



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
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14-17 May, 2025

12th Conference of the EuNet MERYC in Klaipėda, Lithuania

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

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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.