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Music  
as  
one  
of  
the  
eight  
multiple  
intelligences

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Lynne Cox

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**MUSIC AS ONE OF THE EIGHT MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES**

***(How music enriches mankind from the cradle to the grave)***

**NCCAT PROJECT OVERVIEW**

As a music teacher strong in the area of early childhood music, I became fascinated with Dr. Howard Gardner's theory of the eight multiple intelligences. It will unfold in this paper how the one he defines as 'music intelligence' literally saved my life.

For the last ten years I have read and consumed every article I could find on the early child's music development and how researchers have experimented with and documented that music presented at an early age improves a child's intelligence—these papers stressed 'spatial' intelligence. They have proven neurologically that music study at an early age helps the neurons of the brain connect at a faster rate of speed. Geography of the keyboard, relationship of white and black keys on piano, how landmarks serve, plus ear-training and vocabulary skills are some of the criteria in what Gardner identifies as 'music intelligence'. His theory of 7 multiple intelligences include: kinesthetic, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. He recently added his 8<sup>th</sup> - that of naturalist intelligence.

In this paper my objective is to connect the musical intelligence to the other 7 intelligences and prove that indeed music, by its very nature, incorporates all of the intelligences. Examples: in singing songs to keep the flow of the language going, reading music notation, and the fact that music is a form of communication uses the *verbal-linguistic intelligence*; the touch and feel of the keyboard and the different touches needed to play this and other instruments uses the *kinesthetic intelligence (turning out excellent computer typing skills)*; logic of the pattern of the black and white keys, counting, dividing and multiplying notated rhythms uses *logic-mathematical intelligence*; seeing the keyboard, finding one's way on it because of recognition of the landmarks, and reading notation uses the *visual-spatial intelligence*; the *interpersonal intelligence* is required in music ensemble playing, teamwork, considering other's feelings, respect for one another, etc.; the *intrapersonal intelligence* of expressing one's self aesthetically, and Gardner's newest recognized intelligence, the one of *naturalist*, can be counted in the *music intelligence* if one can count Beethoven's 'Pastorale' from his Ninth

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Symphony depicting musically a calm, pastoral scene; Ravel's "Jeux D'Eau" depicting waterfalls, and Debussy's "Clair de Lune" impressionably based on moonlight.

As an experienced music teacher of almost 40 years and having a degree in piano performance, I have long known that music is THE subject that by its very nature incorporates all of the areas of study and exploration of a child. I have taught in a unique school system that serves only pre-k through 1st grade before they leave our school to go to the next one serving 2nd and 3rd grades. The fact that I have successfully taught my favorite subject to almost 700 children weekly at our school certainly documents that I am an early childhood specialist. I have always enjoyed being the first music teacher they have and try to make learning as fun as can be.

US News and World Report published an article several years ago about "The Windows of the Mind" which open at early stages of a child's life and development. The article stated that as these windows open at an early age, this is when the information needs to pour in. Unfortunately, these windows of learning opportunities begin to close at around age 12. This does not mean to say that if an older child or adult does not begin music or foreign language when the windows are open, that the person cannot learn to play music or speak a foreign language, but this study does imply that they will never be able to do so as fluently or as well as they could have if they had studied these subjects before those windows began to close in early teen years.

Studies implemented and published at *University of California at Irvine* in early music study are some of the ones that made the headlines on the importance of music for young children. Ironically, my son, Sean, is working on his Ph.D. in math at this same establishment that sponsored these music studies. The headlines from the Irvine studies heralded that music helps a child become 'smarter'. The public obsession (good obsession) with Mozart and the classics being played for babies even still in the womb now is an outgrowth from these music studies. I seized the moment when these studies were made public in the 90's and began writing grants for my music classroom quoting the positive results of these studies and articles. I was able to obtain many grants for keyboards and other musical instruments. In these days of severe budget cuts, particularly in the arts, this has been a boon for my classroom. One of my strengths as a music teacher is the fact that I enjoy and am successful in integrating all subjects within music instruction, particularly literature.

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In the area of Alzheimer's disease, which my mother suffered from, National Geographic published an article about how the memory of music is the last to go. Mother would sing with me songs she knew at an earlier time in her life when she could not even remember who I was. Since most of the women in my Avant family are long livers, but suffer from this horrid disease, I want to include this fascinating theory in my research as a Teacher Scholar at NCCAT. In other words, I want to use music research to prove that music enhances life from the cradle to the grave. I serve almost 700 small students per week at my school and feel very burned out. As a Teacher Scholar at your lovely sanctuary in the past, I was able to more efficiently research my theories in a concentrated, serene setting and draw from other teachers' experience and ideas, just as they drew from mine. I am a life-long scholar realizing that I have only scratched the surface of things I want desperately to know. It is true that the real thirst for knowledge comes in later years.

Perhaps some papers that I write being able to calmly pursue research in your beautiful, no-stress environment may help many, many people and save the arts from being excluded in budget cuts.

The main reason that I want to explore this theory is because music literally saved my life. I was a daydreamer (known as ADD now) in the Charleston, SC public school system in the early 50's. My first grade teacher insisted that my mother have me tested for mental retardation. Mother never told me about this until after I graduated with a Bachelor Degree in Music in 1966. The 'music intelligence' was what saved me. Back then there was virtually no help for the learning disabled child, you were either put in the 'retarded class' or in the 'regular class'. There was no in-between and little compassion for those labeled wrongly who ended up in that class.

I had virtually no focusing skills in first grade, and we musicians are known as being a bit 'spacy'. Mother took me twice to be tested, making sure, being the wonderful mother that she was, that I knew nothing about the reason I was there. I vaguely remember talking with some pleasant people uptown, sitting on their desk and answering questions. We laughed and just had a wonderful time. Didn't know this was a test. After each of the two sessions demanded by my teacher, the testers told my mother there was nothing wrong with me, evidently the teacher needed 'to be tested'.

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My hard-working, single, divorced mother could hardly put food on the table. Even as a young child I loved the piano, playing on one wherever there was one. Mother knew this, and I would beg her to stop buying groceries so that we could buy a piano. I don't know how she did it, but she bought on time a brand new piano and paid for piano lessons. (I remember vividly playing it as the men took it off of the truck bringing it into our house. I remember lifting the quilt covering it to do so, having to stop when they had to bring it through the door).

What happened was this: my mother did not realize that she was being a wonderful child psychologist by developing my musical intelligence, she was just a loving mother who wanted her daughter to have what she never had. I did not disappoint her, I made good use of the piano and lessons—she never had to tell me to practice. However, other members of the family would ask me to please stop at times!

Psychologically and developmentally music highly developed my focusing skills so that they spilled over into my school work and I never was asked to be 'tested' again. I was a high B student throughout school excelling in language, having hard times with math and science. Music was something I was good at and this helped my self-esteem. My teacher no longer humiliated me by telling me in a loud voice in front of other children to “pay attention, Lynne! Stop daydreaming!”

When I think how close I came to being moved into the retarded class I shiver. I could have been one of those many unfortunate children who were mis-labeled and fell through the cracks. Then I end my meditation on the very happy thoughts that not only did I develop my talent to a professional level performing, teaching, composing, lecturing and acting as adjudicator, but that I have successfully helped thousands of children achieve high musical development and build their self-esteem through music. At present I have had 5 of my “Sea Zoo” songs published by Myklas Music Press of Denver on the nationally required performing list for young pianists chosen by the National Federation of Music Clubs.

Because my wonderful mother had such faith in me, I want to research how music can help humanity from the cradle to the grave, hopefully researching even how it can help senile dementia in older adults. I may want to drive to the nearest retirement/nursing home facility while at NCCAT to have a living laboratory to try out my theories. I love older people. The field

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of Music Therapy fascinates me. Please give me the much-needed stress-free time to do so as  
a Teacher Scholar at NCCAT this year in February.

Lynne (Evelyn C.) Cox