

Summer Music Explorations: Opportunities To Try The 'New' And Refine The 'Old'

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Before children had scheduled 'play dates' and their own PDA's, summer was a child's time for full-time leisure - lazy afternoons naps in the sun, hiking in the local woods, and swimming 'til your skin wrinkled! Children today have much more scheduled 'structured' activity. Summer is still the time to explore new activities and focus on those special areas of interest not given as much attention as at other times of the year. Music is certainly one of those areas of concentration. Beginning music lessons for the first time, or trying a new instrument over the summer months is a great idea as more time is available for a child to practice without feeling 'pushed' due to homework assignments or school sports schedules, etc. For the parent, time may also be more relaxed during the summer as there are fewer school events

requiring parental carpools. This may allow time for the parents to take lessons with their children and/or practice with them as in the Suzuki method in which beginning violinists (usually pre-reading) are accompanied by their parents to lessons and learn and practice with their child each day. Starting a project like this when both parent and child are less pressured by demanding schedules can lead to more enjoyment of this very special, shared experience. Even older children starting a new instrument benefit by starting when their schedules are less hectic and the parents have the time to give them the encouragement and positive reinforcement they need.

For the student who studies music in school group lessons, the summer is a wonderful time to refine playing skills through private lessons. Private lessons help the strong music student master more advanced technical skills and allows the less skilled student to get the personalized attention they

need to successfully audition for a 'chair' in the school band or orchestra in the fall.

For the pre-school child, summer is a great time for starting early childhood music classes as Mom usually has more time to help her toddler enjoy class instead of merely 'rushing' to get there on time. Since young children are particularly sensitive to feeling 'pushed' by their parents, Mom's more relaxed manner will benefit her child and the entire class.

As far as the general benefits of music study for a child's academic development, it is clearly recognized that music study not only develops a child's music aptitude, but enhances their academic skills as well. For statistics and info check out www.menc.org (Educators Nat'l Conference) or the www.ecmma.org (Early Childhood Music and Movement Association) And make sure music is a part of your child's summer!

