a number of ways Children in Scotland can help you make sure your views are heard as part of the consultation – turn to page 9 and find out more.

We hear from some of our members about projects and programmes they are involved in: from a West Lothian parenting group where parents of children with autism are sharing information and supporting their peers, to the latest initiatives tackling the health implications of tobacco use among young people. We even feature one enterprising 14-year-old who built her own kayak to paddle the Caledonian Canal.

And last but definitely not least, as Children in Scotland welcomes new chief executive Jackie Brock we speak to her about the developments taking place across the sector and opportunities that are opening up. What can we achieve for our children, young people and families? Make sure you join us on the journey!

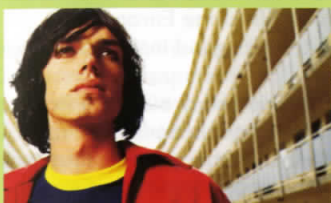


Tracey



Cover photo: Companhia de Música Teatral

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Joy across generations



Photo: Companhia de Música Teatral

Involvement in the arts can support the development of even the youngest children. *Helena Rodrigues and Paulo Maria Rodrigues* look at how and why music has the power to bring communities together

From their earliest years, very young children are connected to different systems within the community – their nuclear family, extended family, nursery or childcare centre, to name just three. *Opus Tutti* is a project that aims to create ways of improving full human development through involvement with the arts in early infancy, and it has become truly intergenerational.

For us a systemic approach has been a very influential perspective, which is one reason why a project concerning early infancy has also included initiatives

addressed to adults and older children. With this theoretical model in mind we plan programmes specifically for infants and extend our activities to include other components of their community system that can indirectly benefit them.

During the first year of the project we enlarged our target with workshops for parents and infants, artistic performances for families, workshops for children aged 7–12 years old and workshops for artists and professionals interested in infancy and childhood themes. This led to an open activity for community residents, aimed at

adults as well as children and held in the magnificent gardens of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon in 2011 during one week in July and another in September. Participants were involved in developing music and movement activities to fit the sound ecology of the gardens, to be performed in the open air. Very much inspired by the ideas of the Canadian composer Murray Schaffer, *A Peaceful Sunday* emerged from this experience. The performance invited passers by, especially caregivers accompanied by their babies and young children, to pause, listen, observe, explore, discover and enjoy the

series of musical, choreographic and scenic events developed as a kind of dialogue with the elements of the gardens.

The experience became the subject of *Budding*, a documentary by Pedro Sena Nunes, which focused on the importance of taking care of the youngest children and on the potential of music as a tool to connect people.

The idea is much inspired by the concepts of "intuitive parenting", developed by Hannus and Mechthild Papoušek, and "communicative musicality" as discussed by Stephen Malloch and Colwyn Trevarthen. We believe companionship has its roots in inner musical resources that can be awakened by musical practice in daily life, and the experience of *A Peaceful Sunday* enlarged our perspective on music as a powerful tool for connecting people and contributing to taking better care of infants.

During the past year, we have been focusing our attention on a particular daycare and kindergarten facility. Each week, two members of our team have visited it, providing music sessions for four different and separate groups (infants aged 4–12 months; 1–2 years; 2–3 years; and 3–4 years). These sessions are scheduled for the close of the day, when caregivers come to take their children home. In this way, we have the joint participation of parents and daycare professionals in the music activities. These are mostly singing, chanting and movement orientated, since one of the programme's main goals is to stimulate a feeling of togetherness in making music and also to provide tips to caregivers to play musically in their daily life.

Besides this intervention located at the daycare centre, we designed *Babelim*, a project to which we invited the caregivers (parents and professionals working at the daycare centre), infants and older children (typically the older brothers and sisters of the participating infants and the sons and daughters of the daycare professionals). These groups joined in music and photography workshops called *Tuning of Listening* and *Tuning of Seeing*. The workshops converged to form *Tuning of Playing*, in which all participants shared their experiences in a playful atmosphere mediated by music. At the same time, workshops on artistic creation for infancy

took place, targeted to artists and interested professionals. These workshops were intended to build up a bank of educational and artistic resources and contribute to the personal development of the professionals involved.

All the workshops for specific target groups contributed to a final presentation called *Babelim*. The name, inspired by the term 'Babel', illustrates the concept behind the performance: a mixture of musical idioms and sounds seeking to respond to the human need to communicate. Based on the links between music and language, we borrowed the idea that babies are born as universal communicators and guided towards narrow languages through the companionship of adults.

The audience who attended the final performance could contemplate the beauty of the interaction between a couple of dancers with their infant on stage, in conjunction with a movement and voice chorus formed by the older children and the professionals who participated in the workshops. Parents and infants were seated in the audience and participated by singing and playing music boxes. A screen with easily understandable scores was displayed to allow the everyone to participate at particular times in the performance.

This final presentation was the culmination of a shared creative process in which music was used as a tool to bring people together. In our experience, it looks as if there is a kind of a 'domino effect' when we create music for parents and infants: music produces spontaneous responses in infants which affect their own caregivers. When a caregiver and infant are musically involved, their involvement easily spreads to others. There is no doubt that music promotes social cohesion through specific devices such as rhythmic synchronisation. This effect is magnified when musical practice occurs in groups that share feelings of parenthood in common. In other words: music helps to synchronise groups and this effect increases when the group is tuned to feelings of parenthood. According to our experience, the conjunction of both elements is powerful in supporting the emergence of a special type of community. Projects such as *A Peaceful Sunday*, *Babelim* and *BebéBabá* – reflections about this project are included in *Communicative Musicality: Exploring the Basis of Human Companionship* edited by

Stephen Malloch and Colwyn Trevarthen – as social compensation mechanisms in a society that lacks human contact and is characterised by isolation.

Besides very positive feedback from the participants, we realised for many it was the first time they entered the installations of a cultural institution such as the Gulbenkian Foundation, and one of the few events they attended.

Opus Tutti is a partnership project of *Companhia de Música Teatral* (www.musicateatral.com) and the *Laboratory for Music and Communication in Infancy* in the *Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas* at the *Universidade Nova de Lisboa*

Where next?

Currently we are working on the creation of three musical and theatrical pieces, aiming to present them in daycare facilities and kindergartens in the future. We are also announcing a First International Call for Players that will lead to an installation that pretends to call attention to the importance of playing in infancy and early childhood. We invite people to send video films illustrating playing moments between an infant and a caregiver or a caregiver and an older child. For more details see opustutti.blogspot.com.

The documentary *Budding* by Pedro Sena Nunes is available at <http://vimeo.com/35249885>.

Helena Rodrigues is an assistant teacher at the *Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas* at the *Universidade Nova de Lisboa* and a founder of *Laboratory for Music and Communication in Infancy* of the research unit CESEM; Paulo Maria Rodrigues is based at the *Departamento de Comunicação e Arte* at the *Universidade de Aveiro*. Both are members of *Companhia de Música Teatral*, Portugal