

## Why was there a need for this research?

By Nicola Burke

One of my most prominent childhood memories is listening to music with my parents at home. My Dad had a large battered old suitcase which was full to the brim with vinyls. Any opportunity I had of listening to those vinyls with my Dad was grasped. I vividly remember asking my Dad to get the suitcase out so that we could listen to music together. I remember this happening from around the age of 3. The vinyls consisted of a range of styles of music including reggae, soft rock, ska, pop, big band and swing music. Listening to music with both my Mum and Dad are treasured, fond memories of mine which I feel have had an impact on my ability to listen to a range of styles of music and enjoy this activity. I also feel that this had a huge impact on my career and my ambition to be a musician.

This was in the late 70's and early 80's. Music listening and the accessibility that we have to music today is a far cry away from then, we can download music at the touch of a button today and we do not even need to hold a tangible object that contains the music we play. When discussing the influence of family on musical preferences LeBlanc (1982) suggests that 'most musicians would affirm the power of this influence at least through early childhood'. He suggests that family influence dominates musical influences during the early years; this theory however, was produced in 1982. There has since been a huge rise in the number of children attending Early Childhood settings. It therefore may be possible that the music played within a setting may replace the influence of the family depending of course on the amount that a child attends a setting and the amount that music is played.

Early Childhood education is also hugely different today as it was in the 1980's. I did not attend nursery or preschool like many other people my age – it was not as common as it is today. Working as an Early Childhood Music Specialist across a variety of settings in the UK, I have become increasingly troubled by the recorded music that is being played in the settings I have visited.

As part of my MA in Early Childhood Music Studies I decided to conduct some research into this area and it soon became apparent that this had not been researched before.

My research involved a written questionnaire and a small amount of telephone interviews. I wanted to discover what styles of music Early Childhood practitioner's use and for what purposes they make use of it. There was an overwhelming clear top 5 styles of music indicated – Classical, Nursery Rhymes, Pop, Christmas and 'Relaxing'.

The research also found that the use of recorded music was not widely drawn upon within music sessions. It was largely used for movement, in the background and for routines. My research was a small scale study and I am aware that some practitioners do play a variety of music to young children. My experience also tells me that music *listening* is not often an important part of Early Years music education. Musical elements such as singing, developing rhythmical skills and developing the ability to play instruments are often the focus. I am not suggesting that this is wrong but there is also room to create active musical listening activities to enrich children's musical experiences and develop their musical skills.

Having explored this as part of my MA I felt the need to explore further and have been extremely lucky to work in close partnership with mac Birmingham and receive funding from Arts Connect and Youth Music to research this further.