

- Discuss the methods by which the writer of this text presents convincing arguments about the importance of music education:



The secret power of music education

ANNE LIERSE asks why educational authorities in Australia are allowing music to be marginalised in the majority of schools. In this article, she provides a clear rationale for providing every school with a substantial music program.

THE empirical evidence relating to the powerfully educative effects of music education on the personal and academic development of the child is expansive and compelling. The claim that “music makes you smarter”, coming from brain research and qualitative psychological studies, substantiates the claim that music education is an essential part of the school curriculum and students who miss out are being deprived. An accumulative amount of research conducted nationally and internationally over many years

has presented compelling evidence that music education is powerfully educative and has emotional, therapeutic and motivational benefits for children. Its transfer effects benefit the development of the whole child in personal, social, and intellectual domains, as well as the development of language literacy, numeracy, creativity, social skills, concentration, team-work, fine motor coordination, self-confidence and emotional sensitivity. [...]

What is the secret power of music?

The secret power of music has been known to all major civilizations going back to antiquity, where music was considered to be the most important of the sciences, the most important path to religious enlightenment, and the very basis of harmonious government and the character of man. Plato wrote, *“I would teach children music, physics, and philosophy; but most importantly music for in the patterns of music and all the arts are the keys to learning.”* [...]

Music and the physical body

Science has found that most functions of the body are affected by music: the brain, blood pressure, heart-rate and the muscles. Also, music can be both a sedative and a stimulant, because the roots of the auditory nerves are more widely distributed and possess more extensive connections than those of any other nerves in the body. Podolsky, in *Music for your health*, claims his investigations show that music affects digestion, internal secretions, circulation, nutrition and respiration. Even the neural networks of the brain have been found to be sensitive to harmonic principles with consonant and dissonant chords, different intervals, and other features of music all exerting a profound effect upon man's pulse and respiration. Blood pressure is lowered by sustained chords and raised by crisp, repeated ones. Because of this, music affects the body in two distinct ways: directly, as the effect of sound upon the cells and organs, and indirectly, by affecting the emotions, which in turn influence numerous bodily functions. Podolsky argued, *“If a musician is playing his instrument, then he and his instrument can also be said to be ‘playing’ the bodies and minds of the audience.”* [...]

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Musical performance enhances intelligence

Music performance plays a notable role in enhancing intelligence and student performance. An important 10-year research study with 25 000 students titled *Champions of change*, found overwhelming evidence that involvement in instrumental lessons and ensembles¹ had an incredible pay-off for students academically, therapeutically and socially.

Creativity

There are many studies demonstrating that children of all ages who have music education score significantly higher on creativity tests than non-musical students. It also found that the greater the number of music classes attended, the greater the creativity.

Social and personal domains

In the area of music therapy, the healing power of music is well accepted. We have all heard William Congreve's² statement that *“Music hath charms to soothe the savage beast”*. Jean Maas, a music therapist states, *“Music is the greatest power ever experienced. I doubt if anything else equals its power to act upon the human organism”*. In the literature of music therapy, reports can be found of success in the treatment of hysteria, depression, anxiety, nervousness, worry and fears, tension, insomnia, and so on. [...]

Adapted from the article by Dr Anne Lierse “The secret power of music education: A rationale for music in every school”, *Leadership in Focus* (quarterly publication of the Victoria Principals Association, 2012).

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¹ ensembles: groups of musicians

² William Congreve: English poet and dramatist