

Facilitating the Development of Imagined Musical Worlds in Children's Music Lessons

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Introduction

Children in Western societies have less free time to play than they used to. According to Patrice Baldwin, a leading figure in the world of drama in education, “much of children’s after school time is taken up with organized after school clubs and structured activities and homework” (2012, p. 53). As a result, children are less often going outside to play with one another. Their lives are now “highly organized,” causing “spontaneous play and the freedom to play for long periods” to be “lost” (Baldwin, 2012, p. 53). Baldwin notes that, when children do have free time, they “increasingly turn to the digital world” (2012, p. 53). Since Baldwin’s observation in 2012, children’s screen time has increased. Even more recently, a study in Ontario, Canada found that children have been “spending nearly triple the recommended time on screens during the [COVID-19] pandemic,” for an average of nearly “six hours of screen time every day,” with some children spending “up to 13 hours in a single day on screens” (Jones, 2021, paras. 1-2). Children’s free-play time is being consumed by structured, after-school activities and by increased use of screen technology. This is concerning, given that psychologist Peter Gray, among others, has noted “a strong relationship between the decline of play opportunities for children ... over the last half century and an alarming increase in children psychopathology” (Whitebread et al., 2017, p. 5). For children’s healthy development, having unstructured, free time to play is crucial.

One of the structured after-school activities in which children often participate is the one-to-one music lesson. In traditional Western music education, it has been common for music teachers in one-to-one contexts to teach their child students using similar methods applied to the teachers themselves in university, by using formal, structured, and hierarchical approaches. As a result, music teachers may not be teaching children in ways that are sensitive to and encompassing of crucial developmental needs, such as the need for playful activity. While private music teachers may not view such developmental needs as their responsibility, all teachers of children have a special opportunity to attend to children’s needs; in children’s lives, they can be the second most influential adults, after parents (Scott, 2014, p. 91). In this paper, I explore research on pretend and musical play, I suggest that music teachers can provide child

students with much-needed play time by facilitating play-based learning methods that encourage pretend and imaginative musical play, and I provide examples for incorporating such methods into one-to-one music lessons. Not only will these methods and techniques provide child students with the opportunity to play within a typically structured activity, but they will also provide teachers with a variety of creative approaches for teaching music to the specific skills and needs of each student.

Children's Play

Children's play is complex, and its sophistication "goes well beyond many adult preconceptions" (Marsh & Young, 2015, p. 462). However, researchers Kathryn Marsh and Susan Young have noted that "in countries belonging to the developed world [...] the simple divisions between work and play result in a view of play as a trivial, lightweight, random, and somewhat useless activity" (2015, p. 462). This view of play is inaccurate. From an anthropological standpoint, Peter Gray argues that "humans have evolved to learn through playful behaviour" (Whitebread et al., 2017, p. 5). In play, children set their own parameters to learn about their physical size, their capabilities, the capabilities of others, and the world around them. As the developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky argued, in spontaneous and child-initiated play, "children exercise control over their own activity, set themselves appropriate challenges, and so create their own 'zone of proximal development' within which learning is most powerfully enhanced" (Whitebread et al., 2017, p. 4). Children's play is "neither trivial nor useless" (Marsh & Young, 2015, P. 462). Play, with all its complexity, is a key component in children's learning.

Pretend Play and Imagined Worlds

Much of children's learning through play takes place in imagined worlds. Children's pretend play and their imagined worlds are key to their development, as they strive to imitate the behaviour of other children and adults around them. In her book, *With Drama in Mind: Real Learning in Imagined Worlds*, Patrice Baldwin states that, within imagined worlds, "Children will become increasingly empowered and life skilled" (2012, p. 40). Children will "pour imaginary cups of tea, drive pretend cars, pretend to do the shopping," and more (Baldwin, 2012, p. 40). Not only do children pretend to be older with more skills and responsibilities, but they also pretend to be completely different beings, such as animals or made-up

creatures. Their pretend play goes beyond realistic scenarios into creatively imagined worlds. Children play within these imagined worlds to explore, learn, and develop.

According to a comprehensive review of play research initiated by The Lego Foundation, the "most extensively researched type of play" is pretend play (Whitebread et al., 2017, p. 18). It is possible that researchers have focused on pretend play most often due to its predominance across a variety of other types of play. For example, in a game of tag on the playground, a child might be imagining that he is running away from a monster (see Photo 1). While this type of play might be considered rough and tumble play or physical play, the child's playful engagement stems from a pretend or imaginary context. While there are a variety of different types of play as discussed by theorists and researchers, pretend play is prominent, permeating many other types of children's play.



(Photo 1: Baldwin, 2012, p. 43)

Children engage in pretend play for a variety of reasons. In a study on the importance of pretend and imagination, children were asked to recall their previous pretend play experiences and to explain the purposes of their pretend play. The children's responses revealed that their pretend play experiences allowed them to "feel in control," "reduce stress," and "raise levels of stimulation," among others

(Baldwin, 2012, p. 50). For many children, play also allows them to respond to situations that make them scared. Rehearsing a frightful situation in a playful way (as in Photo 1) can help children to understand and navigate their own fear. In many ways, pretend play allows children to try on and practice a variety of lives, emotions, and actions. From variety and spontaneity in pretend worlds, children learn about themselves, work through overwhelming emotions, and explore properties in the real world.

Given that pretend play, or play stemming from imagined worlds, is present across a variety of play contexts, and seeing as this play is a natural and effective form of learning for children, adults can find moments to “talk with and teach ... children from within these imaginary and enjoyable contexts” (Baldwin, 2012, p. 40). Within these contexts, children may be “capable of more complex thought than they would be otherwise” (Whitebread et al., 2017, p. 18). Teachers may find it beneficial to join in on the play. Baldwin argues that the “very root of good drama in education” is “an empathetic adult ... in an imagined world with a child, facilitating the practice of real skills within contexts meaningful to the child” (Baldwin, 2012, p. 40). This could also be seen as the root of effective music education. Music teachers can enter imagined musical worlds with their students and facilitate playful activities and learning from within such worlds.

Imagined Musical Worlds

Another imagined world that children engage in is the imagined musical world. A variety of children’s play, specifically on the playground, involves musical play. Kathryn Marsh and Susan Young argue that, compared to “other fields of children’s musical development, there is relatively little research into children’s musical play” (Marsh & Young, 2015, p. 464). Marsh and Young wanted to look at how children choose to make music during largely unsupervised, free play hours, such as playground time. By observing how children initiate their own music making, we can discover “important information about children’s music development, their capabilities, and what is significant and meaningful to them” (Marsh & Young, 2015, p. 464). Across all ages, spontaneous, child-initiated musical play is multimodal; children “blend movement with singing and, if available, with making sounds with objects or instruments” (Marsh & Young, 2015, p. 463). This play is “unpremeditated,” and has an “improvisational

character” (Marsh & Young, 2015, p. 463). Furthermore, children typically use music socially, as “a means for playing *with others*” (Marsh & Young, 2015, p. 463). During their free time, children’s play combines musical play and pretend play, creating actively imagined musical worlds.

Imaginative Musical Play Across Cultures

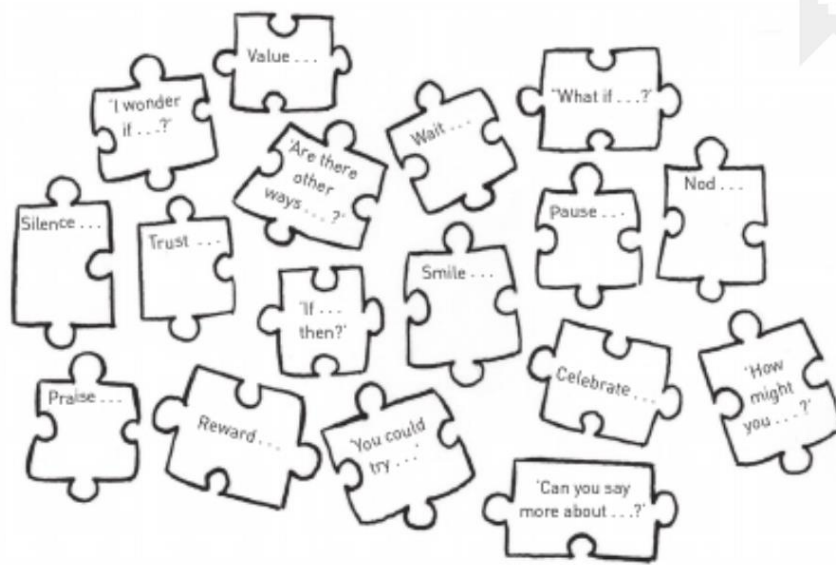
How music teachers encourage their students to play, and the results of students’ play are going to look different within each culture and circumstance. Marsh and Young note that, while most research into musical play “has been carried out in the developed world, [...] there has been increasing research interest in understanding children’s play in diverse societies and in understanding how context and living situations influence the nature of children’s musical play” (2015, p. 464-465). For example, in El Sistema’s Paper Orchestra in Venezuela, children aged four to six years old practice playing together on papier- mâché instruments. Initially, this practice developed out of necessity, since “there simply were not enough instruments for all the children” (Tunstall, 2012, p. 160). El Sistema has since kept their Paper Orchestra because they noticed that, by imagining that they are in an orchestra, young children were learning about music, their instruments, listening, and teamwork (Tunstall, 2012, pp. 160-161).

In addition, while John Blacking was observing the Venda population in South Africa, he “became intrigued with the unique way in which children conceptualized music,” and he chose to observe children’s songs first (Campbell, 2000, p. 341). To Blacking, children’s songs were an “integral and critical component of the Venda musical tradition,” in part because they were largely “unaffected” by Lutheran hymns of missionaries (Campbell, 2000, p. 341). In other words, children’s songs, which Blacking studied for their cultural uses and contextual meanings, were reflections of the real world within Venda culture. Venda children’s music showed Blacking that children have a distinct musical life and landscape, validating “children as musical beings” (Campbell, 2000, p. 353). For children around the world, while musical expressions will take on various forms, being musical involves imaginative and creative play.

Facilitating Play-Based Learning Techniques in Music Lessons

Private music teachers can aid their students' learning and development in music lessons by incorporating play-based learning techniques, which explore and blend both pretend and musical play. In this paper, I use the term "play-based learning" to refer to spontaneous and child-led learning built on variety and experimentation. While many teachers of children incorporate rule-based games in their teaching as play (such as board games, organized outdoor games, etc.), for the purposes of this paper, such rule-based games will only be considered play-based learning if the rules were discovered or created by the students. Children's musical play has been evaluated as "most creative and interesting" when surrounding adults were observing, yet this musical play "failed to extend or develop" when surrounding adults were trying to entertain or to direct the activity (Marsh & Young, 2015, pp. 468-469). The facilitation of play-based learning requires a conscious effort from the teacher to embrace moments of informality, to provide a variety of materials and options for students, and to encourage activities initiated and choices made by children.

In Lucy Green's *Music, Informal Learning and the School: A New Classroom Pedagogy*, she describes how many classroom music teachers have a hard time embracing "informal" teaching approaches such as standing back, observing students, and letting students make their own choices. This difficulty is partly due to each teacher's fear of not meeting curricular requirements and of "being seen as a 'poor' teacher" (Green, 2008, p. 28). Yet, of the teachers who participated in Green's project, which required them to try to manage or restrict their levels of intervention in the music classroom, all "unanimously agreed that [...] using informal learning practices in the classroom has generally changed [their] approach to teaching for the better" (Green, 2008, p. 36). This change was due to a shift in the teacher's role from "an expert who instructs" to "an observer and guide who stands back" (Green, 2008, p. 36). To "guide" students without intervening, teachers might consider a variety of responses or open-ended questions or prompts that help students make connections between their experiences (see Photo 2). To facilitate play-based learning, music teachers in classrooms and one-to-one lessons must create moments to observe and stand back, as difficult and uncomfortable as this may be.



(Photo 2: Baldwin, 2012, p. 81)

Private music teachers might be more easily able to incorporate informal approaches into lessons if they were to have activities in mind that allow for the facilitation of play-based learning. For the remainder of this paper, I will explore play-based learning techniques in the context of imaginative or pretend musical play. Facilitating the development of imagined musical worlds in children’s music lessons necessitates the blending of pretend play and musical play. For this reason, I will explore possible methods of musical pretend play with puppets, with small world toys, and with drama, and I will explore possible methods of creating improvised musical worlds with storyboards and sensory objects. I have developed and categorized these ideas based on my own experiences teaching children and from peer teaching when I was a child, and they are meant to provide music teachers with options and ideas to encourage spontaneity, child-led learning, variety, and experimentation with each student.

Imagined Musical Worlds with Puppets

In both pretend play and musical play, children can explore a wide range of emotions. Pretend play has been linked to children’s emotional well-being, and it could be “crucial to the development of [...] emotion regulation” (Whitebread et al., 2017, pp. 5, 18). Pretend play, such as play with puppets,

could enrich musical play by allowing children to make associations between emotional expressions and musical expressions. Play with puppets allows children to extend emotions outside of themselves and observe them; in other words, “children can talk through a puppet, allowing distance from the message being communicated” (Howard & McInnes, 2013, p.157). Distance can allow for a feeling of comfort or safety when exploring emotions that may be overwhelming. A puppet might be crying, laughing, or screaming, but its actions are manageable by the child. Additionally, puppets can “provide wonderful sensory experiences,” since they are usually soft and manipulable, and they are often made of “a variety of other materials that afford tactile exploration” (Howard & McInnes, 2013, p. 157). By exploring emotional expression with puppets, children can begin to define emotions, experience emotions within reason, and practice empathizing with other beings, all of which are necessary skills for performing and understanding music.

For music teachers, the first step to incorporating pretend musical play with puppets is to simply have a puppet, or a stuffed animal, in the lesson space. Puppets serve as musical friends in the lesson, and their existence allows for musical play that is socially interactive. For some teachers, these puppets might have names, personalities, and identities. For others, they may be blank slates. It is possible that the puppet’s name and personality will be formed through the child’s play in lessons. The puppet may just sit on the piano, watching and listening. To incorporate more interactive imaginary scenarios, a teacher might have the puppet teach the lesson or ask the child to teach the puppet. The teacher might play a piece of music while the child makes the puppet dance. The teacher might ask their student what the puppet is thinking or how it is feeling after hearing a piece of music. Students will regularly come up with playful activities or ways to incorporate puppets into the music lesson, and teachers can encourage play-based learning by embracing the spontaneity and variety of children’s choices, and by allowing freedom to experiment with those choices.

For greater interaction, puppets or stuffed animals with larger and more manipulable faces could be favoured, seeing as a teacher might explore how to change the puppet’s emotion by moving its face or mimicking human body language. For example, humans are not frozen beings; even when still, we

breathe, we look around, and we blink. Regular slight movements of a puppet's head can resemble the natural movement of living beings. More movement can imply excitement, happiness, or nervousness. Stillness can imply listening, interest, shyness, or sadness. Depending on the puppet's face, a teacher can adjust how its facial expressions look by either pinching at the neck or the forehead, or by tilting the head up or down. Teacher facilitators can model emotions for students with the puppets, and the students might want to try to find these emotions on the puppets as well. As often as possible, a teacher can encourage her student to make connections between the puppet's emotions and the music. This form of imagined musical play could help children develop a deeper understanding of human emotions and connect this understanding to their music.

Imagined Musical Worlds with Small World Toys

Teachers can also encourage pretend play with small world toys. Small world toys are realistic miniatures which resemble large, everyday objects that adults use. Prime examples of small world toys are toy cars, construction vehicles, and doll houses, among other common children's toys. With miniature toys, children can "safely deal with overwhelming experiences, the size of the toy making things seem more manageable" (Howard & McInnes, 2013, p. 155). Musical instruments can be very large and heavy, and most often, children's exploration of them is limited. Furthermore, children are often expected to be careful with real instruments. A realistic miniature toy piano, for example, could help children explore the complete instrument in a way that is controllable and less intimidating for them. There are a variety of types and styles of toy instruments, but it can be especially exploratory for children if parts of the toys can move (i.e., if the piano lid can be lifted, if the pedals can be pressed, etc.). The toy can be handled easily by a child, allowing them to learn by taking it in their hand, looking at it, flipping it over, tapping it, dropping it, and more. Furthermore, in studies of musical play, children often "dramatize their toys with improvised vocalizations" (Marsh & Young, 2015, p. 468). By incorporating spontaneous use of small toys, music teachers can allow for more pretend and musical play in one-to-one lessons.

Teachers need not spend large amounts of money on small world toys. For example, a teacher could encourage her student to make his own little piano out of a small cardboard box and some paper,

glue, and crayons. This is a much cheaper and more imaginative option. Whether or not the child's cardboard piano is realistic does not matter; since the child drew it, he will be connected to what it is and what it means, potentially even more so than he would be with a realistic small toy that was purchased. Furthermore, during the child's drawing of the piano, he will be envisioning and recreating what a piano looks like to the best of his abilities, which encourages another level of imaginative exploration of the instrument. While a teacher might not have time to do this craft in a lesson, she could send her student home with the materials and ask him to bring it to his lesson next week. To save even more time in a lesson, a teacher could simply have the child draw a piano on a piece of paper to use for imaginative musical play scenarios.

Small world toys allow for pretend musical play in various ways, and especially so if a teacher has the option to incorporate both small world toys and puppets or stuffed animals. For example, one of the reasons children engage in pretend is to reduce stress. The term "rehearsal" is not just musical; children "rehearse situations that they know from experience evoke stress in them. Rehearsal helps them feel more comfortable with the situation either retrospectively or in advance of repeating it for real" (Baldwin, 2012, p. 50). Patrice Baldwin describes how one ten-year-old child in a study said, "I have to go on the stage sometimes to play in concerts so I pretend that I am walking onto the stage and that I am not embarrassed" (2012, p. 50). For music teachers, if a child has an upcoming performance, he could choose an animal performer, set up the other puppets as audience members, set up the miniature instrument, and act out the full performance with toys, including walking up to the stage, bowing, putting music on the stand, adjusting the bench, sitting down, taking a breath, playing the piece (and here, the student can go to the real instrument and play), bowing while the audience claps, walking back down to the chair, high-fiving another animal, and sitting down. The student could act this out completely, and he may even want to do this more than once. The repetition of this activity would allow the child to continue to imagine a positive outcome for the object of his fears. As with puppets, small toys allow for the exploration of realistic emotions and scenarios, and they provide distance and manageable sizes to allow for comfort and control.

Imagined Musical Worlds with Drama

Just as teachers can facilitate the creation of imagined musical worlds with puppets and small world toys, they can take imaginative activities to the level of drama within music lessons. For example, after acting out a recital with small puppets and toys, a teacher could ask her student if he feels comfortable enough to pretend that he is now playing in the recital. The student's audience may still be the puppets, but the child is the one acting, instead of another puppet. Dramatic role play, or pretend with people as opposed to objects, enables "children to put themselves in someone else's position, cognitively and affectively. This role play supports the development of empathy and personal growth" (Baldwin, 2012, p. 55). In the case of a dramatized recital, the student would be putting himself in the position of his future self and practicing the feelings that he might experience in a future recital. To facilitate the entry into this pretend world, a teacher might find the employment of a simple prop to be useful. Such props could include "a variety of fabrics, scarves, hats and other inexpensive everyday materials" (Howard & McInnes, 2013, p. 155). For example, a teacher might place a scarf on the floor to represent the path that the student walks down as he makes his way from his seat in the audience to the stage. Even if the student does not have time to finish a pretend activity in the lesson, "the imagined experience stores significant associated thoughts and feelings and the brain may carry on working on the drama subconsciously or even unconsciously" (Baldwin, 2012, p. 77).

Another form of drama that can be used in private music lessons is role reversal. In role reversal, the student becomes the teacher, and the teacher becomes the student. The child sits in the teacher's chair and listens to his "student" play a piece of music. After the child listens, he might offer suggestions. As a "student," the teacher might ask leading questions, such as "Is my hand position correct?", "Am I starting on the right note?", or "What can I try next?" The teacher might ask the child for help: "What note is this?" or "Can you point along while I play?" When a student pretends to be the teacher, he may look at his music differently. Rather than waiting for his teacher to correct mistakes, the child student is now responsible for providing correct information to his "student." In role reversal, a student's imagined musical world is one where he is the piano teacher. In this world, he knows about piano, has skills at the

piano, and is trusted to share his knowledge and skills. According to Baldwin, "Drama encourages the mingling, merging and discarding and reshaping of real ideas offered by the participants within fictional contexts" (2012, p. 76). With drama in music lessons, musical ideas can be explored in a variety of contexts that allow for new ideas to emerge and for deeper understanding of the material to develop.

Since children's musical play is multimodal, teacher facilitators can use drama to invite spontaneous movement and dance into music lessons. For children, "in virtually all forms of self-directed play," such as child-initiated songs and musical games on the playground, "movement is inseparable from music." (Harwood & Marsh, 2012, p. 336). Since movement is "the instinctive response to music for children outside the classroom," teachers can use it as a tool for creative music learning (Harwood & Marsh, 2012, p. 336). To incorporate dance and movement into pretend play, a music teacher could suggest that they are all at a ball, and the teacher and student take turns dancing while the other plays. Teachers can also incorporate more movement by encouraging "children to invent movements to accompany songs, listening repertoire, and their own compositions" (Harwood & Marsh, 2012, p. 336). Drama allows the opportunity for spontaneous movement in music lessons, which is beneficial for children's play, in which "music and movement are naturally paired" (Howard & McInnes, 2013, p. 147). When John Blacking was in South Africa, his observations of the Venda concluded that "when performers could be involved in performances of musical styles that encompassed music and dance, they would then be led in the fullest possible ways to learn how to think and act, how to feel, and how to relate to others" (Campbell, 2000, p. 348). Within children's imaginative musical play, the pairing of music and movement is natural and could aid children's development.

Imagined Musical Worlds with Visual Storyboards and Improvisation

Through the creation of a visual storyboard, pretend play opportunities such as incorporating puppets, small world toys, and drama can all be linked to the story and emotions within a musical piece. Teachers can encourage their students to find emotions and stories within their pieces to connect their musical imagination with their understanding of human experiences and emotion. The child could create a storyboard for his piece by using crayons and a blank piece of paper. Much like a comic strip, a square

could be drawn on the page for each scene within the music. The child could describe emotions for each scene and draw simple facial expressions to trace the music's emotional progression. Alternatively, the child could describe characters and actions, drawing the story's progression on the page. Drawing can be another imaginative form of play for children. Children engage in mark-making from an early age; even babies enjoy mark-making, while "smearing [...] food over a highchair surface or table top [sic]" (Howard & McInnes, 2013, p. 150). Allowing our child students to draw while in music lessons helps them engage in symbolic play, which can serve as another entry point for both creativity and pretend musical play.

After the child has completed his storyboard, the teacher and the student can act it out together, either with puppets, toys, or themselves. They can then sing the student's musical piece while miming the actions or emotions. The teacher can play the student's piece while the student acts it out; they can switch places and the student plays while the teacher acts. In the future, the student can refer to his storyboard or make additions; his story might evolve or change altogether. Regardless, the student is engaged with the music's expression and can relate such expression to known human emotions and experiences. In this activity, the student's imagination is "playing with ideas, connecting what is already known and linking and using it in new ways and contexts," which are all key components of creativity (Baldwin, 2012, p. 76).

Storyboards can also serve as the foundation of improvised musical worlds. Rather than creating a storyboard based on a piece, a child could create or improvise a piece based on a storyboard. The student can experiment at the instrument, trying to find sounds or motives that represent each box or scene on the storyboard. He might like the option of having puppets or toys sing and play, as well. This child-led creation allows for experimentation and repetition, which are significant within children's learning. Children "drive their own learning by selecting what they currently need, and what might appear to be arbitrary or repetitious behaviors can hold a key to children's current competencies" (Marsh & Young, 2015, p. 467). A teacher can help her student experiment by providing him with the time to do so and by resisting the urge to frequently comment on his choices or make alternative suggestions. While

observing, the teacher may consider ideas for joining the improvised musical world by later adding a second part, either at the instrument, or with body percussion, singing, or dancing. This improvised piece, based on the child's imagined storyboard, would be a form of imaginative musical play, and with an improvised duet, the teacher can join the child's learning context as another player.

Imagined Musical Worlds with Sensory Objects and Improvisation

The creation of improvised musical worlds need not be tied to a story. One other way to inspire a variety of creative improvisational ideas in music lessons is to use sensory objects. Sensory activities could include "play with water, clay, sand, objects and materials of different textures or items with a distinctive smell" (Howard & McInnes, 2013, p. 150). A teacher may want to have sensory objects on hand, such as sealed bags of Play-Doh, flour, sand, or slime, for example, to inspire creativity. A teacher may allow the child to spend time with the objects before he returns to the instrument. Then, the student might play his piece as though he is feeling sand or patting flour, or as though the piano keys are made of clay. If the teacher has no objects on hand, she can still encourage students to imagine some, such as water, wind, snow, or the smell of freshly baked cookies. A teacher might ask her student to imagine that he is bouncing a basketball. What does that sound and feel like at the piano? The creation of an imaginative musical world need not be tied to a story; a teacher can provide a student with time and a variety of materials and options to engage in musical play based on his own imagination and experimentation. As Baldwin notes, "Any object or shape can stimulate imagination and there are many activities that the teacher can set up to invite playful creative thinking and establish a culture in which playfulness and creativity are valued" (Baldwin, 2012, p. 77).

Discussion

Music teachers in one-to-one contexts may be hesitant to incorporate play-based learning into their lessons. Time constraints can limit free play activity. Music exam, festival, and competition deadlines might be looming over each lesson. Furthermore, "constraints imposed by space, the levels of acceptable noise, what might be used to produce a sound, and availability of others with whom to make music, all influence the ways in which children will play musically" (Marsh & Young, 2015, p. 462-463).

Play-based learning activities might be seen as impossible, or, at the very least, difficult with certain students who may have behavioural or attention disorders. Each teacher will pick and choose which methods might work for her and her students, and the activities will grow and change as each student interacts with and shapes them. Teachers might also reshape play-based learning techniques for use in online teaching contexts. What is most important for the child's learning is that the teacher observe, allow for spontaneity and choice, and provide various options for playfulness and experimentation.

Conclusion

Due to increases in structured after-school activities and screen time, children have less free, unstructured time to play. Private music teachers can incorporate play-based learning into their lessons to allow children to flourish from within their own learning context. While there are many different types of play, pretend play is the most widely researched (Whitebread et al., 2017, p. 18). In pretend play, children create and explore imagined worlds. In their free time, children around the world also engage in musical play, which has been described as multimodal, improvisatory, and social (Marsh & Young, 2015, p. 463). Music teachers can aid their students' learning and development by incorporating play-based learning techniques into their lessons. In this paper, "play-based learning" was defined as spontaneous and child-led learning built on variety and experimentation. To facilitate this learning, teachers must embrace some informal teaching practices, such as standing back and observing students' choices without intervening.

Facilitating the development of imagined musical worlds in children's music lessons necessitates a blending of pretend play and musical play. In this paper, I explored a variety of possible methods of musical pretend play with puppets, small world toys, and drama. I also explored possible methods for creating experimental and improvised musical worlds with creative storyboards and sensory objects. Play is "an essential vehicle for children's musical expression" and "should be acknowledged and encouraged within [...] educational settings" (Marsh & Young, 2015, p. 178). Play-based learning techniques can provide private music teachers with a variety of creative approaches for teaching to the specific skills and needs of each student, and these techniques can also offer child students the opportunity to engage in playful activity which is crucial to their learning and development.

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