



Make Your Mark: Notes on Music Education

Series 2 Episode 2: A Common Approach for the EYFS

[Intro music]

Yusef Sacoor: Hello, it's Episode 3 of Series 2 of Make Your Mark: Notes on Music Education. And this month we're looking at Early Years education, that is up to age 5 from birth. What's the reason for music education at this age, how does it work, what's the best way of doing it? We're going to find out. So let's hear our guests introduce themselves.

Lucy Davies: Hello, so let's get with Nicola.

Nicola Burke: I'm really happy to be here with everybody this morning. I'm a performance coach and support leaders, musicians and educators to develop their leadership skills. I've been working in early childhood for a shocking 26 years in many roles as an educator, musician, leader, researcher, evaluator, mentor, trainer, so a different range of hats. I'm the author of 'Musical Development Matters in the Early Years', which a lot of people know me for. That's a free PDF you can download just to get a bit of a plug for that. And I'm also very proud to be the co-founding director of the Family Music Hub, which is a not-for-profit organisation offering support and training for anyone that includes music in their work with families and young children in their Early Years.

Polly Ives: I'm Polly Ives I have been working as a freelance musician and educator with all of the hats that that includes for around 25 years as well. So I've worked with lots of orchestras around the UK, different organisations, Associated Board of Royal Schools of Music, Sing Up, Action Zones, working with Music Hubs and youth orchestras. And I was one of the workshop leaders for Wigmore Hall's Chamber Tots project and was reflecting earlier that one of my first roles was leading an Early Years project, the first Early Years grant by Youth Music in around 2004. We still carry on, worked with the Youth Music funded projects ever since, so it's lovely to see that progression along the years.

So all of that freelance work has given me a real kind of broad understanding of the earlier scene around the UK and really helped me just devise my own approach for Early Years. I'm also the founder and creative director of Concertinis, a South Yorkshire based charity. Our vision is for all children aged 0 to 7 and their adults to experience high quality live music for wellbeing, wonder, early childhood development and musical learning. So really giving access to all Early Years children to high quality live music.

Amy Campbell: I'm Amy Campbell. I'm very excited to be here this morning. I qualified as an Early Years teacher about 14 years ago and the last three or four years I've spent working towards Early Years music and developing it more across Lancashire where I work. So I'm very excited to get lots of ideas from Nicola and Polly because I'm still quite early on in this journey. I did my CME certificate in music education last year which has really helped me to develop my Early Years music. I've also got my CODI, Early Years Music Certificate. ~ I mainly work for Lancashire Music Service and we're just starting out Early Years projects in the area. We've also got what's called a mobile music vehicle that we take around to different schools and nurseries just to get the children to experience traditional instruments and more modern instruments as well, which is very, very exciting. As it's all in its infancy, it's, yeah, I'm hoping to carry on this journey and spread it throughout the area.

Yuseff Sacoor: You were getting lots and lots of approval and happiness there from Nicola and Polly there, Amy. Yeah, amazing. And an amazing breadth of knowledge there as well. So when we were drafting the questions, I slightly sort of rashly said, what's the point? What's the point of Early Years music education? And I think rather than just being glib, what I mean is what makes this distinct from the work that someone might do at different years at primary, secondary into adulthood. What makes Early Years music special? And Nicola, I'd to come to you first.

Nicola Burke: Yeah, thank you. I think when I read the question before, my immediate response was, it's as important as breathing. So it's like a weird question, but I understand the question. So thank you.

So why is it important? It's a child's right to have broad and balanced experiences in early childhood and beyond throughout education. It's distinct because of the rapid development that goes on from pre-birth to five. And you just think about what happens in terms of child development in that short time. It's quite astonishing and takes a real level of depth of understanding for somebody to be able to navigate that sure parents listening will obviously understand that. But then from a musical perspective, yeah, it's a very bespoke area because children are developing so rapidly. And if we just think about the age of two to three, I mean, that is massive that year, like I say, from pre-birth to five is huge. But that particular year, if you're working with a two-year-old who's two years and one day compared to a child that's almost three, it's just immensely different.

So having kind of a plan for two-year-olds is a funny notion in itself because they're so different. Yeah, so it's important as a right, and I'm continually fascinated by the discourse around the 'music for'. So, know, music for will include music in our provision because it's good for maths, it's good for phonics, it's good for everything, except music, weirdly. The end of that sentence rarely is music and for me it's just part of being human and so to not have music in your life, is just an element of humanity that's that's missing and yeah needs to be included in every aspect of child development. And it is quite naturally, you when we walk we have rhythm, when we breathe we have rhythm, when we speak we have pitch, we have timbre and it's part of being human and it's helping people for me in my career, helping people understand that and then offer opportunities to nurture unique and individual children and to really see their natural musicality that's there. But I could go on and don't want to take up all the airspace because I've been talking about this year for about 24 years probably. Yeah, so I'll let somebody else jump in.

Yusef Sacoor: That's why you're here and we definitely have a question later on about sort of education and music for music's sake versus the framing of Early Years as sort of helpful to other subjects. But before that, does that sort of resonate with you Polly? What is the point for you of Early Years music?

Polly Ives: It's absolutely a way of life. It isn't a subject. It is what makes us human. It gives us fulfilled and connected lives. And particularly a lot of our work focuses on how children interact within their communities. So it's not just the child, it's the relational development, the relationship a child builds with its parents or caregivers, Early Years staff, family hub workers, and how being connected with other people through music absolutely is vital in those Early Years. That does include communication. It includes play, it physical movement, copying each other, playing alongside each other.

We also know that having that early feeling of music is something that I do, it is who I am, is vital in children and adults as a new family. Having that shared identity as a family, music is something we do. And if we can crack that in the Early Years, I think we've laid that foundation, that framework for children when they perhaps have the opportunity to learn an instrument aged 7 or 8 through a Music Hub. But if you haven't got that actual belief in, I am a musical being, I want music, I love music, we can make it a lot easier if we crack the Early Years music scene for our colleagues working in primary and secondary. And also recently, a big focus around Daisy Fancourt's book, Art Cure and how the arts can transform your health and help you live longer. I've had so many people in the last week talk about this because she's won, well shortlisted for the 2026 Women's Prize for non-fiction. But to have these discussions about how vital and incredibly powerful music is for your health, your wellbeing, your learning, your development and your being.

Amy Campbell: It's about belief in music. I love that idea because when I teach older children, if they've not had that musical experience in Early Years, they are a lot more apprehensive with the music and, I can't do that. I can't sing. I can't play an instrument, because they've not had that belief. Instilled is probably the wrong word, but they've not had that belief put in, yeah, instilled in them in an Early Years setting. So they don't think that they can do it. So I think that's really, really important to instill.

And there was something else that Polly said about speech, I think. So my son is five and he struggles with his speech like quite a lot, there's so many sounds that can't say, but he can sing anything. And it's it's remarkable to see that he's not, he's not apprehensive, he'll sing in front of anybody, but you ask him to speak and because he can't very well, he struggles with that. So I think that's a really important thing as well. But I'll you go back to Polly about the book. I really want to read it. It sounds amazing.

Yusef Sacoor: No, thank you. Yeah, I think that's what I'd like to tap into more, suppose, with with Nicola and Polly is is music does seem to be special, particularly at this age. And I don't know if I was to turn around from maybe one of the other art subjects and say why what what what would what would you guys say? Or maybe you wouldn't maybe you'd put them in the same group.

Nicola Burke: Yeah, I have discussed this and when I wrote Musical Development Matters, when I was writing it, there were, I have some fantastic colleagues, I'm sure as we all do, working across art forms in early childhood and I've had the privilege of working quite closely with visual artists, ceramicists and photographers and yeah, just some amazing people.

So when I was writing Musical Development Matters, there was a conversation around, well, how come there's this being written, but there isn't the same for other areas? Why isn't there other specific areas of arts being pulled out. I couldn't really answer that because my area of expertise is music, so that's for me it was a calling to write that. I'm very biased I guess. I studied drama so I do have an insight into drama but I do think and feel that music has a special place in humanity that is very different to the other art forms. I would never say like it's more important because I think that kind of conversation and putting subjects in any kind of hierarchy is not helpful for any human beings. But for me, yeah, I mean, I often talk about like football matches, you know, and how singing at football matches unites people. When you go to a concert, you can have, you know, thousands of people all singing the same thing at the same time. There's a really great phrase for that - Collective effervescence - that's what that is. So that kind of groupness, sense of belonging and often when you get goose pimples, I think music has a special place in enabling that. I'd really appreciate other conversations with other

artists again in more depth about how else can that happen because I'm sure it can. But I've just experienced it on so many levels, specifically with music.

And the areas of development that it's within as part of humanity, as Polly said, communication, sound is music, communication can be sound. And that's very special. I think.

Polly Ives: I'd love that conversation to happen because I'm not sure that is really discussed of whether how that is different. What I think I believe and that I've been inspired by Nicola's development, music development matters is that music can support all areas of creativity. It is a creative practice, so perhaps by having a more collective cohesive approach to the arts and creativity is perhaps what's needed at the moment.

We're working at the moment with Sheffield Hallam University's Early Years Community Research Centre, and I was in doing some observations this week and looking at their continuous provision of what's happening, what they're doing all the time and how we can notice and then extend the musical interactions that are already happening and how we can value those and extend those so that when a child is tapping on a table with a car that we can notice that and think that is a musical rhythm. How can we develop that? Can we sing a song just in time with the tapping of the car? Can we add some musical vocalisation, some musical doodling when you've got a little child drawing at the same time as she's doing it sing 'woo woo'. If you look at the interrelated dimensions of music that we talk about in the National Curriculum in key Stage 1, we're absolutely doing this already with using our voices, using play equipment, using pens and paper. That music isn't a separate subject, it's just part of creative play, creative practice, communication. For those children who don't have a lot of language and speech, that humming vocal sounds and phonics sounds, we're working with a beatboxer at the moment and we're working with children who don't have many words at all, absolutely can get a microphone, hum, make sounds, create silly noises and put them into musical patterns and explore pitch dynamics. And they are being musical.

Amy Campbell: Yeah, I think the exploration is the key, allowing that and noticing it and like Polly says, of them developing on that. There was a child I've taught recently who's slightly older, who's about eight, but not a very limited speech. And he had some different instruments that he's moving up and down a guitar and he singing the Hickory Dickory Dock or he's moving all the different instruments and making that ooo sound as they're coming up and down. So I gave another instrument, was like, tick tock, and he's like, ooo tick tock, and he sort of picked up on that bit and moved on. So it's just about noticing and how he can help sort of move them on a little bit.

Yusef Sacoor: And I suppose on that is it would be interesting to hear about outcomes. And going back to that question of why in the either in the research or anecdotal stuff about the work that you've done with young people, how impactful is doing music with people of this age? Yeah, what what evidence do you have for it, I suppose? So so Polly, can I can I get you to jump in on

Polly Ives: I feel quite lucky in that we work in partnership a lot with nurseries and schools and family hubs who have their own frameworks and their pedagogical approaches for within their nursery. So we can work very closely alongside those colleagues who know their children best, who are skilled, experienced Early Years practitioners. So by bringing up our us bringing our musicians and our workshop leaders to support that and to help train and understand what's happening is hugely valuable for both sides as well. So that partnership working is absolutely key.

We are gradually exploring our engagement frameworks, signals frameworks, which just helps us verbalise what we're noticing, what's happening. And we have to do that to support more colleagues to understand what is happening, what is musical engagement and how we can measure that and demonstrate the impact. I do think it's really important to look at a really broad framework for participation and engagement.

So a lot of active learning that I, you know, noticing eye contact, physical movement, it's not just speech and language interactions in particular, you know, knowing that the children can sing numbers in counting songs is fantastic, but let's keep it as broad and holistic as possible. I do use Musical Development Matters with our musicians a lot to just keep on remembering what is happening, how can we continue to get more and more engagement from those children and notice and value that.

Nicola Burke: Without sounding, well, maybe I will sound pedantic and that's okay. I'm fine if people think that. I'm always curious about the word impact and we see it loads in funding applications, see it loads in programmes, we think what does it mean? And at the Family Music Hub we spend, and my wonderful colleagues Katie and Rosie, spend a lot of time talking about words and language and digging deep into actually what are we doing, why, what are we saying and why. Yes, I'm always curious about that word, so I'm not quite sure what we mean. Yeah, so that's just a share that as a provocation and then just really listening to what you're saying Polly about engagement and again it's the words. It's a word that I've talked about quite a lot over the years and participation and how people often confuse the two, not obviously deliberately and not with intention, But in particularly with observations of young children. Children are often observed and if they're participating, people assume that they're engaged and also people assume, yeah, all sorts about what children are or are not doing. And we assume a lot as humans, you it's quite a natural thing to do. And picking up on partnership, as Polly said, it's just the best way to work.

So for me, on picking those words, engagement and participation have been really valuable. And the conversations I've had have been so interesting to actually understand if that child I'm observing is engaged or not, because typically, similar to what Polly was saying, I'll work in a setting or with a group of educators. They will know the children much more than I do. So I might think, yeah, they're really engaged because I can see they're singing that song. But actually, the educator might look and go, no, that's not their engagement to us. And having that conversation is what actually helps us learn more about children and development and engagement and participation.

Going back to the word impact, think as soon as there's a framework, or a project or a specified outcome with an intended outcome, then that's what that project becomes about. So if the outcome or the impact being researched is, for example, speech and language, because that often is the case, there is quite an abundance, or have been quite an abundance of music and speech and language programmes, when the impact being explored and measured is speech and language, then that's what that programme becomes about and almost immediately music becomes secondary. I'm not saying that's wrong, I'm curious about it and how that's happened over the course of probably 30 years I guess maybe-ish, that that discourse has come about.

Polly Ives: It does slightly feel like it is quite a new ~ field that a lot of people have different frameworks, different pedagogies, different approaches, and that there are a lot of very passionate individuals who are fighting for this cause. I think that's mainly because of a lack of investment, a lack of understanding, a lack of career progressions into Early Years music and that I'm really hoping that the increased focus on this area is really going to transform this area. That we can have more of a collective approach and that it's not a handful of freelancers who know their stuff trying to prove the case and that a collective approach and genuine understanding that Music Hubs now that they're including Early Years within their remit, that we can properly have some detailed strategic conversations about what this really means and to get people who are really expert in working on this area all of their lives to work together to understand the language that we need to use, understand the investment that it will need to convince people fully of this important work.

Amy Campbell: Engagement is really important and in partnership as well because if you're in observing music for half an hour a week, then the child might engage in their own play when you're not observing them. So having that partnership and having the Early Years practitioners saying they were sat in the home corner singing that song or they were tapping the car or something, they were doing something. And the fact that they've retained that and then use that in their own play, I think is really important as well. that sort of engagement and partnership is really, really vital at this early age.

Nicola Burke: It's so important, real quality practice across the board, not necessarily just music, but quality practice in early childhood is ongoing observation and as you've said Amy, the kind of model that we have typically in our country is that musicians drop in, a bit like parachuting in and they drop in and they do their half an hour session and then they're off again to go somewhere else or to the next room or know wherever they need to go and just quite rightly as you've said Amy, a lot won't happen in that half an hour in terms of what's visible to us as educators. A lot will be happening in terms of what the children are experiencing, observing, absorbing. But it's just so common that you're here, know, children weren't, were not engaged in inverted commas. And they probably were, it's just that, what does engagement look like? You know, some of the most engaged children have been the stillest and, you know, with a real strong gaze. And some people just wouldn't notice that that's engagement and then you go back the following week as a musician and you hear that the child that wasn't singing in that half an hour session has been singing all week. So yeah, that partnership is essential to actually understand engagement and digging into that and really understanding children.

Polly Ives: That's lovely and it reminds me of a project we do, a project with babies in family hubs and occasionally we get someone come up to us at the end and say, I'm really sorry, my baby's been asleep the whole time. And I'm, you know, we have to encourage parents to say, that's brilliant, that's lovely. It's special, it's relaxing, it's calming, it's allows the adult a time for a bit of peace for them to enjoy their own cultural experience themselves. A lot of people we know talk, adults talk about, oh I used to play an instrument or I used to go to gigs, I used to go to the pub for live music nights, I used to enjoy clubbing. I, you know, a lot of our work is trying to give the adult as much a listening experience themselves to re-energize, to invigorate, to inspire, to help them feel like music is for them. And then for babies, you we know that babies, absorb, you can absorb music in your sleep. It can support your sleep patterns. There's research about your deep sleep and for babies to have live calm music whilst sleeping supports their growth. So again, someone might say, that baby wasn't engaged during that concert. Yeah, they are. They are. It's all part of the experience.

Yusef Sacoor: Yeah, no, 100%. And I think that sort of leads on nicely to our next question. Talked about a lot of the sort of 'by music's nature' impact on young people and exposing Early Years, well, children and babies to music. I was wondering, circling back to ideas of progression and this being a new subject and where we're going with it. At Early Years, are we also creating young musicians, is there also a space for this or is the focus on more holistic approaches on, you know, cognitive development, all of that kind of stuff? Or is there also a space for thinking there's the next guitarist here or is this far too young an age?

Nicola Burke: I think what's helpful for, what has been helpful for me in conversations around this kind of thinking is thinking about other subjects, like maths, and why do we include maths in early childhood and it's not necessarily for most of the people that I've spoken with, it's not to create future mathematicians, it's to give them a great foundation in that area of learning and development. And for me that's what music is as well, and it could lead to the yeah the next great guitarist, amazing vocalist, brilliant beatboxer and you know anything. But I think again it's I suppose if we're thinking this will do this, put this in here. It's like a formula and humans don't work like formulas. And we've got AI for that now. So, yeah, so I think it's just about offering a broad and balanced experience like we hopefully do with all other areas of learning and development. And it's just that music typically hasn't been a priority. And as Polly said, it's great that conversations are further emerging about how important it is and about children's rights as well and the value of music in humanity. So it has to be included in early childhood.

But for me, it's never about we're doing this because it will achieve X, Y, Z. It's about, this is just right. It's right. It's quite simple to me. And over the years, I have been asked, why bother with music in Early Years? And it's just, well, why wouldn't you? That question doesn't make sense. Why wouldn't you? That's the same as the same or why bother reading with children? You would never say that. Of you wouldn't say that and we shouldn't say that and in my view, the same value should be given to music, and I don't use the word should very often. But music definitely should be included in early childhood and beyond and like Polly said including parents, caregivers, all the people that influence young children, helping those people have great musical experiences is key to actually enabling those experiences for young children.

A lot of my work now is supporting educators and musicians to overcome their fears. So many people are fearful of making music and so many musicians that I've worked with are, to be quite honest, quite fearful of young children because the Early Years is not straightforward. It's, you know, children don't do exactly X, Y, Z at a certain time. It is messy in the most brilliant, exciting way. But messy and exciting doesn't always float everybody's boat because, you know, musicians like to know this is my plan and this is what I'm going to go and do. And that's great. But if you want to get involved in playing with young children, you've got to embrace the chaos. And the chaos is beautiful and playful and brilliant, but also can be quite scary for some people.

So yeah, so think going back to the kind of original question, yeah, it's a child's right and it doesn't have to have specified future outcomes because we will grow and develop and continue throughout our lives and it's just crucial that music is part of that journey.

Amy Campbell: I think the early exposure to lots of different things helps children get over any inhibitions they might have, especially in later years. So if they've been introduced to lots of different types of instruments and musical styles and all sorts, then they won't be as inhibited to join in with things when they're a bit older. That's something that I've sort of found and you're just exposure to every as much as you can at such an early age.

Nicola Burke: Most of my work nowadays is with adults and typically educators and leaders. And so often I hear experiences from these adults that they had in their, either early childhood or within the kind of primary years phase, where they were told they were not musical or they should mime in the choir or they didn't play the triangle at the right time. And then that shuts down their musicality. And then there's quite a lot of work to do to help them overcome all the barriers that they have, and often it's because of sometimes one sentence that one adult said to them when they were 6 or 7 for example. And I come across that so often, yeah, and it really shuts people down in terms of their musical selves, and we've all got our musical selves it's just that a lot of people have lost them because of the messages that they've been given you know as they were growing and developing so yeah it's just so brilliant to hear that Amy you just keep celebrating that work and developing it further so that everybody's comfortable being in their musical skin.

Polly Ives: I do think it does start to create future musicians, but it also creates future happy and secure people as well. This is what we've said already, but just remembering people being feeling confident and secure and have joy in their life.

At the moment we're hearing that lot of children and then adults are on technology so much more nowadays. The new rules around, well, guidance around iPad usage with 0-5s. And adults, the more time that we're on the computer, that music gives that real life, physical, connected experience and opportunity for people to connect with other people. We, on Saturday I did a concert, a musical stories concert and we worked with an amateur, semi-pro orchestra and afterwards the double bass player came up to me at the end and said, oh, you might not recognise me, I'm Paddy and I've just taken up the double bass again. And he was now 28, and he was in one of my groups when he was four. And he's now an engineer, but in his spare time he plays the double bass and to me that is so important. He is a future musician. He might not be a professional musician but it's quite possibly led to him being a successful engineer and have a career.

We know a lot of people, a lot of questionnaires we have nowadays that we're very aware that highly skilled, highly paid jobs nowadays. A lot of people working in science, in maths as a doctor, a lot of those people had early musical experiences and a lot of that is that more affluent areas families do access high quality, might have experienced music experiences when they're very young. So what we really need to look at is how we

can reach all areas so that music is part of people's progression in life so it's not just an activity for only some groups of people.

Yusef Sacoor: Definitely, and inclusion comes up on every podcast I think we do. There is such an intersection and reality that music doesn't reach as many people as it should do. And that starts from a very early age. So thanks again for sharing. Now we're gonna go for a break.

Lucy Davies: We've talked about sort of how we measure impacts in Early Years music. And we're gonna kind of circle back to that a little bit. So how do you really ground these, the positive impacts of Early Years music for children? Are there any particular techniques that you use or that you see to be most impactful?

Nicola Burke: Know the children. It sounds quite simple, but it's not easy. So actually, I find the word instill quite funny, instill, but I suppose you want to nurture and instill a great, you know. Yeah, a great experience of music into children. Yeah, it sounds a bit weird to me, but I think knowing the children, which isn't typical in terms of Early Years music practice because typically, as I said earlier musicians drop into a session and they'll deliver and the word is deliver which I also have issues with because really we want to be enhancing not delivering. Yeah I think it's knowing the children if you know the children then you can respond to those unique children their identities their preferences their dislikes and then hopefully that will lead to a positive experience leading to a positive impact in inverted commas. Yeah, so that's my, if there was any technique it would be that approach rather than a technique I suppose, it's yeah knowing the children because and again in other areas of learning development. If we were running a math session you'd know what what you would hopefully know where the children were at in terms of their mathematical development. Otherwise, you could teach them stuff that's absolutely pointless, potentially. And we don't want that with music either. We want to be stretching children in terms of their musicality, their skills. And you can't do that if you don't know what their starting point is. So yeah, knowing the children is my answer and a quick answer.

And then I think what's been helpful for me and other people that I've worked with is a question to reflect upon when you have had interactions and sessions with children and families. We often say, for example, in evaluation questions, you'd be evaluating, not always reflecting, but evaluating a session. And you do generally have to do that, particularly with funded projects. And the question often is, what went well? Or, yeah, how did that go? What went well? And people often say, yeah, that went well - For who? - are two great words to put at the end of that sentence. Because often it works well for the facilitator of that session. So, work well could mean that all the children were tapping a beat, copying a rhythm, singing, whatever. Does that mean that was a good experience for them? Hard to know. And you will only know that if you know the children.

And usually, again, coming back to something we talked about earlier, that comes with partnership work and working closely with people who do know their children.

Yeah, that's my starter, I suppose, in terms of the broad question, Lucy. Yeah, but I Polly and Amy will have lots to say as well. Yeah, think techniques, I think it's approached me in terms of, yeah, knowing those children.

Polly Ives: Yeah, so with Concertinis we do look at multiple ways of reaching different kinds of children. So it is about knowing the children you want to reach and also who their musical play partners are. So how do we support in a nursery, the nursery staff perhaps, or the Early Years practitioners there? And that is very much about understanding and enabling musical environments, so looking at their continuous provision and how can we empower the people that work regularly within those environments to be confident music makers alongside their children. When we work in family hubs, it's very much the family hub staff and their colleagues, their intervention workers, but definitely the parents and carers and grandparents playing alongside them to make them feel like they are having a positive impact with their children.

Lucy Davies: Amy, to come over to you. Obviously, we've talked very much about sort of putting the child at the centre of everything, which is key. But in terms of kind of supporting, I guess, practitioners with who may not necessarily be confident in delivering, to use that word, sorry Nicola, in delivering those experiences. Obviously you've recently been involved with the launch of the Early Years section of Music Marks, a common approach resources. I just wondered if you could give us a bit more insight around what that's involved, the format of those.

Amy Campbell: Yeah, I think because 'A Common Approach' is used for a lot of my colleagues who teach instrumental lessons are used to using the Common Approach of structure rather than a framework. A group of Early Years people decided to sort of try and get together and put it together so that can be passed on to instrumental teachers who might be asked to go into Early Years settings. I think can't remember if was Nicola or Polly, somebody said earlier about them being scared of the Early Years because they're not used to that environment and they are used to having this is the outcome and this very structured sessions where as in Early Years that it's not structured in the same way. It's more observing and engaging in a musical play, which colleagues are used to doing in a certain way for instrumental lessons are absolutely not used to. It's complete, you know, ~ off the deep end sort of thing for them. So it's a structure that they're used to using in a sense of the layout and the Common Approach, the way it's laid out, but trying to fit that around Early Years music.

It's been, it was a really, really interesting experience actually being involved in it because a lot of things people said it was square peg and a round hole. It just, doesn't fit, but it's how we could try and make it fit to make it easier for the practitioners, for the,

the music teachers going into the nurseries and Early Years settings, but also trying to keep that Early Years environment, I guess, if I want to have a better word.

So it was very, very difficult to do. I think the outcome is the best we can to put in both worlds together. I think a lot of it would be, having that conversation with them as well on top of the Common Approach document to say, is how it's best again, that's not quite the right word, but how it fits for this certain place.

It's very difficult to put sort of put an umbrella over the whole thing, which is what we've tried to do with this. But obviously it's very, very dependent on different settings. Polly mentioned earlier about different economic sort of places as well. Obviously what works in one place, what work in another setting down the road, depending on who goes there. But ~ it's a really good starting point for those who've never been involved in Early Years music before. I think there's lots of discussions and sort of shadowing of other people as well that needs to go alongside it to help them.

Polly Ives: Constantine's planning a program at the moment that we're trying to get funding to look at a regional approach for South Yorkshire. And that will include working with South Yorkshire Music Hub and their instrumental teachers, their orchestra coaches, anyone who works with them as freelancers or employed musicians, because we know that a lot of musicians have quite a portfolio career of teaching and performing and that a lot of those people who working for Music Hubs might well be very keen to work in Early Years, but at the moment there aren't really the natural career progressions into working with that age. There aren't many courses that support that. I'm delighted to see CREC running very well.

And I can big up Nicola's work here because we want to look at working with the family music hub because we really need this approach to support people who are really keen to learn some new skills, learn some new songs, feel connected and supported with a virtual cuppa session or a spotlight session of having a chat with more people who work within Early Years. So even just the career path for people getting into that field, it isn't clear at the moment. the more these conversations happen, and more that we can share these skills and encourage Music Hubs and colleges to include music more with their students who are training to be teachers or Early Years practitioners. There's been about two hours in a whole PGCE course or so which is nowhere near enough. No wonder people aren't confident. So we need to see much more of that happening.

Amy Campbell: With the Family Music Hub and we've got note weavers up here in the North West as well. So having those sort of pockets of people sort of speaking to each other, working together, which we are doing, but having that spread more throughout, especially throughout Lancashire, would be amazing. Amazing for Early Years music here.

Nicola Burke: Amy, you use the phrase like bringing worlds together and I really see that need. So Early Years or early childhood to music. Incidentally, it's only us in the UK that uses the term Early Years for people listening. Early childhood is really the phrase that's more inclusive and makes more sense globally. Anyway.

But in terms of early childhood music, where does it sit?

So it doesn't really, as Polly said, in terms of early childhood education training, whatever training that may be, you barely get any input. You're lucky if you get potentially, like you said, probably two hours as an Early Years educator. So music doesn't really show up. And then as a musician, again, as Polly said, there's not clear pathways that help musicians develop the knowledge and skills and their pedagogy to enable them to work well in early childhood. And again, as Polly said, which is the Centre for Research in Early Childhood that people can check out. They offer a Masters which focuses on music and also the CME, the Amy you went through didn't you? So brilliant that CREC are kind of leading the way with that. yeah, Early Years music doesn't really sit anywhere, which is, and it's great again, that we're having these conversations to help people understand the importance of it and the value and again about children's rights. But yeah, it's interesting that we do have these two worlds and the needs of those two worlds are very different. And again, with musicians, if you don't have that underpinning of early childhood, it's really hard to go and embrace the chaos, as I said earlier, because you don't have the skills and knowledge to enable you to be comfortable with that. And as we know, it's hard being uncomfortable and you can embrace being uncomfortable, but if you can get support and develop your knowledge and skills, again, like Polly said about the potential project in South Yorkshire. It's going to be brilliant because we need to support musicians to develop their talk kits and know musicians nowadays do have generally portfolio careers and community music making and education typically will be a part of that so the more that we can support that workforce the better and again early childhood educators if we can support them to develop their knowledge of music and overcome their fears.

For me most of the work is there with fear and overcoming that barrier, then we can try and help these two worlds that sometimes come together. And when they do come together, that's when like the explosive learning and richness comes through. I'm so privileged to have worked with so many early childhood educators over my career. That's how I've learned so much from conversations with amazing people and people who are willing to have difficult conversations and take risks in their practice. But that's how we support young children to have great experiences. Go for it, Amy.

Amy Campbell: Nicola, do you think that fear of the Early Years practitioners has come from the fact that they've not had that experience when they were a child?

Nicola Burke: I think there's a whole myriad of reasons that contribute to it. I think the word talent plays a role in that fear. I think culture and programmes like the X Factor and people being ridiculed also contributes to that fear. Experiences, like you say, or lack of, in childhood and adolescence potentially. Yeah, I think there's a whole range of reasons. And the concept of what do we mean by musical? And that's often where I start with, particularly early childhood educators, what do we mean by musical? What does that actually mean? Because there's two phrases that I've heard the most in my career working mainly with early childhood educators and that is I'm not musical and I can't sing.

So the first thing is to unpack what do you mean by musical? And actually sometimes taking away the word music and musical can be the biggest kind of help in terms of removing that barrier. Because if you use the word sound, it's less scary. And essentially what we're doing is playing with sound. That's what we're doing, making sound, listening to sound, playing with sound. And yeah, so that. I think the musical word plays a big part in that amongst other things. Thanks, Amy. It's such an interesting question. Yeah, Polly, have you got any more thoughts on that? Why is there so much fear around making music in the, suppose, typically in the early childhood workforce?

Polly Ives: I definitely think there is this perception of music, as you say, that people feel like you need talent, you need skill, the element of musical genius is kind of banded around, know. But like we were saying earlier, people sing at football matches, they sing along in the shower, radio, in the car, you know, love going to gigs, and that is musical. That is being a musician.

I think we need to work really hard to break down those barriers like we've talked about for years, that really means that the quality of interaction that we have is vital and the language we use. The musicians that we work with, you know, we have to have a much more diverse workforce. We need to talk about music. Sometimes I think people think that when arts organisations talk about music, we're implying classical music. Well, we're not at all. You know, we work with all kinds of music, right, you really varied and with musicians who genuinely care and want to advocate for their musical styles and that those are all important in people's lives.

I'm also just very aware that policymakers and heads of services, heads of councils still need to understand this value, this importance and talk about it in a really positive way because actually we're often we're putting people off, we're actually exaggerating the problems that we're fighting all the time. I keep fighting for concert promoters that I work with performing at festivals that often they don't include the children's concerts in their main marketing. And that's bonkers. They're reaching new audiences, it's diverse, it's

new commissions, it's quality performers. We work with top musicians who perform on international stages, but because it's a children's concert or an Early Years concert, it's not included in the headline, the promo. So we've got to change that, we've got to keep changing the importance of little people, young children are audiences. They're not the audiences of the future, they are the audiences of now and that will make them the audiences of the future as well if we inspire them and capture them really early and keep on nurturing their belief in the power of music.

Nicola Burke: The concept of young children being an audience or audience members is so, it's so radical, which is, and that's weird, isn't it? Why is, why is that? Where does it, and it's the view of the child, like in our society, you know, and how we view young children and include them and celebrate them and with them and really consume, you know, that the music that's, that's really out there. It's such a weird concept, isn't it? We definitely need to keep that, keep going and trying to help people see things from different ways.

I think just touching on something you said earlier, Polly, and it made me think of an educator that I worked with for quite a long time in an earlier setting in Birmingham they had quite a view of what a musician is and what the work musical was. And one day we were having a conversation and it turned out, and so from her perspective, she didn't see herself as a musical and wasn't a musician. But she went to Glastonbury every year and had been for a long time. And I was totally baffled. And I was going, well, but then that's like you are a musician, are, and you are, you know, consuming music and music is a part of your life. Yeah. And listening to music is something that people don't talk about, probably my view, anyway, enough. And in 'Musical Development Matters', the first section is all about hearing and listening. And that came from some research that I led.

Yeah. And really explored listening to all sorts of music with children in Early Years. And, why aren't we playing rave music in nurseries? Generally speaking, know there are some places that do do that. And you do have to navigate that carefully. Like I've learned that the hard way by going into nurseries and putting some electronic dance music on that didn't go down well. So it's having conversations with the people you're working with as well. Again, going back to partnership. But yeah, listening to music, you know, and for me, very personally, that was my first access. You know, a lot of people say that singing is the first thing, potentially is. And I'm not saying what should or shouldn't be, but for me, listening was a huge part of my childhood that inspired me to have a career in music and education. And we're not doing enough of it, including being audience members, as you say, Polly.

But just as a quick important aside, think it's important to also acknowledge the skills of a musician. And I don't want to dilute or not recognise the importance of great musicians, of the skills and the time that it takes to to develop your musicianship and I

do think there's always a place for musicians, actual musicians who consider themselves to be musicians and identify as musicians and have gone through their own musical journeys. That skill set in itself is really important so not to dilute that and again coming back to partnership, musicians working with educators to enhance experiences for young children is the way forward for me. Yeah so not to deliver music but work together to really create these amazing opportunities that we can create for young children as consumers, audiences, music makers, listeners, creators, know, all the things that are possible. I'll stop ranting.

Yusef Sacoor: Good listeners make good musicians at the end of the day as well. So, yeah, just picking up on sort of, I don't know, playing spiral tribe in primary school and stuff. Do you guys just to round off, have some anecdotes about work of Early Years and the impacts that it's have had on children of that age? I will start with Polly.

Polly Ives: In preparation, I have got about five, but I know we only have time for probably one. But I did a concert on Saturday in Suffolk at Britain Peers Arts, a musical stories concert with Concertinis where we combined storytelling, music, image projections and animation. And after the first piece of music, which was a really virtuosic bassoon piano version of Dacquan's Le Cuckoo. There was this gasp after the very last note, immediate gasp, and this joyful, probably four-year-old's voice that just said, 'that was amazing'! And I paused and held the audience before they clapped and just let his voice kind of ring and the kind of three hundred and 300 audience or so, I just felt like there was this kind of collective hug or an amazing goosebumps moment and this sharing of a thought of, yeah, actually that was pretty amazing. And I think we really should value those wow moments or just noticing a child's natural immediate impact or response to live music.

Well, that's sparking their curiosity and wonder, leading them to listen more and play more. They all joined in with the concert, they sang along and amazing rich experience. But actually we need these wow moments and to listen to the voices of the little people that we are inspired by every day.

Yusef Sacoor: For sure, and Amy, I'm sure you must have some good experiences too.

Amy Campbell: Yeah, so very slightly outside of the age range that we're talking about, but working in the primary school, the year one boy with some learning, additional learning difficulties, never joined in with any music, never joined in with any other lessons really in class. Came to a music session, was doing an activity with a ball and suddenly it just stopped and he looked and he started to join in with the actions at first and then he started joining in singing and then he started joining in with something else and the TA that's his one-to-one just sat there and just went 'wow he's never done anything for the last he's never joined in with anything' he came to music the music session again the following week and he was like 'ball ball' and just carried on asking for

it and his TA said he's been asking for all week he's been singing the song on the playground so he took that activity and just use it in everything that he was doing. And that was the start of him becoming involved more with the music sessions. That was the impact, sorry Nicola, that it sort of had on him. And since then his musicality has grown and he's gotten involved in more things, not just in music, but in other sessions as well, which yeah, just amazing to see.

Nicola Burke: And a lot of the standouts are with educators where they've suddenly found a voice and been able to engage in sound play, making music and considering themselves to be musicians. That happened on a course actually recently that we at the Family Music Hub were facilitating.

Yeah, and the of the training on that one person was huge and many think well what's the cascade effect of that on the children that she's working with. So that's again helping people overcome their fears but I do have quite a standout moment which in Birmingham we called the 'Moonbeams Moment' and that was on a project that was called moonbeams and I had the real privilege of working on that for quite a number of years which is profound in terms of my thinking and not dissimilar to yours Amy I was playing with a three-year-old who was not, was non-verbal, he was not speaking in the nursery, he was speaking at home, so he did have the ability to do that at home. And we started interacting with some drums and some xylo bars and the educators were just totally astonished by his communication, his interaction and his music making. And it went on, believe it or not, it went on for 10 minutes, yeah, between myself and this three-year-old and it was one-to-one, but being observed as well by educators and it was like a key, it literally was like a key, something unlocked in him and then he went to interact more so within the setting. I'm not saying that definitely was the music that enabled that but it seems to be a contributing factor in his journey. Yeah, it was just pretty amazing. Yeah, that interaction and response, you know, it's so powerful, and just need to create lots of opportunities to enable children to have brilliant music making experiences in early childhood.

Yusef Sacoor: Absolutely, I think we can all agree we want more Moonbeams moments across the country and the world maybe. So, without further ado, that's all we've got time for. We could probably go on about this for ages, it's amazing to hear the transformative power of music yet again on this podcast. But potentially it's even more impactful at such a young age. Thank you to our guests and thank you to you, the listener. As always, show notes and more can be found at musicmark.org.uk/podcast