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The Role of the Family in the Child's Musical Development

Abstract

The text contains examples of the influence of parents on the advancement in the music education of their children. It analyzes statistics of research studies concerning the dependency between parental influence and careers of mature musicians. It deals with the influence of the family on the basic musical development of each child from the beginning of his life and human musical development. The article draws attention to anomalies in upbringing. Examples of artistic stimulation within family are shown.

Keywords

Family, child, music, development, education.

Genes and the upbringing of children are of fundamental importance and act as the most powerful factors conditioning a child's personality. The influence of a family¹ has stupendous meaning in the primary developmental stage of a child's growth, often bearing life-long consequences. Parents, who care for their babies in a loving way from the very beginning can be sure that their children will later become attached to them and grow up to be confident and

¹ *Families: Opportunities and Challenges*, ed. J. Stala, Kraków 2019; *Strengthening Families*, eds. J. Stala, J. Garmaz, Kraków 2016.

friendly. Parents who talk to their children, listen to them and read to them out loud usually have intellectually skilled offspring who perform well at school. Parents who set assertive but flexible limits tend to have children who rarely get into trouble. Bread-winners who treat their offspring harshly end up with children who are aggressive, anxious or even both. On the contrary, those who show their offspring affection and are fair to them will most probably deal with equally affectionate, just and caring children.² Parents pass their genes onto their child, and in the early years of their development they create their environment. The next stage of development revolves around peer environment and the society within which the youngster functions and tries to incorporate.

Children are born with natural abilities to learn new paradigms and skills. What use they will make of their predispositions and how their brains will be shaped depends on their everyday surroundings. Any aspect of culture realized at a particular household can be implemented by parents onto their children. Everything a toddler can learn at home and what is constrained there, whilst not undergoing any peer verification, can be passed from parents onto their child. Children learn music at home. If it is practiced during preschool education, it will act as support for parental input. When parents themselves are musically oriented, or when they provide their household with an artistic ambiance, this exerts a special influence on a child's musical progress. Children of such parents attend symphonic or chamber music concerts as well as ballet and opera performances much more frequently. Moreover, such families also practice music at home. Furthermore, it is precisely the participation in concerts and listening to music that makes it possible for them to learn the artistic value of music in all its forms. Such opportunities allow children to see for themselves how music is created and somehow they also feel that they participate in the process. Live music is most engaging, and it leaves a person immensely impressed. Additionally, through live music one can prominently impact a child's emotional sphere. Experiences coming from active, expressive and personal contact with music bring satisfaction and reduce tension which is important in terms of psychological balance. Contact with music expands the intellectual sphere – musical pieces evoke a variety of associations among listeners – music awakens imagination, prompts evaluation and positively affects the ability to understand the world. The lack of proper triggers from society might often be a missed opportunity for our children to grow in the musical sphere. A youngster raised without music

² J. R. Harris *Geny czy wychowanie?*, Warszawa 1998, p. 21.

will surely not perceive it as anything worthy, and even if he or she does, they would still do without it.³

There are many examples showing that channeling the progress of one's children is impacted not only by genetic factors but is also significantly affected by the parents' behaviour. Judith Rich Harris talks about a pair of twins separated at birth and raised in different adoptive families.⁴ One of them became a solo pianist, while the second could not play a single note. The irony lies in the fact that the girl who played the piano grew up in a completely non-musical family, however, her mother was stubborn enough to educate her adopted daughter in the field, and to push her systematically to take piano lessons. On the other hand, the mother of the second twin was a piano teacher herself and she let her daughter decide whether to learn the instrument or not. It is therefore visible that making use of a child's gift was fully dependent on the parent. The shaping of a talent rigorously influences the development of a gifted child and their high musical achievements.

During one of the International Chopin Piano Competitions, which was held in 1960, research was conducted on the competitors. The aim was to establish the factor that had made it possible for the competitors to achieve their musical skills and to study their personalities in general. The results concerning the environment of the people being studied turned out to be surprising.

- • All competitors practiced for the ICPC with full control of their parents up to the age of fifteen.
- • Also, all of them were children of unemployed women regardless of the country they lived in.
- • Moreover, 80% of the musicians started to learn the instrument before turning seven years old.
- • Lastly, 90% of all competitors came from musically accustomed families.

Another study conducted in Warsaw took place in a music school and examined the growth of students from working class circles. Due to the school's

³ A. Pękala, *Rola rodziny w kształtowaniu zainteresowań muzycznych dziecka* http://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media/files/Edukacja_Elementarna_w_Teorii_i_Praktyce_kwartalnik_dla_nauczycieli_/Edukacja_Elementarna_w_Teorii_i_Praktyce_kwartalnik_dla_nauczycieli_-r2006-t-n2/Edukacja_Elementarna_w_Teorii_i_Praktyce_kwartalnik_dla_nauczycieli_-r2006-t-n2-s13-17/Edukacja_Elementarna_w_Teorii_i_Praktyce_kwartalnik_dla_nauczycieli_-r2006-t-n2-s13-17.pdf (17.03.2020).

⁴ J. R. Harris, *Geny czy wychowanie?*, Warszawa 1998, p. 347.

detailed recruitment records, the school was able to observe the following pattern: it turned out that after seven years of education, the students from the working-class group amounted to 80% of the students resigning from the school.⁵ The drop out rate of students with a high standard of musical ability was directly related to the lack of understanding among their family members of the importance for regular practice. The parents did not understand that it takes two to three months of practice for a child to polish a piece of music and that receiving an instrument and being perceived as talented is not enough. Therefore, a child would see the disappointment of its parents and, being completely discouraged, resign in the 3rd or 4th grade. The period of a child's education institutions such as music schools, tends to be filled with a number of duties for the parents; these include driving children to school, taking part in their concerts, competitions, observing their mindset, engagement, their ability to concentrate, dealing with tiredness and patience. The hardest part is to play the role of 'the guardian' watching over the hard work of a youngster. A crucial element is also the way parents react to the learner's dissatisfaction with themselves. The motivation for further work, battling downheartedness and lack of confidence, the ambiance of support and acceptance – all these are shaped by those close to them. Thus, the role the parents play in the success of the student, is of utmost value.

I myself, am a perfect example of a musician raised in an artistic household and bringing up musical children. I studied the violin in primary and secondary music school, and then I took up choral conducting. I have worked as a conductor for 25 years. My father was a professional musician. He hasn't had any impact on my upbringing but his genes surely affected my predispositions. My mother was the main carer since my early childhood. She was a painter and had a very good voice and sense of hearing. I remember how we used to sing in harmony while baking or preparing holiday dishes. There was a turntable and loads of vinyls with a variety of music. We often listened to Vivaldi or Edith Piaf. My mother decided to send me to a music school because she observed my outstanding abilities in the field. Along the way she was a gentle guardian in my development. When I had my three daughters, I decided to give them all an education in music starting from early childhood. They have been watching me doing my job from an early age. I took them to my rehearsals where they witnessed the process of musical creation, before they had even learned to walk.

⁵ Department of the Music Psychology of FCUM, *Psychologiczne podstawy kształcenia muzycznego*, Warszawa 1997.

When we sang at home, we would provide them with variations, we improvised and simply had fun with music. I was a really busy mother. At the times of my absence, there was a nanny who stimulated their intellectual and musical activity. She read a lot of stories, danced and sang with my daughters. In the meantime, I also took care of their musical development. I oversaw their instrument practice, urged them to work on their own and took care of the regularity of their work. Currently, my 20 years old daughter M. studies bass at Academy of Music and she is focused on making it her profession. My middle daughter A., who is 17 years old, graduated from primary music school in a flute class. She doesn't play the flute anymore, however, she stays in touch with live music as she sings in a semi-professional choir. My youngest daughter, Z. (14 years old) is a fantastic violinist. She plans to pursue a career as a musical actress and vocalist. When I sent my children to a music school, I was not thinking of music as their potential future job. I just wanted them to perceive the world with sensitivity, in a more versatile and broader way. My aim was to give them an array of experiences and emotions and for them to learn how to be organized. One of the desirable fruits of musical education was for my daughters to practice diligence, regularity, ability to think fast and to expand insightful perception. However, I did not force further musical education on my children. I then let them choose for themselves.

Almost all the classmates of my youngest daughter come from a family in which at least one parent has some sort of contact with a particular form of art. Moreover, more than a half of M.'s college friends have their roots in family traditions. A positive approach to music at home and stimulation of the child's development in this direction paid off in the subsequent choice of the path of education. It is therefore a visible consequence in upbringing even on adulthood level, until university students can be perceived as adults in full understanding of that word.

Taking into account my humble statistics and many years of observation I find it reasonable to share the following conclusion. Societies of large cities have multiple possibilities to interact with art. Moreover, people who live in big cities may also be employed in artistic institutions, such as in the running of operas, theaters, concert halls, artistic schools even if they are not artists themselves. Children of artists constitute a high percentage of the students in music schools. Conversely small towns and villages have fewer possibilities to develop artistic awareness. What follows is a decreased determination among parents to educate their children in music, as well as less help being available in pedagogical

issues. In my view, this brings about inequalities in different levels of teaching. Another observation is that music schools concentrate local societies and cater for them. Academies of music admit students from varied societies and that is why there are fewer young musicians from traditionally artistic families than in institutions of primary musical education.

In 2014 an article by Musical Development Among Poles Foundation (Fundacja na Rzecz Rozwijania Muzykalności Polaków) titled “Music-making in Poland” showed the results of a broad study concerning a variety of conditioning factors in the musical activity of Poles.⁶ One of the chapters was devoted to the family’s role in building the offspring’s musical path. Among 1200 people, 70% had never or only occasionally experienced music-making in their family. Also, only 7% of the families in the study were musically active and involved in the musical progress. In terms of repertoire 51,9% of the pieces or songs performed are Christmas carols, 20,4% are current musical hits, another 20,1% convivial and country songs, 16% folk songs, 13,4% patriotic songs and lastly 2,3% consist of classical pieces such as chorales and opera passages. Another study revealed that when music-making is common practice between family members, it contributes further to the musical development of children. What is even more important is precisely the engagement of the parents that pushes children towards shared music creation.

The influence which a family has on a child’s music education is worth showing through an example. The story dates back to the time I conducted an orchestra in a primary music school. One of my students who played the cello was diagnosed with ADHD. Right from the very beginning he didn’t show any willingness to cooperate with me and he was disobedient. This boy couldn’t catch up during the lesson and providing instruction once was insufficient for him to begin playing on time with the rest of the group. He played whatever he wanted and whenever he wanted to. When asked to stop, he would continue to play alone, even when everybody else was quiet. The student used to talk to himself or comment on my actions, sometimes even laughing or making fun of me. I tried to let his behavior go unnoticed and continue the lesson regardless. Yet, it completely disrupted my work, as much as it was disruptive for the rest of the students who, from time to time, would give me subtle signs that they were being disturbed.

⁶ A. Białkowski, M. Migut, Z. Socha, K. Wyrzykowska, *Muzykowanie w Polsce*, http://www.muzykajest.pl/muzykowanie/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/muzykowanie_2016-fina%C5%82owa-wersja.pdf (26.11.2020).

I had several talks with the student, explaining to him how the work in a group, especially in an orchestra, should look like. During rehearsals I would approach the student to help him individually. Through this experience I was learning the specifics of ADHD but for the first time I felt helpless. I couldn't find any way to tame the boy. Finally, feeling discouraged and out of patience, and disheartened by the wasted time and energy, I turned to the headmaster with a request of providing a substitute class for the child. Soon after I made that request, the parents of the child came to see me. It turned out that they cared and that they were aware of the situation. The parents promised their cooperation and help, but asked me not to remove their son from the orchestra. They promised to be present at the future rehearsals. Indeed, their presence during the lessons gave their son a lot of confidence. He became calmer and was able to focus on his music. Gradually, he started overcoming whatever was blocking him internally, and he started learning the patterns of behavior required to play in a group of people. Seeing my approval and enlivened by his parents, he began to cooperate. Our connection was growing stronger and we would sometimes chat during the breaks. Finally, we gently limited the presence of his parents during the rehearsals. The student stopped to misbehave, became focused and willingly fixed any mistakes. He also felt comfortable taking part in concerts. Today, he is a music college graduate, a gentleman who plays in one of the Polish orchestras. It is evident that his achievement was due to his parents' support and their determination. This is a rare example of a role that can be played by the family. Nonetheless, I truly feel that there are more similar families, and that the musical development of a child is possible only with understanding and care of the closest relatives.

I will get back to the basis of forming a child's general musical abilities. The most important environment in which the child evolves and fulfills its basic needs is the family⁷, and it remains of utmost importance. Family is the first and natural trigger in supporting the development of potential musical abilities. Moreover, the family is the first one to watch the first steps in a child's musical experience.⁸ The pedagogical meaning of the family as being an exceptional environment for human's life remains unchanged. Regardless of any modifications

⁷ Cf. *Religious Education / Catechesis in the Family. A European Perspective*, eds. E. Osewska, J. Stala, Warszawa 2010.

⁸ M. Suświłło, *Psychopedagogiczne uwarunkowania wczesnej edukacji muzycznej*, Olsztyn 2001, p. 112.

that the family might undergo with time, it “holds particular potential, crucial to play its role.”⁹

The family is a natural and irreplaceable environment of a person’s birth and development. It is where both child and adult satisfy their fundamental needs. When it comes to sociological terminology, such terms were created: a small (nuclear) family that gathers parents and their children, and a greater (extended) family that also includes a broader circle of relatives, especially grandparents and siblings belonging to the same household.¹⁰ Most sociological definitions of the family underline the tasks that the family should cover. The most important ones include: providing the biological continuity of society, satisfying material needs, preparing for independent living and handing over the cultural legacy for next generations. The family is one of the most important primary groups, namely, groups that are characterized by extremely close and direct contact of their members: they are establishing an emotional, close relationship with each other, based on cooperation and solidarity.¹¹ Ancient philosophers and thinkers already pointed to the family as an essential and basic element of social construct. Aristotle found it to be the foundation of social structure. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights it constitutes the natural and basic cell of the society. It is also similarly described in the European Social Charter, which was rectified in Poland in 1997, giving the institution of the family the right for proper social, lawful and economic security.¹²

Human development usually takes place in a family’s environment and every family should be aware of this fact. Already in the prenatal period, the formation of music receptors takes place, and in the 20th week of pregnancy, the hearing is fully developed and motoric reactions are the result of hearing music and sounds. After birth, the child reacts to the sounds it heard during pregnancy. It recognizes its mother’s voice, and can distinguish between the mother’s voice and the other sounds and voices. It is familiar with songs and

⁹ W. Segiet, *O Związku edukacji z rodziną społeczne konteksty i jednostkowe biografie*, Poznań 2013, p. 55.

¹⁰ *Rodzina – Wychowanie – Przyszłość*, eds. E. Osewska, J. Stala, Kraków 2020; B. M. Kałdon, *Rodzina jako instytucja społeczna w ujęciu interdyscyplinarnym*, Warszawa 2011.

¹¹ J. Rembowski, *Rodzina w świetle psychologii*, Warszawa 1986.

¹² *Rodzina w społeczeństwie – relacje i wyzwania*, eds. E. Osewska, J. Stala, Kraków 2019; B. M. Kałdon, *Rodzina jako instytucja społeczna w ujęciu interdyscyplinarnym*, Warszawa 2011.

humming performed by its mother before it was born; it recognizes her favorite music; music that she was listening to during the pregnancy.¹³

Many publications have research results showing improvement in the health of premature babies when their mothers sing lullabies while cuddling them. Scientists from Meir Hospital in Israel conducted a study, published in "Acta Paediatrica", which proves that mothers who murmur and hum to their prematurely born babies, simultaneously ensuring the touch of their skin, effectively influence the child's recovery but surprisingly, it also positively affects the mothers themselves. A team of pediatricians under Shmual Arnon's tutelage examined 86 pairs of mothers and their children being hospitalized in ICU because the babies were premature. All the babies were born between the 32nd and 36th week of pregnancy. Some of the mothers only took up kangaroo care, whereas other mothers added singing to it. It was later observed that babies who were both kangarooed and sang to, had quicker recovery in terms of heart rate than the babies who were only kangarooed.¹⁴ On the other hand, a study conducted by scientists from New York City proves that when a mother sings to a premature baby it may slow down the baby's heartbeat and stabilize his/her respiratory system. Singing soothes the baby, makes it easier for the baby to fall asleep,, creates a good mood, and sometimes even improves the way a child sucks. It might also affect the neocortex, facilitating neurotransmission. As a result, the child becomes quiet and peaceful, as *Pediatrica* magazine claims in its article concerning this issue.¹⁵

After birth, the child hears itself, makes noises and consciously tries to modulate them. It practices its voice's power and gradually its complexity, too. A child can differentiate people's voices, follow the source of the sound with its sight, and laugh when hearing its mother's voice, starting even as early as the second week of life. A baby tries to match its voice's pitch with the noises it hears starting from the third month and it reacts with movement while listening to music from the sixth month onward. Before turning one, an infant distinguishes speech from singing, it hears differences among sounds like tweeting birds, the whirring of an

¹³ M. Manturzevska, B. Kamińska, *Wybrane zagadnienia z psychologii muzyki*, Warszawa 1990.

¹⁴ <http://naukawpolsce.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C401441%2Cspiewanie-poprawia-stan-wczesniakow.html> (18.04.2020).

¹⁵ J. Stala, *Religious Music in the Family as a Manifestation of Religious Feelings of its Members*, in: *Focus on Family and Education*, eds. E. Osewska, Split 2016, pp. 165–174; <https://dziecisawazne.pl/wpływ-muzyki-na-wczesniaki/> (18.04.2020).

engine, and household acoustics. Between the first and the second years of life, when a child starts to move around comfortably, it gains the ability to walk, and the reactions to music get richer. At this stage the infant is not capable of coordinating its moves with rhythm, but it can already feel the mood of a song and the changes in its tempo, which becomes apparent in its motor expression. This stage of development is also a period for vocal experiences, initially in a very spontaneous manner, and with time transforming into consciously constructed short melody lines. At the age of two, a child recognizes the second and third intervals in a melody, although it uses even more intervals from the diatonic scale. They can repeat melodies and rhythms which are characteristic of the environment that they live in. A child starts to accumulate groups of words and creates chants out of them and he/she can sing some simple tunes, too. Every infant has many versatile abilities. Innate gifts and predispositions that a child possesses can already be observed at the age of two. These tendencies can be of a musical, sociological, or creative nature. Developing these abilities, and therefore the self-fulfillment of a child, is not exclusively the child's achievement; it is equally a success of those who wisely support the child's progress – notably the parents.¹⁶

The next stage of growing up is the preschool period (3–6 years old). It is a stage when memory develops and musical imagination expands. It is also a time of spontaneously expressed movement and song. Children gain the ability to listen carefully; what is often expressed as sitting still. Flourishment of those skills should be consciously stimulated by parents and pre-school classes. Movement and games are the most effective factors influencing the general development of the child. There are plenty of physical activities and guidelines to create these and guidelines on how to use them with music. Therefore, the type of music that children listen to really matters. The more one keeps on speaking to a child in a childish way, the longer the child takes to learn how to speak. Therefore, keeping this fact in mind, it is sensible to propose ambitious music to children. It is of the foremost value that they have easy access to such music, and that the music is varied. Factors which are worth being taken into consideration are the tone, rhythmical, stylistic diversity and a wide range of forms and instrumentations. Unfortunately, the majority of music for children which is available on the market, is completely opposite. Children might have their own

¹⁶ M. Manturzewska, B. Kamińska, *Wybrane zagadnienia z psychologii muzyki*, Warszawa 1990, pp. 31–36.

specific musical preferences even in the earliest stages of life. They often appear to be more tolerant, open and interested in things which seem too difficult for adults to appreciate.

Once one is aware of the things mentioned above, one should take into consideration that every parent has the competence to develop the musical skills of their child. We can teach our children to speak without the help of a speech therapist, and we can teach them how to walk without the support of a physiotherapist. Similarly, we can teach them how to dance and sing, whether or not we are especially educated in the field. From the earliest moment of his life, every person has a natural musicality, for which one should create the right conditions for its development. Our children have some potential in order to manifest themselves with their voice and their body, but like in case of the language, they need practice. It narrows down to musical games engaging movement of the body, singing, improvisation, and playing instruments in simple and cheerful ways. The simplest songs can be clapped out, stomped, sung on random syllables, and played on pots or other home devices. A study conducted by Linda Kelley and Brian Sutton Smith showed that ensuring that there is the appropriate musical environment at home conducive to learning, is key. They conducted research in 3 groups of parents: a group of professional musicians, a group of parents who included musical activities in the family lifestyle despite not being musicians themselves, and lastly a group which was not at all musically oriented. The study focused on comparing the musical skills of the children in each group. It was observed that there was a similar level of musical progress between the first two groups and also a significant disparity between them and the third group. Moreover, the result indicated a better quality of relationship between parents and children who practiced musical activities together. Thus, making music together in the family contributes not only to the development of our kids, but it also supports spending the valuable time with close relations.¹⁷

There are many formal groups supporting the promotion of the development of the musical activity in early childhood. It is possible to find schools for parents and their children, which teach methods of musical education. Suzuki is a well-known school that treats learning to play the violin as naturally as learning to talk. At this school small children learn to play along with their parents. They copy the movement and place their fingers appropriately to the melody,

¹⁷ <https://annaweber.pl/zainspiruj-sie/o-tym-jak-rodzice-nieswiadomie-tlumia-zdolnosci-muzyczne-dziecka/> (15.10.2020).

by ear. Parents fulfill the part of a home teacher but the learning process takes place only when a child, a teacher and parents cooperate. Playing an instrument with mother or father, and most importantly with other children, gives children the sense of community – participation in something universal – that is what music is indeed. Adults find repetition tiresome. It is adults who pass on the message to children that repeating is boring; children do not get bored and tired by repeating. Children stumble and fall hundreds of times while learning to walk and yet they do not give up until they succeed. They analogically attempt different activities, treating them as a challenge and a game. So called “musical talent” is irrelevant in the Suzuki method. Perseverance in listening and in repeating melodies is important, equally to good models who play the music to be followed and imitated. Only in that way can the qualities for talent flourish. The main targets of the Suzuki method are the development of the personality, promoting sensitivity for beauty and emotions, learning concentration, responsibility and systematic work. To ensure a happy, sensible and high standard of living it is advisable to commence the process of child’s musical development as early as possible. Creating music supports social behavior, stimulates intelligence and increases the brain’s efficiency. It shapes the whole development and greatly impacts the person’s ability to focus.

I cannot ignore the issues related to toxic parenthood and a misguided approach to teach children to make music. There is a very fine line between our desire for a child’s growth and motivating him/her to do so, and the unhealthy pressure that can appear in a parent’s approach. In its extreme form, this desire can lead to pressurizing the child that affects his emotional and psychological development. The question is, do we persuade the child to follow activities that meet his/her needs, or do we want to use the child to make our unfulfilled dreams come true? Sometimes children want to please their parents because they do not feel acceptance and appreciation for what they present. They may perform musical exercises to attract their parents’ attention and gain their love and approval, even though they dislike or hate them.

Emotional abuse by parents is not as visible as physical violence, but it can often do much more damage. The child becomes very unhappy because he is cut off from his true self. The lives of such children are filled with repressed anger, feelings of loneliness, sadness, periodic fears, and even depression. It is important to note that a young person is a separate being with his own opinion, feelings and perceptions. His individuality and aspirations should receive parental support and never be an extension of their desires.

As parents, we can work to avoid putting pressure on the child. Developing one's own passions and actively devoting oneself to them is an excellent way of self-realization. We then set an example for our children. Worth mentioning, is the spectacular phenomenon known to the whole world, that music and the influence of the family have a significant effect on the expansive artistic development of children. This is undeniable proof of how significant the conscious and skillful management of children's development by their parents and immediate family is.

The Jackson 5, currently touring in a reduced line-up as The Jacksons, is a soul-funk-pop group, founded and led by Joe Jackson, the musicians' father, in 1969. It was Joe Jackson who set the direction for developing the group's sound and stage image. The music of the group, which is very rhythmic, containing easy catchy melodies and extensive instrumentation, was always perfectly performed.¹⁸ The main performers of the group were Joe's sons, including 11-year-old Michael, and two of his sisters who were the backing vocalists. During live performances and in front of the cameras, the musicians radiated with their joyful energy and perfectly performed dance routines. This is where Michael Jackson made his first steps – in the family band. He then became a global musical phenomenon. Undoubtedly, the stimulation of his talent from the earliest age, in the family environment, gave him a strong artistic base and mental foundation to further his career path.

Another popular musical family is The Kelly Family, which plays mostly pop, rock and folk music. The group was founded in the 1970s by Barbara Kelly and her husband Daniel Jerome Kelly. Their children did not go to music school. It was their father, Daniel Jerome, who taught them to play the instruments. Initially, the family sang in the streets and in the subways, collecting money in a hat. Soon they started showing up at festivals and then began touring Europe. In the 90s, they were known in the whole world. They sold record numbers of their albums and performed in front of audiences of several thousands. They were their own managers and producers.¹⁹ The diligence and determination of this family were a deciding factor in shaping their great success, and the effect of the cooperation within the family, which was initiated by the parents, placed them in the history of popular music.

¹⁸ https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Jackson_5 (10.12.2020).

¹⁹ https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Kelly_Family (10.12.2020).

Looking back into the distant past, there are many examples of the influence of the family on children's musical careers. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, as a 6-year-old prodigy, gave concerts at the most eminent aristocratic lounges. His father, Leopold, raised the boy strictly and kept under control the hours of training in isolation. 11-year-old Wolfgang and his 5-year-old sister amazed all Europe with their skills. The influence of Wolfgang's father was so immense that the 18-year-old young genius had to postpone his marriage plans in order to devote himself to a musical career and performing.

Another example would be Sergei Prokofiev, whose first teacher was his mother. She also wrote down her son's attempts at composing music when he did yet not know the music notation. Seeing the child's talent, both parents watched over his education, and, at the age of twelve, Prokofiev was already studying at St. Petersburg conservatory. Another example are the parents of the great musical genius, Fryderyk Chopin's, who were also his first teachers. Both parents played instruments and they took care of the musical education of their son and two daughters. Apart from his musical passion, Chopin's family also instilled in him a love for his homeland, which is evident in the character of his work. Gustav Mahler's parents were not musicians, but they saw their son's extraordinary abilities and decided to educate him in music. Their wise evaluation and constant help enabled the growth of an artist considered by most critics to be one of the greatest symphonists in the history of music.

Looking at contemporary Polish music-making families, the Steczkowski family comes first to mind. The most famous representative of this musical clan is Justyna Steczkowska, who made her debut in 1994 in the program „Szansa na Sukces”. She then won the debutant competition of the Opole Festival, and in 1995 represented Poland in the Eurovision Song Contest in Dublin. Her sister Magda has accompanied her many times during concerts as a backing vocalist, and is currently pursuing her solo career. The Steczkowski family was also a home for two brothers. The first one, Paweł, plays the cello and double bass, he is also a composer and music producer. He formed the Mimofonia production group and the Teuta ensemble. Paweł works as a music journalist for Polish Radio. The second brother, Marcin, plays the saxophone and violin. He is also active in the Mimofonia, the Teuta, and Ludofoniarze. Other family members include Agata, a pianist, composer, and conductor of original artistic workshops, Jacek, a luthier, Cecylia and Krystyna who play the violin professionally, and Maria who is a singer in addition to her day job as a beautician. In 2000, the whole family released the album „Carols and Pastorals” and each year, during

the winter season, they perform in many Christmas concerts in churches all over Poland.

Another family similar to the one mentioned above, is the Pospieszalski family: Jan, Karol, Lidia, Marcin, Mateusz and Paulina, also known as Pola. They often play music together, especially during the Christmas season, which fosters family gatherings.

I am writing this article while sitting at home during the weirdest of times. The coronavirus pandemic has forced humankind to undertake extreme precautions and to stay at home.

This situation has directed human activity towards massive use of online contact, which is currently the best and often the only possible means of social interaction. Whole families, locked in their homes, show their creativity through internet portals. I was especially interested in the phenomena of touring families. The S. family has five children (5–16 years old), including a child with Down syndrome. I personally taught two of them. The parents are very devoted to their children and take great care of them. They also care about their musical development. The family composed and publicly performed a song – an anthem against the virus. All the children played an instrument and sang joyfully, vividly encouraged by their parents. I would like to add that I have seen this family's musical performances several times. I observe that this is much more than a one-time only event. My observation is focused on a conscious upbringing through music and the use of its values in the individual development of each child and in the strengthening of social ties in this smallest family unit.

Another observed online example is the B. family, which I am also familiar with from pedagogical contacts. The father, a fine musician, and his wife took care of the academic musical education of all their four daughters. During the lockdown, they created a wonderful video at home, presenting episodes of the entire family already professionally touring before the lockdown. The extraordinary craftsmanship of the musical arrangement performed testifies the many years of great work of the parents, and the seeds sown in their descendants who, noticing the sense of their education, brought about the highest quality.

People for whom music is of greater than average importance, are often more open-minded, curious about the world and about new things, and willing to go beyond their own limits; just like children are. So, it is up to us parents to determine how we direct the musical development of our offspring and whether we can use our awareness and knowledge to properly cultivate their innate talents.

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Captions for photos

Photo 1. Jackson 5, 1972 television special (https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Jackson_5#/media/Plik:Jackson_5_tv_special_1972.JPG)

Photo 2. The Kelly Family, München 2002 (https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Kelly_Family#/media/Plik:The_Kelly_Family,_M%C3%BCnchen.jpg)