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## How Performing Arts In Early Years Education Can Support Your Child's Development During Lockdown

 My Baba  5 May, 2020  Living, Education

Archaic views that performing arts classes are solely for “budding stars’ or they’re “just a bit of fun” are fortunately on the decline. It’s no big secret anymore that getting children involved in the performing arts can have major benefits in a child’s educational life. Over the past two decades, landmark studies have shown that children

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who sing/dance/act are four times more likely to be recognised for academic achievement compared with their non-performing peers.

Ever since the creation of Kindergarten by Friedrich Froebel, the arts have played a vital role in early years education. Froebel held the belief that young children should be involved both in making art and enjoying the art of others. This was not merely for teachers to recognise children with unique abilities, but because the arts lay the foundation for each child's "full, all-round development."

Although many early years experts agree that performing arts education enhances the development of the "whole child" and contributes greatly to school-readiness, there are many who believe that it contributes to far more specific skills.

Studies have found that children involved in early years performing arts tend to have enhanced cognitive, motor, physical, linguistic and social development. They also have an advanced development in intrinsic human qualities, such as creativity, expression, identity, culture and imagination.

As both an early years educator and a mother, I can wholeheartedly confirm that it is far harder homeschooling your own child. With that in mind, I've put together a few creative suggestions on how we can use the performing arts as an educational tool throughout lockdown.

## How can we use the performing arts to support our children's development during lockdown?

### Sing with your child

Singing to our children is one of the most underestimated learning, bonding and development tools. It doesn't matter if you sing like Whitney Houston or if you're tone-deaf, the benefits remain the same. I mean, okay, your neighbours may not be impressed by your vocal ability, but studies show that babies prefer their parents' voices and other familiar ones over those of strangers. A foetus

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can hear clearly for months before birth, therefore, choosing a familiar rhyme or tune from your pregnancy will create an instant bond and connection. It also acts as a practical and unique soothing method throughout childhood. For those parents who are simply too embarrassed to sing, why not choose a rhythmic rhyme or poem? Something from AA Milne would work perfectly and has always been a big hit in my household.

If you feel confident enough to sing then singing songs that your child is familiar with is always a great starting point but it's not necessary. Singing to your child should never feel like a chore so why not use this time to introduce your children to your favourite songs? After all, singing should be a joyful expression. I would be thoroughly impressed if I heard a three-year-old singing a Joni Mitchell or a Carole King number.

## Produce a creative environment for dramatic play

Creating the right environment to foster your child's creative learning is key. Any adult/parent-led activity needs the correct environment to maintain a preschooler's attention.

Keeping distractions such as screens, toys and food out of sight during your activity will inevitably help, but that doesn't mean it needs to be a sterile environment. For example, you could create a mini jungle from cuddly toys, blankets and jungle music, or you could turn your garden into a magical forest with pot plants and fairy lights. Your child's imagination is so rich they will lavish you with idea upon idea, of characters you could play and storylines you could produce together. Whilst engaging your preschoolers with creative dramatic play, be sure to ask them plenty of questions. Give your child an opportunity to practise decision-making, problem-solving and critical thinking. Help your child to find new ways of looking at things and encourage them to express their feelings. Compliment their ideas, as this will build your child's confidence and create a positive, affirming environment that they will thrive in.

outbreak.



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#### Use the performing arts to maintain your child's community

The development of the human brain during the early years is truly impressive. A child's brain is 90% of its adult size by age 3. Therefore, if a young child experiences drastic environmental stressors, their milestones and development can be significantly delayed. If your child had a busy social calendar prior to lockdown it is vital to find new ways of socialising, whilst of course keeping them safe.

If they are already at a nursery or school then joining an online performing arts class alongside their peers is a great option. Not only will they see their friends on screen, but they will also enjoy some clear structure and routine, alongside the physical and educational benefits of the class. Joining a class that they were a part of prior to lockdown is ideal, however, where that is not an option, joining a new class and building a fresh community of friends would also be beneficial. How wonderful would it be if they make a new community of friends that they could meet in class after lockdown, sharing the songs, dances and poems they've learned together during their virtual sessions. Look up your local performing art schools as many are now offering online classes. I'd suggest asking local parents for recommendations to dig out any local gems.

#### Book a private online performing arts session

If you would like to organise a play date or a special birthday, why not let your child invite one or two of their closest friends and hire a performing arts teacher to lead a private online session. Let your child pick their party theme and have a personal performing arts class catered around them, or add a private performing arts class to their weekly home school schedule. Since the west end is now dark, there are many professional (DBS



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## How This New And

certificated) performing artists who would be more than happy to privately coach your child (or yourself) virtually. You can find teachers through your performing arts school or put a shout out on social media.

## Watch live theatre

Okay, so a physical trip to the theatre isn't an option right now, but this doesn't mean that we cannot nurture a love of 'arts and culture' within our own homes.

Theatres are currently releasing live pre-recorded shows online, so you could make it a weekly or fortnightly occasion. Print off tickets, get dressed up, have ice cream at the ready and transport your child to a magical night at the theatre. Educational studies have revealed that children who are exposed to theatre develop a better sense of cultural awareness and empathy, so as a parent we can rest assured that along with inspiring our children's imaginations we're also developing their emotional intelligence.

From one parent to another, I wish you all the greatest success in your new role as a home educator. And hey, you never know – you may come out of this with the next Mozart or Meryl Streep. It's always a possibility!

**Article by Sharon Cherry Ballard, founder of [Cherrystars](#).**

**Cherrystars run exclusive performing arts classes for the early years alongside their children's talent agency. Classes are led by a team of professional stage and screen actors. More information at [Cherry Stars](#) [info@cherrystars.co.uk](mailto:info@cherrystars.co.uk)**

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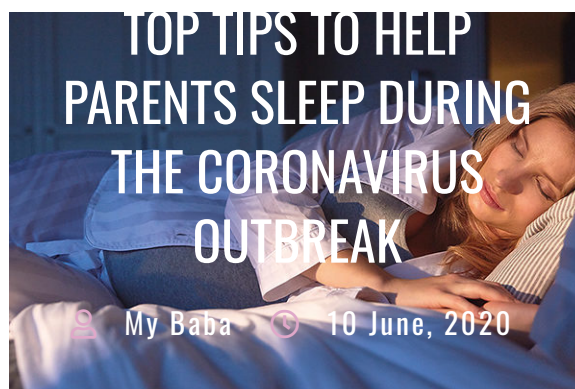
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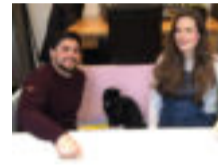
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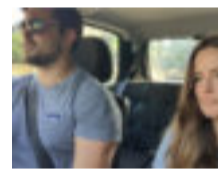
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