New Frontiers in Music, Language and Autism

The Help Group Summit 2012
October 27, 2012

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Acknowledgements

All participants in the studies and their families and schools

At Oxford University:
  Professor Dorothy Bishop and the O.S.C.C.I. (Oxford Studies of Children’s Communicative Impairments) Team, Dr. Kate Nation, Dr. Liz Pellicano

At Princeton University:
  Professor Ronald Comer, Professor Wendy Heller

At Mount Sinai School of Medicine:
  Dr. Angela Diaz

The Members of the Board and Junior Board of Directors of Music for Autism, including The Help Group’s Dr. Barbara Firestone

All Music for Autism Volunteers and Musicians

Outline of Presentation

• Music and language processing in autism
• Music therapy for those with autism
• The socioeconomics of autism
• Advocacy through Music for Autism
Explorations of Music and Language Processing in Individuals with Autism
Musical Abilities of Those with Autism

- First described by Leo Kanner (1943)
- Rimland’s *Infantile Autism* (1964)
- Repetition Study (Applebaum et al., 1979)
- Recent empirical investigations on pitch, interval, and contour processing
Music and Language Processing

• Left hemisphere-language?
• Right hemisphere-music?

• Music and language
  – Universal
  – Analogous components processed similarly (Patel, 2003)
“I can better tell people how I am by playing a song in my mind.”

Harold Stone, a 52-year-old with high functioning autism
Music and Language Processing

• Psychological Evidence
  – Music and language abilities correlate (Simmons & Baltaxe, 1975)
    • No longer valid

• Neurological Evidence with Event Related Potentials (ERPs)
  – Music and language abilities divergent (Ceponiene et al., 2003)
Event-Related Potentials (ERPs)

Mismatch Negativity (MMN)

Amplitude (μV)

Latency (ms)

Electrodes

Deviant

Standard
Music and Language Processing

• Psychological Evidence
  – Music and language abilities correlate (Simmons & Baltaxe, 1975)
    • No longer valid

• Neurological Evidence with Event Related Potentials (ERPs)
  – Music and language abilities divergent (Ceponiene et al., 2003)
Music and Language Processing

• Children with autism show similar musical processing in the context of poorer language
Music Therapy for Those With Autism
Music Therapy

• Has been used to treat disorders ranging from AIDS to Alzheimer’s, depression and cancer and became a formal area of study in the 1950s
• Therapy carried out by a therapist in a controlled and programmed manner, often in collaboration with doctors or other therapists
• The client need not have musical ability to benefit from therapy, and any increase in musical knowledge is a byproduct of therapy and is not a goal
Music Therapy with Individuals with Autism:

Widely Recommended . . .

German postal survey (Evers, 1992):

– 56% of child psychiatrists
– 14.5% of pediatricians

recommended music therapy for individuals with autism

– 25.1% of pediatricians

thought music therapy for individuals with autism might be useful
Music Therapy with Individuals with Autism:

Under Researched...

• Mostly case studies, need for greater systematic research (Accordino et al., 2007)

• Meta-Analysis of music therapy with children and adolescents with psychopathology (Gold et al., 2004)
  – With no studies on those with autism, medium to large effect size of music therapy on those with childhood psychopathology, $d = .61$ ($SE = .14$), $p < .001$
• September, 2011 study
• 6 nonverbal participants with autism
• At baseline, no intelligible words
• AAMT 5x weekly for 8-week period
• All children with significant improvements in their ability to articulate words and phrases
The Socioeconomics of Autism
The Socioeconomic Picture of Autism

• In 1960s, found higher rates of autism in higher socioeconomic areas
• In 1980s, researchers argued that these findings may be an artefact of the ability of those from lower socioeconomic areas to get an ASD diagnosis and services for the disorder (where study participants were recruited)
The Socioeconomic Picture of Autism

• Larsson et al. (2005) ran a population-based, case-control study in Denmark
  – Has a uniformly organized and comprehensive health care system
  – Showed that socioeconomic status (maternal education and parental wealth) did not associate with an autism diagnosis
Autism does NOT discriminate...

BUT our giving of autism diagnoses and services for those with autism do.
Music for Autism
Orchestrating Stronger Lives
Our Mission

Music for Autism is committed to raising public awareness and improving the quality of life of individuals with autism and their families through music.
Music for Autism: Our History

• Began programming in the US in 2007 with our acceptance as a 501c3, nonprofit organization

• In 2009, established a goal of expanding our programming to many more US cities
  – 2007: New York, New York @ The Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center
  – 2008: Princeton, New Jersey
  – 2009: Houston, Texas
  – 2010: Washington, DC; Brooklyn; Staten Island
  – 2011: Boston; Los Angeles; Nassau, Suffolk and Westchester Counties
Upon our 5th Anniversary in the UK, we were honored at No. 10 Downing Street by Cherie Blair for our “Service to Individuals with Autism and Their Families”
“The work of Music for Autism touches upon two of my great passions: music and supporting individuals with autism . . . I applaud the work of this charity for not only focusing on young children with autism, but also aiming to improve the lives of young adults with autism . . . I applaud Music for Autism for enabling children with autism the ability to experience quality music — something that we should all be able to experience — and for giving them the opportunity to listen to music in an environment where no one will be embarrassed. . . We should celebrate these young people for what they can do as opposed to what they cannot.”

Cherie Blair, QC, Wife of Former Prime Minister Tony Blair, on Music for Autism
Web Site Concert Calendar

Click on the map below to see the upcoming concerts in your area.

Click here for UK concerts or here to see all US concerts.
Commencement of Linda Rodgers Emory Concert Series

Generously underwritten by the Richard and Dorothy Rodgers Fund of the UJA-Federation.
New York City

Manhattan:
1 - The Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center
3 - The McCarton School
1 - 92nd Street Y
2 - Reel Abilities Film Festival at the JCC in Manhattan

Brooklyn:
4 - Brooklyn Heights Public Library
5 - Edith & Carl Marks JCH of Bensonhurst (coming in 2012)

Staten Island:
7 - JCC of Staten Island

Queens:
6 - Central Queens Y (coming in 2012)

Map found at NYCtheatrespaces.org
New Jersey
1 – Princeton – The Eden Institute

New York
2 – Mid-Island Y – JCC
3 – Suffolk Y JCC
4 – JCC of Mid-Westchester

Map courtesy of Google Maps
Growth from 2007-2011

In 2011:

• 13 cities
• 7 states
• Over 30 concerts
E List Sign Up

Mailing List Signup

Music for Autism sends monthly messages with information on its free, interactive concerts and fundraising events in the United States.

If you're using a spam filter of any kind, please make sure robert@musicforautism.org is on your approved mailing list.

Music for Autism does not share its email list with other organizations.

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“I had the great pleasure of bringing my son Connor to the concert at the Help Group in Los Angeles on Sunday. I was astounded and thrilled at how the children were moved by the music and how I was moved by the spirit of acceptance. As a parent of a child with Autism, I am used to being on guard for behaviors which require me to remove Connor from situations. At the Music for Autism concert, I didn't have to do this...Connor was allowed, encouraged even to express himself and I was able to relax at a public event for the first time in 5 years. Thank you for that.”

Kathleen Kitts, mother of Connor, age 6
Los Angeles, California
THANK YOU!

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