According to Maria Montessori M.D., it is very important for children to receive exposure and experience with music between the ages of two and a half to six. Dr. Montessori called this period the sensitive period for learning. During this sensitive period, children are sensitive to learning and absorbing music. The sensitive periods are blocks or stages of time that a child is particularly sensitive to or attuned to the acquisition of some particular knowledge or skill (Montessori, 1966). Don Campbell also defines sensitive periods or critical windows as periods where development takes place at a more rapid and effortless pace, and are periods of development where the information that is learned is less likely to be forgotten (Campbell, 2000).

Children should receive music instruction during their sensitive period, ages two through six. A problem occurs when children do not receive music instruction during these sensitive periods because they lose out on valuable brain growth and development. According to Montessori, if children have not been able to learn a skill during his or her sensitive period the opportunity to learn it is lost (Montessori, 1966). In addition, Maria Montessori M.D. stressed the importance for children to receive exposure and experience with music and language-rich experience between the ages of two and a half to six.

Dr. Maria Montessori also believed in assisting the natural development of the child by educating children through hearing and the other senses during what she called a child’s sensitive period for development (Montessori, 1966). The Montessori materials gradiate and adapt the stimuli that a child receives to support all areas of future...
development such as helping a child to develop listening and language skills (Montessori, 1967).

Dr. Montessori believed that creative work lifts man up from the earth and transports him into a higher world, which every soul may attain within its individual limits (Montessori, 1967).

Music in early childhood is a critical aspect of a child’s development. The two and a half to six year old child is in the sensitive period of development and therefore is especially sensitive to sensory-motor activities. Providing age-appropriate activities within the musical environment will allow children to develop their skills and reach their inherent musical potential. In the Montessori three to six classroom, singing and singing games are a very important part of the music curriculum because they allow children to develop their inner musical ear. The voice is a child’s natural instrument and it is an instrument that every person possesses. As children participate in singing games they are allowed to experience and absorb simple melodies through movement. These singing games can really help shy children to participate and sing along when the emphasis is on movement instead of just singing in a large group. Singing in the three to six Montessori classrooms helps children develop their abilities to feel steady beat, chant rhymes, and to differentiate between musical comparatives such as loud to soft, fast to slow, and high to low (Getz, 2002).

Dr. Maria Montessori, who greatly respected the muscular-sensorial approach, designed a set of materials and instruments that allow children to self-educate themselves on an aural basis for most elements of music. The Montessori bells are an example of an instrument that is used in the Montessori three-six classroom. The bells were designed to
specifically train the ear to perceive differences among musical sounds. The Montessori bells consist of a series of bells that represent the whole tones and semi-tones of one octave. To work with the bells, the child is required to pair off the bells that produce the same sound. This enables the child to learn how to discriminate, eventually learn how to arrange the bells in gradation, and to play the musical scale (Getz, 2002).

According to Frank Leto, professional musician, Montessori three to six teacher, songwriter, and an Early Childhood and Elementary school music educator, music is a language. Children learn to speak their native language instinctively. As children have daily contact and interaction with their parents, family and friends, they learn how to speak their language as a way of life. The language of music can be passed on to children in the same manner as their native language. When music is brought into a child’s environment they are encouraged to participate in musical activities. Bringing music into a child’s environment gives him or her the opportunity to acquire a musical vocabulary of rhythms, melodies and songs (Leto, 1988).

Works Cited


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