



Why Learn A Musical Instrument?

There are many reasons for learning a musical instrument (at any age) beyond simply the enjoyment of playing and learning about music.

Social; music can be a great social outlet for life, be it playing in orchestras, bands, rock/pop/folk bands or just getting together with friends to play music.

Discipline, perseverance and patience; working on something regularly over time to achieve a goal. Learning an instrument takes time and we must work on our skills regularly and over a long time period in order to develop them.

Culture, History and general knowledge; when was certain music written and what for? What was the context of this music? Who were these figures in history? How has music and the world changed over time? How is music different in different countries and cultures?

Emotional wellbeing; playing music can provide an emotional outlet in all manner of circumstances.

Brain Development

Studies have shown that learning a musical instrument affects the development of the brain. Playing music is the only activity that uses as many different areas and functions of the brain at the same time and so helps build new neural pathways/connections within the brain. It also helps develop each of those different areas of the brain.

Different faculties used:

- Motor (fingers, arms, etc coordination, kinaesthetic, proprioceptive senses)
- Visual (reading music, following a conductor)
- Aural (listening and hearing which also affects/benefits speech)
- Mathematical (understanding beats and timing and the relationships between notes, recognising patterns)
- Creativity and expression
- Emotional (identifying how this music makes you feel, how can we make this music sound more sad/joyful/silly etc?)
- Memory

Ensembles

There are specific benefits of joining an ensemble to play music:

- Team work and cooperation; We all need to play in time and in tune with each other. Everyone has their own particular role to play in the creation of the overall sound,
- Listening and hearing; Listening to each other to keep together in time and in pitch. Knowing what parts everyone else is playing with yours,
- Social; sharing a common interest,
- Visual; following the conductor and reading music,
- Concentration and focus; keeping up with what the group is doing whilst also endeavouring to get your own part correct,
- Motivation; Playing in an ensemble can help motivate students to want to improve their skills, it provides a reason/point for all the work required.

Further Reading

There has been much written on the benefits of learning a musical instrument, here are a few links as a starting point:

<http://time.com/3634995/study-kids-engaged-music-class-for-benefits-northwestern/>

<http://www.effectivemusicteaching.com/articles/directors/18-benefits-of-playing-a-musical-instrument/>

