

From the introduction of music to young children to the humanization of hospitals

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I have always been amazed by the drunkenly behaviour of very young children: they stutter, stagger, stumble, howl, pass abruptly from laughter to tears and vice versa, fall asleep suddenly, wake with a start, vomit, and relieve themselves in their clothes or on their bed.

One wonders what it would be like if they drank alcohol too!
Roland Topor, *Pense-bêtes* (Le Cherche Midi, 1992) p. 43.

In 1979 I was part of a small group of musicians who went into the day-nurseries and clinics run by Protection Maternelle et Infantile (PMI), France's family planning and welfare service. At the request of Jacqueline de Chambrun, who was at that time the senior medical officer of Seine-Saint-Denis social services department (DDASS), we embarked on an adventure that involved playing music to the babies and families who came to the clinics.

For us, we were discovering a new environment and an audience composed of babies, parents, and educational and medico-social teams. It was an unfamiliar situation. 'Organizing cultural activities at the points of service supplied by the DDASS is, at first glance, a surprising enterprise!' would write later a manager of a PMI clinic.

At that time I was working with schools and the world of the very young was a million miles away from what I was doing. In Les Musicoliers, the not-for-profit organization for which I was working, the idea of making music in nursery school classes was a very exciting one. But from there to making music with babies, that was a giant leap!

Our group of musicians was open to contemporary music as well as extra-European influences. Of course CDs and the Internet did not exist back then but our curiosity brought us stumbling into the world of musical theatre and we discovered instruments from all over the world.

We were attracted to psychology, psychoanalysis and education. Around us many authors and researchers were producing popular works on intrauterine perception and infant competence. Psychoanalysts were working on the concept of the sound envelope as

propounded by Didier Anzieu.¹ We were eager to learn new things, to experiment. We had the desire and the pretension to be the ones who were going to shake up the established approach to music and childhood.

In 1976 the experimental music collective INA-GRM published in *Cahiers Recherche/Musique* an issue on *pédagogie musicale d'éveil* (introduction to music). Even the fact that the word *éveil* (awakening) was associated with the word 'music' had something incredible about it and opened up hitherto undreamed of prospects. I was also working in the 'disadvantaged' districts of Val Fourré and Nanterre with a population labelled 'in difficulty'. I was introducing music to young children in a music school in Paris. The conservatoires of music began talking about *jardins musicaux* (musical gardens). Suddenly it was possible to enter the world of music without having to learn music theory, without having to suffer three years of studying that awful musical code before touching an instrument. Many other institutions were also undergoing change, such as Le Centre d'Etude et de Recherche pour le Petite Enfance (an organization providing training for professionals working with young children) and L'Institut de Pédagogie Musicale et Chorégraphique, a music and choreography teacher-training institute which prefigured the Cité de la Musique in Paris. These were places where ideas could be exchanged and compared.

Our little group was part of this movement, and Jacqueline de Chambrun picked up on our availability and the curiosity that motivated us. She was brilliant and 'crazy' enough to ask us to do some music workshops in the PMI clinics. 'I want the PMI clinics to be a place where women spend their time', she used to say. One of the few places where mums could go without having to explain themselves to their husbands. In Cité des 4000, a housing estate in La Courneuve where I worked for a long time, the mums were astounded by the sight of this musician sitting on a mat in the middle of the waiting room. But when their babies, just a few months old, started to babble while I was singing or to watch me intensely while I was playing the balafon, the word *éveil* (awakening) took on its full meaning. I was awakening their children to the fun side of music, awakening the mothers to the abilities of their children, and awakening myself to a new world on the outside of traditional education and teaching. At first observers, the mums quickly became actors in the situation by taking up musical instruments or singing nursery rhymes from their childhood.

The framework of the project was defined thus: 'Use the clinics as a gateway into the district, to a population which sometimes has difficulty in accessing culture, and go beyond the medical context to promote the social dimension of the interaction'. France's family planning and welfare service was, in a way, promoting music for infants.

This initiative brought about the creation of the not-for-profit organization Enfance et Musique in 1981. We had endless discussions about what to call the not-for-profit organization. We talked for hours about acronyms and abbreviations that would define it. We finally agreed that the combination of the words *enfance* (childhood) and *musique* (music) simply described what we were doing: bringing two worlds together.

Music is child's play²

Awakening (*éveil*), inter-cultural, inter-generational, intersensory, potential space, transitional object, cultural actions: awash with new terms, the 1980s saw quite a battle when it came to musical education and how to approach music with young children. Martenot, Willems,

¹ ANZIEU, D., *L'Enveloppe sonore du soi* in PONTALIS, J.B., *Narcisses. Nouvelle revue de psychanalyse* No.13 (Gallimard, 1976). See also ANZIEU, D., *Le Moi peau*, (Dunod, 1985) and ANZIEU, D., (editor), *Les Enveloppes psychiques* (Dunod, 1987).

² Title inspired by DELALANDE, F., VIDAL, J., REIBEL, G., *La musique est un jeu d'enfant* (Buschet-Castel, Paris, 1984.)

Orff..., many of the then current music teaching methods were shaken up by advances made in the study of childhood.³

More and more professionals working with young children were being convinced of the usefulness and even the necessity of placing music in such facilities; although the resources and the skills were not always equal to their ambitions. They had to come up with creative arguments if they were to convince their institutional and financial partners. They also had to learn how to deal with this new approach to introducing live music to a very young audience. The 1989 draft agreement formalized and consolidated the numerous initiatives that deal with early childhood.

Five years ago Patrick Ben Soussan asked me to edit an issue of the magazine *Spirale* which was to be about music and early childhood. *Musique autour du berceau* (Music around the crib) brought together a certain number of people who were active in the field. In the editorial I wrote: 'After all, if we are to speak of our activities, we must use the words of psychology, sociology, psychoanalysis; speak of child development, education and parentcraft. We must not forget cognition, perception, hearing... And what about music in all that?

We cannot speak of babies and music without speaking of music in general. The space that music must occupy in facilities for very young children must be equal to the space that it should occupy in our adult lives: is music merely made, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau thought, "to dispel for a few moments one's boredom, if one is rich, and to make misery more bearable when one is poor"? Music is consolation, appeasement but also communion, communication, exchange, listening, pleasure, silence, and many other things.

France's 'cultural exception' has not prevented the commodification of culture and the commercialization of the great boom of interest in all things relating to early childhood. One only has to look at the range of CDs for children; there are some great offerings but also some dire ones. Overall the production of music for children has really improved although some publishers continue to adhere to a conception of children which dates from another century. The musical box may have gone but it has been replaced by music in a box.

And hospitals too

In 1998 we set up the not-for-profit organization *Musique et Santé*. Once again it came about from meeting people such as health executives and doctors,

Should music be present in hospitals? The French philanthropic organization *Fondation de France* dared in the late 1970s to mention the word 'humanization'. Today we speak of 'improving the conditions of hospitalization', it is a less scary way of saying it.

The presence and the work of the musician is part of a movement intended to render the children's hospital more human and open. The movement includes palliative care, outpatient services, admitting parents, informing children and parents through information booklets, rooms for mother and child, family accommodation in or near the hospital, hospital schools, libraries, social workers, psychologists, child psychiatrists...

It is this evolution that has brought musicians into the hospital environment. Of course there was some resistance but today their presence is accepted and recognized.

Working directly with newborn babies in difficulty and young children and their families coming to the hospital is yet another example of promoting culture and creating links. We are establishing relationships, creating links between parents, children, and medical staff; strengthening ties outside the hospital and with the community. We are making room for live music.

³ See BUSTARRET, A., *L'Apport des méthodes actives dans l'éveil musical des jeunes enfants*, in BOUTELOUP, P. (ed.), *Musique autour du berceau* (Erès, 1999) *Spirale* No.13, pp. 29–43.

And although musicians working alongside the nursing teams contribute to the 'better-being' of the patients and their close ones, they do not present themselves as therapists. Instead they present themselves as allies who contribute, using their own particular skills, to improving the quality of life of the persons in hospital who often find themselves in a stressful situation.

In 1999 an agreement between France's Ministry of Culture and Communication and Ministry of Public Health was drawn up to reinforce the cultural actions that had, over several years, been implemented in hospitals. In addition to it being the institutional recognition our work, it has also allowed us to set up multiple-source funding with regional authorities, such as DRAC (culture) and ARH (hospitals), and foundations. It is worth noting that these recommendations were put forward in 1981 as part of the government initiative *Musique et perspectives de soins* (Music and prospects for care). Thus is the tempo of our institutions: *pianissimo* and *ritardando*.

Babies are future consumers and therefore the 'object' of many interests. And yet art education and awareness is an essential democratic issue. Whether our efforts be directed at children and their families or our political leaders and administrators, our role remains that of awakeners and cultural precursors.

The only thing that interests me is what I shall write tomorrow.
Georges Brassens, Foreword to *La Tour des miracles* (Stock, 1968).