

Hertfordshire's Five Gold Rings

Early-Years Music Classes

Thank you all so much for attending the classes, it has been a pleasure to get to know you and your children, and to share some musical experiences together.

Lots of research has shown the benefits that music - and singing in particular - can have for young children and their parents/carers. It can also be free - and fun!

Here are some ideas for things you can do every day in your own homes.

The musical world!

In these classes, we looked at different ways of exploring music with our children. We helped children recognise musical ideas by associating the **physical world** with the **musical world**. For example, we moved the parachute **quickly** when the music moved **quickly**, and we moved it **slowly** when the music moved **slowly**. We stretched up **high** when the music was **high**, and bent down **low** when the music was **low**. These fun exercises help our children to recognise the musical ideas of **rhythm, speed, pitch** and **mood**. You can do them at home whenever you're listening to music.

Sing Sing Sing!

Don't be afraid of **singing to your child**. People are often self-conscious about their voices or musical ability, but your infant will love the sound of your voice, even if you worry you are out of tune. Your baby will be your biggest fan! It is a great opportunity to engage and communicate.

Peekaboo!

Try using a muslin and **moving it over your baby's body** while singing (an extension of peekaboo games).

Sing and Dance!

If you have an older toddler, encourage them to sing songs with you, or **join in with actions** to familiar nursery rhymes.

Make your own toys!

Musical toys are readily available in shops and online, but you will probably not be surprised to hear that **saucepans and wooden spoons** are equally fun! You can also make shakers using little containers/bottles and dry supplies like rice or pasta.

Be silly!

Musical interaction doesn't have to be 'formal'. As well as singing songs, little **interactive games** of clapping rhythms, making silly noises, whistling etc are all enjoyable and beneficial.

Listen and dance along!

'Live' music is wonderful, and a completely different experience for your child from the recorded music they will be more familiar with. If there are chances to see and hear (and hopefully touch!) instruments, that is fantastic. However, this isn't always possible, and actively **listening to CDs or the radio** with your child (and dancing/moving along) is a good activity.

Further Resources

<http://www.hertsmusicservice.org.uk/singing-resources/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/article/using-musical-instruments-in-creative-play>

<http://www.herts5goldrings.org.uk/index.php>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2011/may/08/singing-children-development-language-skills>

About Madeleine

Madeleine Bradbury Rance is an operatic soprano with a diverse musical background. Having studied 'cello and voice at The Purcell School and Junior Royal Academy of Music, she went on to read English at Cambridge where she received a Double First Class Degree. While at Cambridge, she performed with the choir of Clare College, with whom she made several professional recordings and went on two international tours. Madeleine holds a Distinction in Opera from Birkbeck, University of London, and has performed at a variety of different venues in Europe and America, including the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées Paris and St Thomas Church New York.

Alongside her performing, Madeleine has taught music to students of all ages. Since having her baby Owen in 2010 she has become even more aware of the responsiveness of young children to live music, particularly given his tendency to join in with her singing exercises! Alongside her performing she has a thriving teaching practice and runs music classes for young children and their parents/carers.