

YOU & YOUR CHILD

Music in Early Childhood — It Makes a Difference!

By CAROLYN JOY ZORN

Children love to make sounds. From an infant's first cooing and gurgling, to a toddler tapping on a pot with a spoon, music is evident from a child's earliest creative expressions.

How can you nurture a child's natural music ability? By beginning as early as possible — even before birth. Studies show a fetus can recognize and discriminate sound during the last trimester of pregnancy. Just think of the emotional bond created when you sing a lullaby to your child!

It's helpful to set up opportunities for children to sing and move to music informally, in much the way they learn language during the first five years of life. A natural place to begin to share is "music-play," with songs and nursery rhymes from the child's own culture. Provide children with an assortment of folk and orchestral instruments such as rhythm sticks, bells and drums, to stimulate your child's imagination. Begin to foster multicultural

insights by introducing songs of other cultures.

The success of a child's later musical experiences may depend on the nurturing his musical ability received in his preschool years. Here are a few suggestions for musical parenting:

- Listen to a variety of music styles at home. It's wonderful for young children to hear the differences between classical, jazz, rock and folk music styles. Learn collections of children's songs and share them with your children. Borrow quality collections through the children's sections of libraries throughout Bergen County. Invest in quality children's entertainment products from specialty music resources, such as the *Music for Little People* catalogue, a Parent's Choice award-winning collection of family entertainment products.
- Attend concerts and performances geared to young children, like the Little Orchestra Society Lollipops concert series.
- Attend organized music and move-

ment classes designed for preschool children. Look for programs which offer high-quality, informal classes in a non-competitive environment; an instructor who expresses a real love for songs and rhymes, with a playful manner and the ability to evoke a sense of wonder and fascination in little people as they sing and move.

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