

Hearing – Feeling – Playing

Music and Movement with Hard-of-Hearing and Deaf Children

Bearbeitet von
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Introduction

Shirley Salmon

The idea for this book started to develop a few years ago. I had already spent many years working with children with hearing loss and had become familiar with various approaches concerning the therapeutic use of music and movement and with the work of some teachers and therapists from this field. Looking for technical literature in connection with my practical work, I came across Mimi Scheiblaue, Karl Hofmarksrichter and Claus Bang, who had gained experience in this specific field. I repeatedly studied the works of those “affected” by so-called hearing loss – notably Helen Keller, Emmanuelle Laborit and Evelyn Glennie – those who are the actual experts. This still seems important to me, since we who are able to hear (using our ears) can hardly sense what it means to have or develop a hearing disorder, or respectively what it means to grow up under the conditions of impaired – or the total lack of – auditory information. I am therefore especially pleased that the internationally acclaimed percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie (who, after developing a hearing disorder in her childhood, learnt to use her own body as a source of resonance in order to actually feel sound) has written the foreword. Here she describes quite distinctly how important and powerful the universal gifts of making music and hearing are to all of us.

When I contacted the English speaking authors Evelyn Glennie, Paul Whittaker, Naomi Benari and Christine Rocca, it was of course necessary to quote the English title of the book¹. Doing so I came across interesting alternatives: Listening – Feeling – Playing, or respectively Hearing – Sensing – Playing. The title of this book *Hearing – Feeling – Playing* refers to acoustic, vibratory, tactile, emotional and social stimuli as well as to their perception and active realisation. *Hearing* can also involve the conscious, individual activity of listening. *Feeling* can express vibratory, tactile and kinaesthetic stimuli and perceptions on the one hand, or the emotional level of sensing and empathizing on the other. *Playing* not only refers to playing instruments, enacting stories or to playful movement, but also to “play” on the one hand and “games” on the other (cf. *The Importance of Play-Songs in Inclusive Teaching* in this volume).

Some terms of this book need further explanation. “Hearing impaired” refers to people whose (auditory) sense of hearing is impaired. This term is often used comprehensively for slight, moderate and serious hearing disorders as well as for cases

1 The book was originally published in German in 2006 entitled *Hören, Spüren, Spielen. Musik und Bewegung mit schwerhörigen und gehörlosen Kindern* by Reichert Verlag, Wiesbaden, Germany.

in which there remain traces of hearing and cases of total hearing loss. “Deaf”, on the other hand is used as a category for people who are apparently unable to hear at all. Since we, however, know – also from reports by “deaf” people such as Helen Keller, Emmanuelle Laborit, Evelyn Glennie – that hearing does not only happen via the ears, but also with the whole body, this term merely indicates that the perception does not occur via the ear.

“Hearing impairment”, according to the ICF² of the World Health Organisation denotes a functional or structural disorder of the body in the sense of a considerable deviation from the norm, or total loss, respectively. The term *hearing disability*, in contrast, does not only refer to the organic impairment, but also implies effects in other domains (activity, participation, full inclusion in our society) as a consequence of the impairment. Generally speaking I prefer the term “children/people with hearing loss”, firstly because it includes every degree of hearing impairment and secondly because it does not only focus on the disorder itself. The disadvantage of this term might be that it has a diminishing implication or often causes serious disorders to be taken quite lightly. The expressions “deaf” and “hard-of-hearing” are standard terms used by the people who are “affected” and/or others in the deaf community. Therefore the subheading of this book contains the words “deaf” and “hard-of-hearing” to indicate that the texts contributed present experiences and inspirations for the work with children affected by a varying degree of hearing loss.

The allocation of the various texts contributed was not easy since the logical structure of the book could not allow for age or age groups to be the sole criterion. The beginning consists of accounts describing individual developments and experiences under the conditions of hearing impairment and hearing loss as well as the individual approach to music, its performance and its personal significance. The theoretical principles deal with essential developmental aspects which are relevant to all children, but especially to those with hearing loss. These are supplemented by contributions defining the position of, and offering insights into, the research on the perception of music. The practical principles present approaches which can be relevant to various age groups, whereas the last part offers descriptions of practical work within various environments and with different age groups – ranging from pre-school children and families to school children and teenagers.

In comparison to the USA, where the use of music in education for people with hearing loss has a more than one hundred-year-long tradition, this tradition in German speaking countries is shorter, the use of music far less widespread and its

2 ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health) serves as a universal language beyond geographic and scientific limits for describing an individual's functional health condition, disability, social impairment and his/her relevant environmental factors, <http://www.who.int/icidh>, 12/2007 (Ed.).

documentation still incomplete. One of the first pioneers was Mimi Scheiblaue (1891–1968), who as early as 1920 employed rhythmical-musical elements in educating hard-of-hearing and deaf children as well as performing nativity plays with them. Since then several different approaches involving music and movement have been developed, such as those of Karl Hofmarksrichter, Antonius van Uden, Claus Bang, Irmgard Rohloff und Susann Schmid-Giovannini.

While this book intends to introduce the readers to a number of basic principles as well as to a diversity of European approaches, there can be no claim to completeness, since this would be impossible in a single publication. Pedagogic and therapeutic backgrounds and methods are discussed in the various texts contributed, common aspects and differences between pedagogy and therapy, however, are not a central theme of this book. The importance of music and movement for deaf and hard-of-hearing children and the right to receive education, similarly support or therapy with music, movement or dance are central concerns here. The aim of this book is to address, inform and inspire specialists from the educational and therapeutic fields, parents as well as the experts (meaning those “affected”) themselves.

The central question in practical settings remains: which approach involving music and/or movement, which methods and which form of participation – be it in education, remedial help and support or therapy – can be of benefit to the children in question?

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3 County Centre for Hearing and Speech Education in Graz, Austria (Ed.)