

sounds of intent

in the early years



about this booklet

Published in the UK on behalf of Sounds of Intent
by International Music Education Research Centre Press
UCL Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL
United Kingdom - www.imerc.org

ISBN: 978-1-9-0535132-9

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The thinking in this booklet draws on Adam's 'zygonic' theory, which seeks to explain how music makes sense to us all. For more information see *Applied Musicology*, published in 2012 by Oxford University Press, and *Music, Language and Autism*, published in 2013 by Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

design and development by Evangelos Himonides, UCL Institute of Education



welcome

to Sounds of Intent in the Early Years

Sounds of Intent in the Early Years can be used in three ways:

1. to give you a sense of how children's musical development usually occurs
2. to enable you to find out what your child's level of musical development is, and to chart his or her progress
3. to give you ideas for what to do now and what to do next, given your child's level of musical development



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- introducing music in the early years
- six levels of musical development
- three ways of engaging with music
- the Sounds of Intent Early Years Framework
- recording your child's level of musical development
- using the poster
- getting in touch



SIX

levels of musical development

By being exposed to sound and music, by having a go at making sounds themselves and by engaging in musical activities with other people, children's brains gradually learn to make sense of music. There are six levels of musical understanding, four of which (Levels 2, 3, 4 and 5) usually occur in the early years.



LEVEL 2

sounds interesting

Young children react to an increasing variety of sounds: loud or quiet, high or low, mellow or harsh, long or short, coming from different directions.

Children learn to make sounds for themselves, using their voices, their bodies, and objects in the environment.

They come to enjoy interacting with other people by using sound.



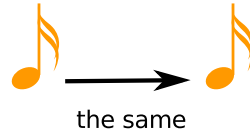
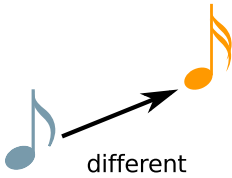
LEVEL 3

copy me, copy you

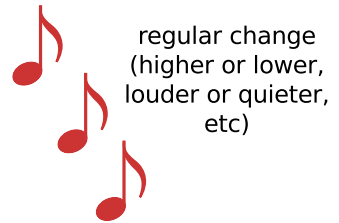
Children compare one sound with another, and start to recognise what is different and what is the same. They enjoy listening to patterns in sound, which enable them to anticipate what is going to happen next.

Children relish making patterns themselves, using their voices or instruments or everyday objects, by doing the same thing over and over again, or by slightly changing things.

Children love it when you copy their sounds, and they try to copy the sounds you make too.



a regular beat

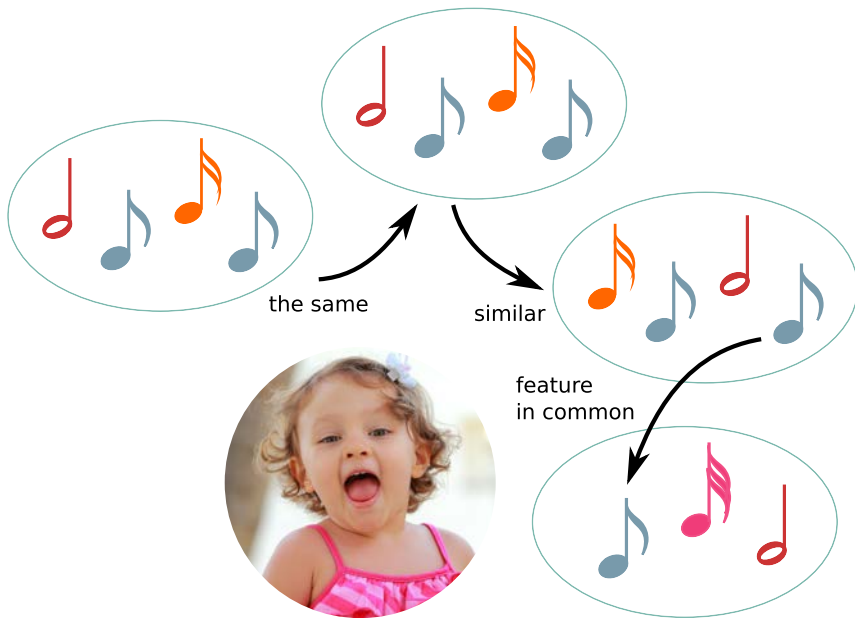


It is patterns like these, that use the idea of one sound copying another (or the difference between two sounds being copied) that make music what it is – different from speech and everyday noises. Without any apparent effort, children learn to listen out for these patterns, and learn to process them as music.

LEVEL 4

bits of pieces

Children learn that music is made up of distinctive groups of notes, that psychologists call 'chunks'. Think of any pop song – it will almost certainly have a short, catchy phrase or 'hook' that keeps coming back. Children pick up on these chunks of music, and experiment by joining them together to make up their own 'potpourri' songs: 'Mary, Mary, quite contrary ... couldn't put Humpty together again!'



At this level, the brain makes sense of music by listening out for chunks that are the same, or similar, or have features in common. And children create their own songs by repeating chunks as a whole or in part, or linking them by making the end of the one sound like the beginning of the next.

Being musical is part of being human; we all share an innate musicality



Musical interests and abilities start to develop three months before birth, and they continue to evolve all our lives.



However, the most rapid period of development is in the early years, when learning seems to be effortless. Adults need to work hard, though, to give children the best possible musical start.

Music is brain food!

Sounds of Intent shows you how to plan a rich and varied musical diet for the children you work with and care for. We hope you and they enjoy it!



And it is vitally important. For children in early years settings, music is not the icing on the cake: it is an essential ingredient in the multisensory mix of everyday activities that will enable them grow to meet their full potential.

Remember, there is more to music than an activity to be enjoyed for its own sake. Early music engagement is crucial for wider development and well-being. If very young children don't take part in vocal play with adults they may struggle to grasp language and to appreciate the feelings of others, and they may not come to relish the to and fro of social interaction.

How well children come to understand music, and how much they enjoy it, depends on the richness and diversity of the musical experiences they are offered, and the willingness of those around to engage with them in making music. This does not need special musical talents. It is something that we can all do.



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LEVEL 5

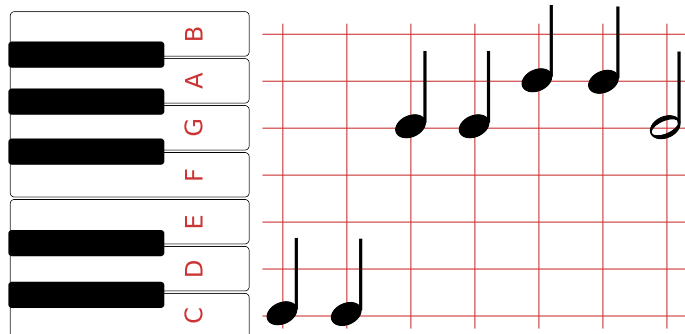
whole songs, in time and in tune

Through exposure to tens, hundreds or even thousands of pieces, children learn that the music of their culture tends to use the same underlying patterns of notes over and over again. The most common pattern in Western music is the 'major scale', which you can hear by playing up and down the white notes on the keyboard. As this pattern becomes more strongly fixed in children's minds, and they get better at controlling their voices, they noticeably sing more in tune.

Some combinations of notes occur more often than others, and this all adds to children's sense of a deeper structure in music – that lets them know when a piece is ending, for example.

At the same time, children get a feeling for the regular 'beat' that is found in most music, that they can clap their hands or tap their feet to. This makes it easier for them to sing and play music together.

A regular beat



Twin-kle, twin-kle, lit - tle star

These underlying patterns make up the deepest forms of repetition in music that the brain learns to process, and it is these that enable pieces of music as a whole make sense. The wonderful thing is that children become musical experts with no conscious effort on their part.

WHEN do the levels of musical development occur?

The development of children's musical interests and abilities depends less on their **age** than on the **opportunities** that they have to listen to music, to try out instruments and other sound-makers for themselves, and to engage with other people in musical activities. So, key factors in children's musical development are the richness of the musical environment in which they are brought up, and the enthusiasm of their carers and teachers to make music with them. That doesn't mean that the adults have to be great performers, though – just sharing the natural musicality that we all have is enough to set children off on their personal journeys of musical development. The Sounds of Intent levels just describe features on those musical journeys that, research shows, we all seem to share, and that adults can listen out for to help them to understand their children's musical abilities.



It is amazing to think that, by the time they leave the early years, almost all children who have experienced a nurturing musical environment will already be **expert musicians**. With no conscious effort, their young brains will have spent 1000s of hours acquiring the skills to enable them to grasp the structures of music almost as well as adults' brains can. Most of the work in becoming a 'musician' (in the Western sense of an elite performer) is to do with acquiring the technical ability to sing or play at an advanced level. That is likely to take further 1000s of hours — but this time engaged in conscious practice!

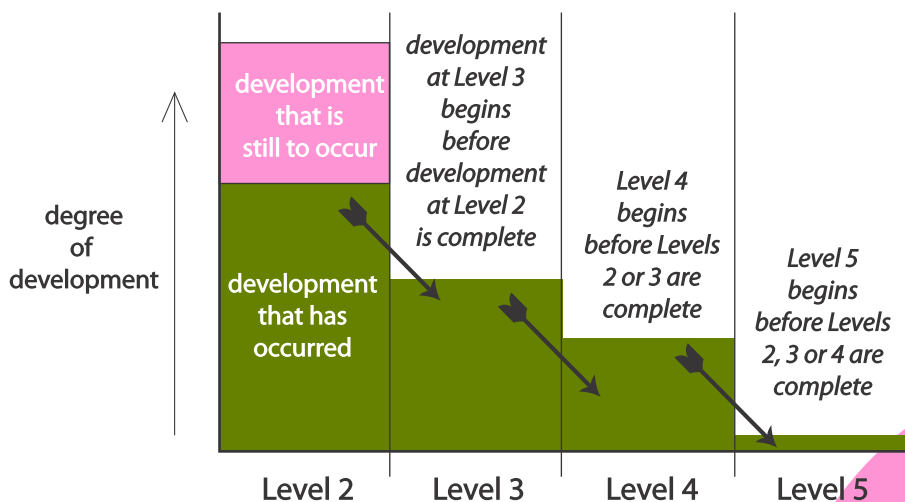
HOW

do the levels of development relate?

The Sounds of Intent levels are *not* like the rungs on a ladder, where you can only go to a higher rung by leaving a lower one behind. Rather, the levels represent musical abilities that build on one another in a process of continuous consolidation.

For example, we continue to function partly at 'Level 2' all our lives, reacting to the variety of sounds that accost us in everyday life ... and so it is too with Levels 3, 4 and 5. Moreover, Level 2 abilities will continue to evolve once Level 3 is under way, and the same with Level 4 and Level 5. For sure, Level 3 abilities could not emerge without *some* functioning at Level 2, and the same is true of later development.

So a child will have a music-developmental *profile* comprising aspects of different levels, although he or she may be engaging with music predominantly at one level or another.



THREE

ways of engaging with music

Children engage with music in three different ways:

- **reactively**, by listening and responding to what they hear
- **proactively**, by making sounds and music themselves; and
- **interactively**, when musical engagement occurs with others.



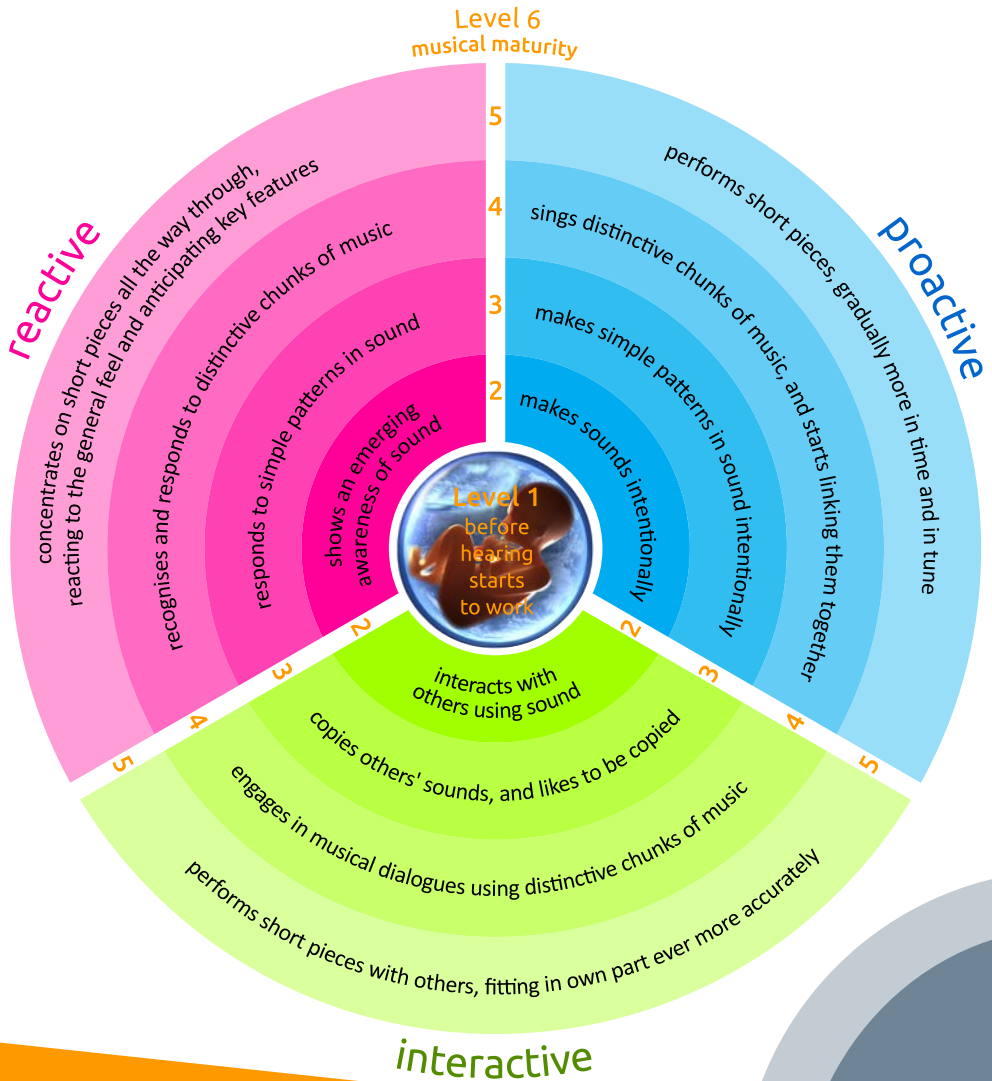
“children may engage with music in all three different ways at once!”

“don't forget that most music to which they respond occurs 'incidentally' in the background”

the Sounds of Intent

Early Years framework

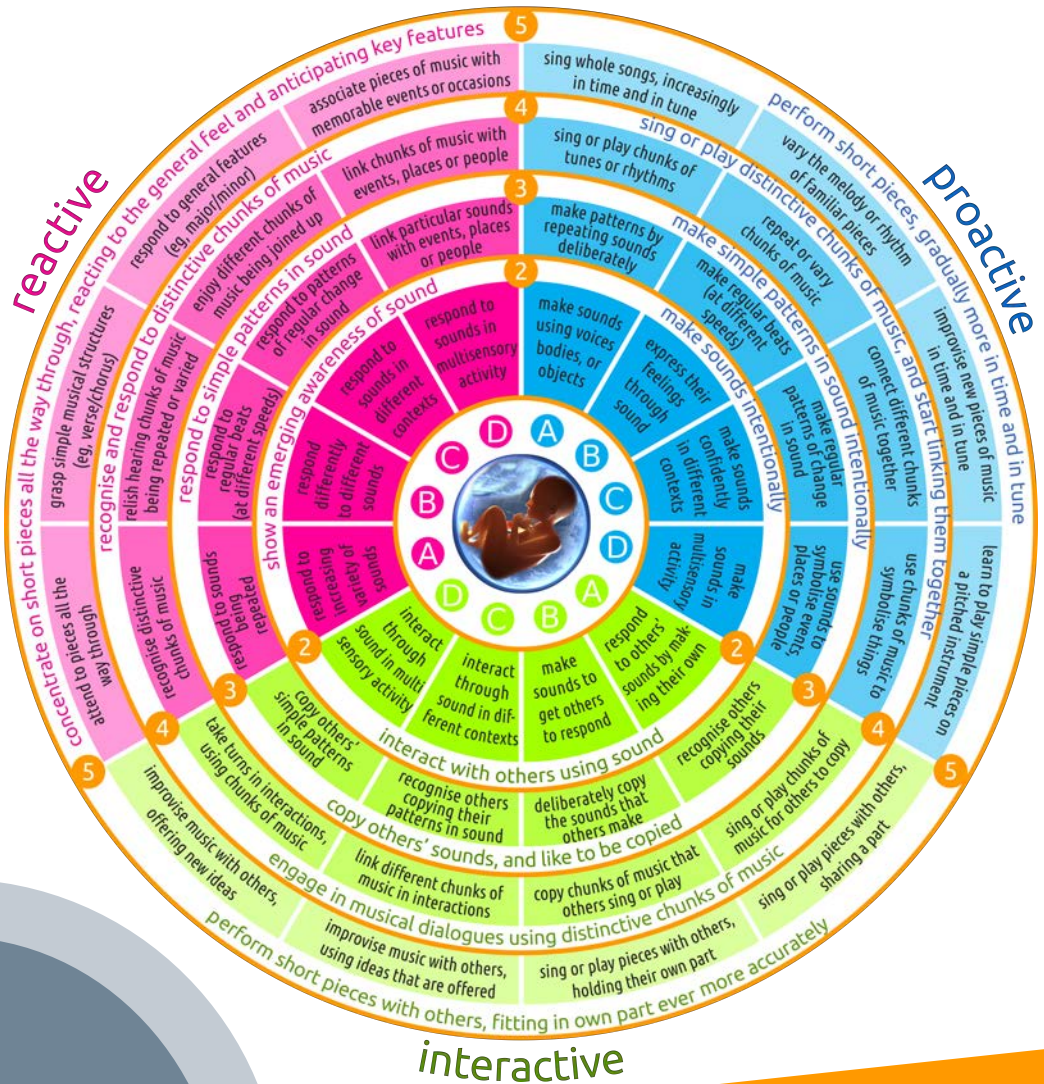
The six levels of musical development apply to each of the three domains of musical engagement, giving 12 'headlines' of musical participation in the early years.



your child's level of musical development

To help you plan activities for your children, the 'headlines' of musical engagement can be broken down into four elements as follows:

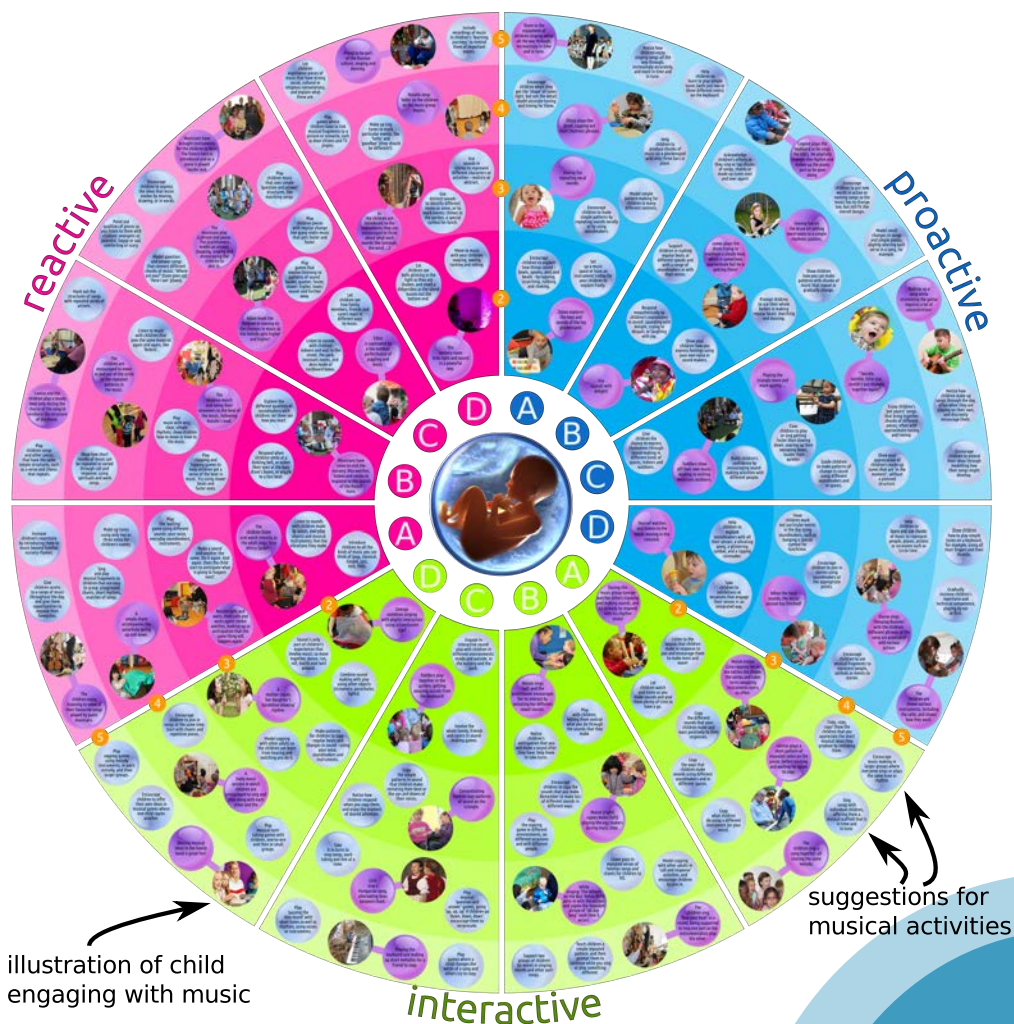
children...



what to do now

and what to do next: using the poster

The Sounds of Intent Early Years poster illustrates how the framework can be used, with examples and illustrations of musical activities for each level of development.



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Sounds of Intent in the Early Years is a joint initiative of the Applied Music Research Centre, the University of Roehampton (Adam Ockelford and Angela Vogiatzoglou); Eastwood Nursery School, Centre for Children and Families (Lavina Boothe); Soundabout (Jacqui Malone); the Amber Trust, and the International Music Education Research Centre (iMerc), at the UCL Institute of Education, University College London (Evangelos Himonides and Graham Welch).



This pack is dedicated to Liz Rook, Director of Eastwood Nursery School, Centre for Children and Families, from 2005 to 2013, whose initial support made the project possible.



The dissemination of Sounds of Intent in the Early Years is being led by Soundabout, the leading UK music education charity to use music and sound to unlock the potential of children, young people and adults with learning disabilities and autism. Contact details: Elizabeth House, Wornal Park, Menmarsh Road, Worminghall, HP18 9PH. tel. +44(0)1844 338898 www.soundabout.org.uk Charity number: 1103002 Company limited by guarantee number: 5023067



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ISBN 978-1-905351-32-9



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