

Mommy & Me Music Class *0-5 years old*

This class is the basic, primary music class, one that a child can attend from birth to age five. This basic class follows the recommendations of child development researchers—grouping children of a variety of ages because this fosters natural, family-style learning. Younger children enjoy watching and imitating older ones; older children learn by leading younger ones; and adults are happy because the children in the family can go to class together. Each child participates at his or her own level in singing, moving, chanting, listening, watching, or exploring musical instruments. Any caregivers—parents, grandparents, nanny—can bring the children. The whole family is welcome for this important family music experience.

Curriculum.

The curriculum is taught by a music specialist who prepares and leads a weekly class with an artfully conceived flow of songs, rhythmic chants, fingerplays, movement activities, and instrumental jams. The music is pitched in just the right range for children's voices and includes a mix of original songs and traditional tunes from a variety of genres and styles, including the rock, jazz, blues, folk, and world-music traditions. Because children need a rich music experience to stimulate and support their growing music skills, the songs are not only from diverse styles but also include musical content that covers a variety of meters and tonalities.

The primary goal of this class is to support children's music development so they can achieve tonal and rhythmic competence. Yet the rich, play-based learning environment also fosters children's growth in other domains essential to school and life success. Music learning supports all learning, and the curriculum and program model support:

- Music Learning and Development
- Language Development and Emergent Literacy
- Social and Emotional Development
- Cognition and General Knowledge
- Physical and Motor Development
- Approaches to Learning

Adult Participation

Adult modeling and involvement is integral to young children's development. Because children have a strong drive to imitate the behaviors of the grownups they love, the participation of classroom teachers, parents, and other caregivers in music activity is essential, whether or not the adults consider themselves "musical." The teacher works closely with and mentors the classroom teachers on how to use songs, activities, and materials to continue the children's music development throughout the week, and to support educational goals and enhance daily routines.

What Can I Expect From My Child?

As you participate in class, try the activities at home. What kind of response should you expect? Some children are spontaneous singers and movers, others are careful and astute observers. In either case, after sufficient listening and observing time at home and in class, you may begin to notice your child singing or chanting parts of songs, sometimes with words, sometimes without. However, even when your child gives no response or seems uninterested in listening or participating, important unconscious learning is taking place. Keep in mind the following points:

- Most children choose (wisely) to observe more often than to participate actively in class. They are taking in information, which they will act on later at home.
- Most children become accustomed to the class routine and their classmates around the fifth or sixth week. At this point, their participation is likely to increase.
- Children are assimilating important music information whether or not they are outwardly participating. At home, this means it may be important to play the CD or sing the songs yourself even if your child seems to be unaware or uninterested, especially during the first few weeks of class.

Remember that you are the most important model and teacher for your child. Your most effective role is to participate and enjoy the class yourself, even though your child might choose to sit back and observe. If you are enjoying yourself, your child will soon wish to share that enjoyment with you.

We know it might be difficult to watch other children zealously participate in the group while your child does not. This is especially true if your child performs all of his class favorites as soon as you arrive home. Try to understand that he is very wisely "practicing" in private and will make his public "debut" when he feels more confident. Meanwhile, if you feel suddenly overwhelmed with frustration by the lack of your child's participation in class, just count to three, relax, and participate yourself!

What Can I Expect From Myself?

Some parents are somewhat disconcerted by the concept of being their child's most important role model, especially when it comes to music! You may feel that you are not particularly musical - perhaps you even describe yourself as being "tone deaf". You may be great at singing but feel unsure of yourself or "vague" when dancing or trying to "keep the beat". Whatever the level of your technical skill, remember the most important things you can model for your child are simply pleasure, interest, and the desire to participate in music activities.

Many adults feel deprived, confused, or inadequate about their ability in music, as if they have been denied something that should be effortless and natural. In fact, this is often the case. As your understanding of your child's music development grows in the coming weeks, you may also

come to understand that unfortunate circumstances in your own childhood music experience may be at the root of some of these feelings. More important, by participating with your child, you can begin to rediscover within yourself the natural human musicality that is everyone's birthright.

Why Aren't There Separate Classes For Different Age Groups?

In each class the teacher will strive to create a musically rich, developmentally appropriate environment where the whole family can enjoy music and nurture skills at the level right for each child. Mixed-age classes also provide a rich learning environment because children of different ages thrive when they interact with each other: the babies are often fascinated by the older child, and the "big" children (3- and 4-year-olds) enjoy helping and sharing with the "little" ones. This approach is based on research from music education, early childhood development, and family relationships.

Children 5 through 7 are ready for more independence and new challenges and are both more social and more comfortable with a structured classroom setting. Individual lessons are currently offered for this age group in piano and voice. Classes will be offered for this age group in the near future.