

Music is Movement

A Study into Aspects of Movement Representation of Musical Activities among Preschool Children in a Dutch Music Education Setting.

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ABSTRACT

Musical activities are at the centre of Music on the Lap, a Dutch approach to early childhood music education. The present study takes an in-depth look at the role of movement in these musical activities and thereby focuses on the representation of musical elements through movement. This study has among its aims the raising of more awareness for the conscious use of movement in early childhood music education.

Departing from an embodied approach within an interpretative design, the premise of the current study is that movement should be considered an important form of kinaesthetic representation through which preschool children can come to understand and learn different aspects of music. The musical movement responses of children aged 18 to 36 months in a regular Music on the Lap setting were investigated. The musical movement behaviour of the children, during specific musical activities, was captured on DVD and the individual responses of 27 children were analysed. Interviews with the participating teacher provided important additional information. Through microanalysis of the children's movements, the study arrived at a theoretical interpretation: movement responses to music can be considered enactive symbols, creating direct and indirect representations of musical characteristics. To further musical learning the movements should be firmly based in a temporal framework of aural and verbal connotations in order to stimulate purposeful movement responses. This temporal framework should be structured by the teacher through a process of appropriate movement models and verbal guidance to arrive at meaningful movement actions, which can consequently generate implicit and explicit musical kinaesthetic and musical representational knowledge. In this process the children are actively participating to construct with body and mind their own musical knowledge.

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