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# Interpreting the musical cultures of children in Ireland: An ethnography exploring children's perspectives and voices in middle childhood experiences of music in Cork

Michelle A. Finnerty

Ph.D 2016

# Interpreting the musical cultures of children in Ireland: An ethnography exploring children's perspectives and voices in middle childhood experiences of music in Cork

Michelle A. Finnerty

Thesis submitted for joint award of PhD

National University of Ireland, Cork

School of Music and Theatre and Dublin City University, Department of Music, St. Patrick's College.

September 2016

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Professor Mel Mercier, University College Cork

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2016

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# Abstract

This study focuses on musical cultures that are experienced and constructed by children in various in-school and out-of-school contexts in Ireland. Situated in the wider context of children's rights in Ireland, its rationale is directly informed by the *The National Research Strategy, Our Children –Their Lives* 2000-2010 (2000) ten-year plan of action which was established in Ireland as a direct result of the *UNESCO Convention of the Rights of the Child* (1989). Through an examination of children's views and perspectives on their 'musical worlds' (Mans, 2009) the many ways in which music plays a role in their everyday lives is documented and interpreted.

The study is informed by research that considers children as active research participants and employs ethnographic fieldwork methods and a multi-method approach to carrying out research with children (Kellett et al 2004; Kellett, 2005; Moss & Clark, 2001). Drawing on cross-cultural perspectives on the musical cultures of children (Marsh, 1997, 2008; Campbell, 1998, 2010; Young, 1995, 2000; Lum, 2009; Gaunt, 2006; Emberly, 2003, 2009, 2011; Mans, 2009) an ethnography comprising a combination of observations, interviews and audio-visual recordings is carried out at three schools and associated after-school activities in the urban district of Cork. Original findings from the research indicate that children in Ireland experience parallel musical worlds; the music they encounter and engage with in formal education and other formal contexts can often be quite distinct from the music that they engage with, listen to and create spontaneously in both informal and formal contexts.

A synthesis of themes from the literature and research findings lead to recommendations for the development of pedagogical approaches that support the inclusion of children's voices in music education programmes, and that facilitate the role of child-led, unstructured spontaneous improvisations within the provision of music education activities, both formal and informal. Research findings further endorse the

view that music provision for children in Ireland must be embedded into all future policies relating to children's lives.

# Declaration

I, Michelle Finnerty, declare that this thesis is my own independent research and writing, except where appropriately acknowledged in references in the text.

This thesis is submitted for a joint award of PhD from National University of Ireland, Cork and Dublin City University, St. Patrick's College.

This is the only publication of this work, and it has not been submitted for any other degree at National University of Ireland, Cork or any other institution.

All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the Ethics Committees at University College Cork and St. Patrick's College, Dublin City University.

…….  ……

Michelle Finnerty  Date:

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Since 2009, I have been involved with the newly formed Society for Music Education in Ireland (SMEI) national committee in Ireland. The opportunity to be part of this committee has provided a wonderful opportunity to engage with the committee members and to consider the national context of music education in Ireland.

Over the past number of years, I have had the opportunity to work with many different people involved in various strands of music education in Ireland and abroad. These various opportunities have broadened my understanding of music education in Ireland and greatly influenced my ability to engage with the research study. I would like to thank the following:

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Cork July 2016

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# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| CCÉ | Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Eireann |
| CCM | Cork School of Music |
| CCSM | Cork County School of Music |
| DCYA | Department of Children and Youth Affairs |
| DES | Department of Education and Skills |
| ESRI | Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and from Trinity College Dublin (TCD). |
| ISME | International Society for Music Education |
| MEND | Music Education National Debate |
| MEP | Music Education Partnership |
| MG | Music Generation |
| MGCC | Music Generation Cork City |
| NCO | National Children's Office |
| NCS | National Children's Strategy |
| OYMCA | The Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs |
| SMEI | Society for Music Education in Ireland |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| YPCE | Young People Children and Education |
| ECCE | The Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme |
| FETAC | The Further Education and Training Awards Council |

# Chapter One: An Exploration of Children's Musical Cultures in Ireland: Research Context, Aims and Methods

## 1.1 Introduction

My interest in studying the musical cultures of children in Ireland emerged initially from my experience of being an Irish traditional musician and educator and the opportunities that this afforded me to engage in diverse formal, informal and community education contexts throughout Ireland. Working musically with children in various settings has increased my interest in understanding children and the significance of music in their lives. Becoming a mother has heightened my motivation to understand and develop the role of music in the lives of children.

The roles that I have undertaken as a researcher, advisor, music facilitator and teacher have elevated my interest in children's musical activities and the local and national contexts which provides and supports these activities.[1] My masters' dissertation (Finnerty, 2008) examines the connections between music, school and community, and uses case studies within the primary level education system in Ireland. Its focus on formal, curricular aspects brought to the fore many elements of children's musical culture and, notably, also revealed significant unstructured, informal and spontaneous music making engaged in by children, both inside and outside of the school context.

Children's engagement in spontaneous music making has been researched and documented in international studies within the disciplines of music education and throughout ethnomusicological studies of children's musical cultures (Marsh, 2008; Campbell, 1998, 2010; Young, 1995, 2000; Lum, 2009; Gaunt, 2006; Emberly, 2003, 2009, 2011). These international studies reveal children's natural engagement in spontaneous and creative music making as they engage in unstructured 'free' play. Many of the descriptions outlined within these studies resonate with my personal encounters with children in schools and, in particular, with recent experiences with my own children.[2]

---

[1] These projects include *Bridging the Gap*, UCC (2001-2005), *Linenhall Arts Centre* (2007-2008), *The Connections project* (2007-2013), *Tiny Voices* (2013), and *Club Ceoil*, Music Generation Cork City (2013-2015).

[2] Although these personal experiences do not contribute directly to this study, they have increased my desire to engage in research in this area and to understand more about children and the role of music in their lives.

This study is part of research that has been funded by the Office for Minister for Children and Youth affairs (2010-2014). The research findings are contextualised in relation to the National Children's Strategy (2000) and the various government policies and legislation on children and music in Ireland. In this opening chapter, I discuss the background, context and rationale of the study. I highlight its aims and objectives and outline the primary research question. I consider the parameters and limitations of the research and conclude with a preview of the overall dissertation structure.

### 1.2 Background, Context and Rationale

Music intersects with children's lives in various ways. They experience music as part of their everyday soundscape. Their engagement with music is multifaceted and this study highlights how music plays a role in their everyday lives and how children experience music inside and outside of the school context. Exploring the relationship between music that children engage with formally in the school environment and the music that children create informally and spontaneously, both inside and outside of that environment, this study highlights how children are 'active agents' in choosing the music they create, make and listen to, and reveals that they have their own views on their relationship with music and its role in their lives (Campbell & Wiggins; 2013:1). The study aligns itself with Campbell's emphasis on the importance of understanding the music that children have 'within them':

> The music children have within them, as well as their thoughts about music are starting points for understanding their values, their knowledge, and their needs (Campbell, 1998).

Throughout my research, I consider that 'what children say may at least partly reveal what children think' (Campbell, 2010:102). Through a critical examination of children's views and perspectives on their musical worlds, this dissertation reveals how children experience parallel musical worlds; the music they encounter and engage with in formal education and other formal contexts can often be quite distinct from the music that they engage with, listen to and create spontaneously in both informal and, indeed, formal spaces. Children's informal, spontaneous music is also influenced by the music that

children experience formally. Irish traditional music is a central part of the lives of many children involved in this study. Popular music also emerges as an important part of children's experience and engagement with music. In this study, I consider the connection that many children have with Irish traditional music and I explore the influence of popular music genres on their musical tastes and interests. I reveal children's views on the role of music in their lives, highlighting the emotional, social and physical effects of engaging with and listening to music. I also discuss children's ideas about musicality and how these ideas influence their level of engagement with musical activities and their self-identification as musicians. In addition, I consider children's music activities in the home context.

The importance of facilitating children's views on matters that affect them is clearly articulated in the National Children's Strategy (2000). In terms of arts and culture, the National Children's Strategy specifies that children 'will have access to play, sport, recreation and cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood' (2000:57). This statement provides a particular opportunity for ensuring that the arts are integrated as a key dimension of children's development. In order to realise and support the implementation of the National Children's Strategy, it is important to understand the meaning and role of music and the arts to children in Ireland. Understanding how music is part of children's lives in Ireland and by listening and talking to children, this study aims to raise their voices, encouraging them to share their thoughts, interests and views in relation to music education in Ireland.

Children in Ireland experience music in a wide range of formal and informal contexts, including the home, the school, in the community and though various forms of media. They have variable control over these contexts and interactions. The extent to which music is part of these situations and the level of children's desire to engage with music varies depending on the setting. Both formal, structured contexts and informal, unstructured contexts emerge as important and influence the methodologies used in

this study. Highlighting the social significance of the various spaces that children inhabit, James et al state,

> ...the spaces of everyday life...are produced though their webs of connections within wider global social processes which in turn are reshaped through their constant re-articulation. Just as spatial discourses are important as they inform social-spacial practices in the spaces of everyday life, which in turn reinforce our specialised ideas about childhood (James et al., 1998:18).

The home, the school and the playground are three primary spaces where children's musical cultures have been documented in this study, and this follows international studies of children's music (see: Campbell, 1998 & 2010; Gaunt, 2006; and Marsh, 2008). After their experiences of sound in the womb (Parncutt 2006, 2012), children next experience music and develop a relationship with musical sounds in the home. McPherson's research on the role of parents in children's musical development highlights the significance of the home environment and that from a young age, 'children develop resilient attitudes, beliefs and expectations about their potential to learn music that have been instilled in them through interactions with their parents' (2009:91).

In Chapters Five and Six, I report on children's experiences of music at home and reveal how this environment offers them a space to play music, listen to music and often create their own music. In Chapter Four, I include a brief discussion of how children who attend pre-school education in Ireland also experience a range of musical interactions with their pre-school teachers and peers.

The primary level classroom is an important formal space in which children encounter music outside of the home in Ireland. The Revised Primary Curriculum (1999) is the formal curricular guideline for the teaching of music at primary level education in Ireland. Alongside classroom curricular music activities, many schools organise whole-school musical activities as part of the school day which provide another opportunity for children to experience and engage with music within the school environment. The school yard is an important space where children engage in social interaction throughout their

school lives. There have been a number of international studies that reveal a rich source of data on children's musical and play activities in the school yard (Campbell, 1998/2010; Marsh, 2008; Emberly, 2009). Although the primary level classroom is often considered to be a space that is formal, structured and curriculum led, additionally it often provides opportunities for informal, unstructured and non-curriculum based activities to take place. In her research on children's musical cultures, Marsh reveals how the 'classroom can be permeable in nature', and how 'the roles, relationships, and identities of the children and adults who inhibit the classroom are also quite fluid' (2011:31). Her research also reveals how musical activities can move between various spaces, such as the playground and classroom. Commenting on her study of learning, teaching and musical identity in a remote Australian Aboriginal Homelands School, she writes:

> Environments for learning were also permeable, with formal music learning and musical play activities both occurring in the liminal covered area and moving between the playground and classroom at different times (Marsh, 2011:31).

In an Irish context, Ward (2011) reveals how children engage and experience both formal structured activities in the classroom and how they engage in child-led spontaneous activities often during free play in the classroom and during breaks outside. In Ireland, children engage in many after-school extra-curricular musical activities in a variety of formal and informal contexts. In Chapter Four, I provide a detailed discussion of extra-curricular musical activities. In Chapters Five and Six I explore the relationship between the in-school and out-of-school activities and I present children's views on the significance of these activities in their musical lives.

### 1.3 The Research Problem

In the last thirty years, music education in Ireland has encountered many developments at both curricular and policy levels. Up until the last decade, the developments by the Department of Education and Skills in the formal education system have remained for the most part separate to the work of other agencies such as the Arts Council of Ireland. Research studies published by the Arts Council of Ireland such as *Provision for the Arts*

(J. M. Richards: 1976), *The Place of the Arts in Irish Education (1979) and The Deaf Ears Report* (1985) emphasise the important role of the arts in education and highlight the lack of provision of arts education in the Irish context. Throughout the late 1990s, gatherings such as The Music Education National Debate in 1996 and *Crosbhealach an Cheoil* – The Crossroads Conference in 1999 were important opportunities for widespread discussion of music education in Ireland. Formal curricular developments in the area of music education include the introduction of a new Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus in 1999 (Higher and Ordinary Level) and a New Revised Primary Curriculum in Music in 1999.[3] The development of these new documents reflect a growing desire and commitment by the government to the provision of music education for all children in Ireland. However, this commitment has not been realised and the aspiration for an equitable music education system where all children can experience and engage with music is far from being realised. The lack of support to primary school teachers in the development of music throughout classroom and whole school levels is also evident throughout Ireland.

More recent studies and policy framework documents focus on the importance of arts education and the role of the government and arts organisations in supporting and enhancing the provision for children in Ireland (*A National System of Local Music Education Services – Report of a Feasibility Study,* (2003); *Arts Act* (2003); *The Public and the Arts* (2006); *Points of Alignment* (2007)). In 2009, Music Generation National Programme was initiated as a result of philanthropic seed funding from the band U2 and the Ireland funds. [4] The development of Music Generation marks a significant milestone for music education in Ireland as the aims of the National Feasibility Study (Music Network, 2003) are incorporated into the strategic plan which is developed via local Music Education Partnerships (MEPs) throughout Ireland. Although limited to specific regions, Music Generation programmes have increased the opportunities for many

[3] Junior Certificate Programme is for students in secondary school (Years 1-3) and Senior Cycle programme is for students (Years 5-6). A new Junior Cycle Music curriculum will be introduced in 2018 as part of a new programme.

[4] The Music Generation National Programme is discussed in detail in Chapter Three on page 82.

children to engage in music education activities. In recent years, the Music Generation programme has secured a formal commitment from the Department of Education and Skills to support music programmes at primary level education that are additional to the formal music curriculum. This commitment, although limited is significant.

The *Arts in Education Charter,* published by the Department of Arts and Heritage (2012) marks a significant moment in the development of overall arts education policy for children in Ireland. It is particularly noteworthy as it involves the Department of Arts, the Department of Education and Skills in partnership with the Arts Council. The strengthening of relationships between these departments and the Arts Council is noteworthy and marks a huge step in securing of a long-term strategy for the recognition of the role of arts education for all children in Ireland. One of the main objectives of the *Arts in Education Charter*, was the establishment of a National Arts in Education Online Portal for arts education in Ireland. The Society for Music Education in Ireland (SMEI) was also set up in 2012, to act as an umbrella organisation for the development and promotion of music education in Ireland. [5]

Although policy development and provision related to children's experience of music in Ireland has been advanced in recent years, the majority of this provision (in both the formal and in-formal, in-school and out-of-school spaces) has occurred without the direct consideration or input of children. The majority of decisions regarding children and their lives are made by adults. Accordingly, this study emphasises the significance of including children's perspectives, focusing on the area of music and children in Ireland. It also recognises music activities that take place without direct facilitation by adults and acknowledges the importance of children's spontaneous music making activities. Alongside the lack of inclusion of children's voices, this dissertation argues that children's rights to cultural experiences including music are impeded by the absence of a professional development infrastructure that supports primary level teachers and primary level schools in the facilitation of the music in their classroom and schools.

[5] In 2013, it became affiliated with the International Society for Music Education in Ireland (ISME).

Since the 1950s, anthropologists and ethnomusicologists have begun to consider and focus on children as part of their studies of musical cultures. Writing about the significance of this, Campbell states:

> The engagement of anthropology, ethnomusicology, folklore, and sociology with child-focused studies in recent decades has served to validate children as worthy of attention not only for knowing how they fit into adult cultures and systems but also for who they are in the fleeting moments and phases of childhood (Campbell, 2007:892).

Education scholars have also begun to consider the musical culture of children within the context of ethnomusicological fieldwork methodologies and Campbell also welcomes this cross-disciplinary interest:

> Children are moving from the margins of scholarship, becoming of interest to those who study human development, communication and social interactions, cognition, customs and lore, play and leisure, and most importantly children as their own autonomous culture. Their artistic expression, particularly those that combine music, movement, and language, are subjects worthy of study by a cross-disciplinary cluster of scholars in music, culture, and education' (Campbell, 2007:892).

Marsh (2008) argues for new approaches to music education pedagogy built on an ethnographic study of children's own musical practices. In her cross-cultural study of children's musical play, Marsh advocates for new approaches to the study of children's musical behaviours with a particular focus on children's musical play:

> It is time for educators to peer out through the windows of the classroom and notice children's musical play. By incorporating observed manifestations of this play into the classroom, it is possible to develop a 'playful' rather than 'playlike' pedagogy, one that takes account of the cultural nuances and realities of children's musical capabilities and preferences, providing cognitive, performative, creative, and kinaesthetic challenge (2008:318).

Similarly, writing about the study of musical cultures of children in Germany, Alexandra Kertz-Welzel emphasises the importance of understanding the musical cultures of children, stating that 'If teachers do not know their students' musical cultures, it becomes challenging to offer music education lessons that can be meaningful to them' (Kertz-Welzel, 2013:21). Few studies have examined the musical cultures of children considering music within the school context and outside the school. McCarthy (2010) points out that there are 'two kinds of imbalances; with regard to the study of the musical culture of children: 'one in the locus of research in school-based settings that are frequently not attuned to the musical life-worlds of children (Dunne and Kelly 2002:4), and second, the fact that such studies do not include the voices and narratives of children' (2010:1). This study aims to address this gap and to examine the musical worlds of children within and outside of the school context.

This study also aims to address the absence of children's perspectives on their musical worlds in Ireland. The ethnographic fieldwork aims to illuminate children's musical lives and reveal aspects of their worlds to others (Mans, 2009). The research engages with how children think about music, how they respond, make and create music in parallel with how they experience music through various media and within formal and informal education contexts. Following on from the above discussion of the research contexts that inform this study, I now focus on the primary research question that informs this study and I consider the main aims and objectives of the research highlighting the methodological considerations and approaches adopted.

### 1.4 Research Question, Aims and Methodological Considerations

This project aims to explore the contemporary musical cultures of children in Ireland. The research is primarily concerned with children between the ages of six and twelve, with a focus on the various in-school and out-of-school musical activities that exist for children within a particular community setting. The diagram in figure A highlights the main aims of the study.




*Figure A Research Aims*

The primary research question is, how can research into existing children's musical cultures inform strategies for the development of children's access to and engagement with music in Ireland? The three main sub questions that informed the development of the thesis are outlined in figure B below.

| **Research Sub-Questions:** |
| --- |
| 1. **What types of musical activities do children engage in within the school context and out-of-school contexts?** |

| |
|---|
| a. **What do children engage in as part of the school environment?**<br>b. **What is the nature of musical engagement outside of the school environment?**<br>c. **How is music a part of children's worlds as they play?** |
| **2. What are the views of children in relation to their musical worlds?** |
| a. **What are children's thoughts and opinions on music their engage with?**<br>b. **What are their musical interests and preferences?**<br>c. **What types of music is part of their worlds? (home, school, clubs etc.).** |
| **3. How can an understanding of the musical cultures of children inform how music is provided for children in Ireland?** |
| a. **What is the variance in the experience of music in different schools and community environments?**<br>b. **What is the relationship between children's informal child-led 'musicking' [6] and the music that they engage in within the formal school and out-of-school contexts?**<br>c. **How can an understanding of the musical culture of children enhance the provision of music at curricular, policy and classroom levels?** |

*Figure B Research Questions*

In her overview of research on music education and children, McCarthy (2010) points out that there are 'two kinds of imbalances with regard to the study of the musical cultures of children: 'one in the locus of research in school-based settings that are frequently not attuned to the musical life-worlds of children (Dunne and Kelly 2002:4), and second, the fact that such studies do not include the voices and narratives of children' (2010:1). McCarthy argues that the direction of future research should have two main elements, 'Not only do we acknowledge children's musical cultures and bring them into the classroom but also go out and research musical cultures as they are integrally woven into children's lives' (2010:2).

[6] The term 'musicking' is coined by Christopher Small (1998) and is discussed in further detail in Chapter Two on page 42.

To ensure the validation of this research, several sources were investigated. Fieldwork took place in three primary school settings and three after-school settings in Cork city and county, located in the South of Ireland. Primary schools provide an opportunity for a researcher to access children in a safe environment that is supervised by adults. Principal teachers are the main 'gatekeepers' of schools, and, in all cases, they provided access to various areas of the schools and to students, teachers, parents and guardians. As all children are required to attend primary level school in Ireland, the school provides an opportunity to meet with a wide range of children from a local area providing one method of acquiring a representational cross section of a community.

Observations were carried out in the classroom, playground, and during supervised excursions, music workshops and activities organised and facilitated by visiting music teachers to the school. 'Microsystems' (Lum, 2009) such as influences from home, school and local community are considered alongside the larger society 'Macrosystems' (Lum, 2009) influences such as policies, curriculum and media influences. The study adapts ethnographic techniques of taking and writing-up field-notes as detailed by Emersen et al (1995). The importance of spending time immersed within the research participants' lives is also central to this study (Geertz, 1973). In Chapter Four, on page 107 I discuss in detail the methodological approaches used in my fieldwork and how the data was analysed in the writing up of the ethnographic fieldwork chapters.

Alongside the use of data collection from observations and interviews with children in multiple fieldwork settings, this dissertation draws on data from a review of literature from the disciplines of ethnomusicology and music education studies. It also includes analysis of the development of arts education and cultural policy relating to children in Ireland. This multi-method approach to the data collection enhances the research study and aims to strengthen our understanding of the disparity between children's perspectives of their musical worlds and the provision of children's musical cultures as revealed in the strategies, policies, and legislation.

### 1.5 Parameters of the Study

Although the fieldwork for the study is focused on children of the middle primary level age (6-12) and the participants in the study are all living in the South of Ireland, in the Cork region, the ethnography highlights some of the broader contexts to how children experience music in diverse contexts in Ireland. Children's views are represented as individuals as much as possible and not as homogenous groups. They are observed in group contexts in both in-school and out-of-school contexts and some of the findings reflect this method of observation. Throughout my visits to the fieldwork settings, I had many informal conversations with principal teachers, classroom teachers and music facilitators. These conversations do not feature directly in the dissertation but they informed the approach and sensitivities to my presence in the fieldwork settings. During my conversations with children, it emerged that many were very keen to talk about the meaning and role of music in their home lives. This study incorporated these conversations in the writing up of the ethnography and considers the significance of the role of music in the home lives from the perspectives of the children. It acknowledges that a deeper understanding of the role of music in children's lives would extend to fieldwork in the home contexts. However, for reasons of scale, I limited this study to primary school and after-school music clubs. I continue with a brief outline of the structure of the dissertation.

### 1.6 Structure of Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into eight chapters. Chapter One has provided an introduction to the study, outlining the main aims and objectives of the dissertation. Chapter Two provides a historical overview of the study of the musical cultures of children in the disciplines of anthropology, ethnomusicology and music education. Chapter Three explores the national policy and provision of music education for children Ireland and it surveys the provision of music education in Cork. Chapter Four discusses the methodological approach used for this study focusing on a discussion of the various multi-method (Moss, 2001) approaches used and data analysis methods.

Chapter Five and Six share data gathered form my observations and conversations with children on their musical cultures. The final Chapter Seven discusses the overall findings and presents a number of recommendations for further research on this area and future considerations for the development of music activities for children in Ireland.

### 1.7 Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter highlights the motivations for a study of the musical cultures of children in Ireland focusing on personal considerations and on the national and international contexts of the study of the musical cultures of children. It also discusses the various research questions that inform the development of the research plan. The discussion of fieldwork location and methodological considerations provide insight into the structure and design of the study which are further discussed in the thesis.

This study aims to contribute to the National Children's Strategy and the underlining philosophy of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, as it focuses on learning more about the lives of children in Ireland and on raising their voices in matters that affect them. This research focuses on a methodological approach that considers the 'whole child' concept as articulated in the National Children's Strategy (2000). Through ethnographic fieldwork with children, it provides an understanding of their engagement and experiences of music. It highlights a better understanding of children's lives by listening to, and thinking and acting more effectively for children in Ireland. It examines the relationship between children's informal child-led 'musicking' and the music that they engage in within the formal school and in out-of-school contexts. The research findings aim to create a deeper understanding of how children engage and talk about their musical worlds and as a result contributing to our understanding of how to develop and inform the provision of music education for children in Ireland.

# Chapter 2: Cross - Cultural Perspectives on the Study of the Musical Cultures of Children

## 2.1 Introduction

To develop a thorough understanding of the historical study of children's musical cultures, it is important to engage with relevant literature from a broad range of scholarly disciplines. In this chapter, I explore scholarship on children's musical cultures from the fields of folklore, music education and ethnomusicology, in order to achieve 'a metaview of children's expression in music' (Campbell, 2007:881). I begin with an overview of the historical study of the musical culture of children, before discussing the themes and methodologies that are of particular interest and relevance to my research. I consider how the various methods, themes and concepts contribute to an understanding of the musical cultures of children and the changing view of childhood within this context. I also discuss some of the central studies that inform the theoretical concepts used in the dissertation.

## 2.2 Early Folklore Collections

Interest in researching children's music emerged in the late nineteenth century primarily in the fields of folklore, ethnology, anthropology and child study (McCarthy, 2009). Research studies around this period began to show an increased interest in the collection of children's folklore such as games, songs and rhymes. These studies were primarily collected to preserve the musical repertoire and folk traditions of the time. They also provided insight into historical aspects of tradition and childhood.

One of the earliest pioneers of the study of children's games was English folklorist, Lady Alice Gomme. In 1878, Gomme and her husband, Arthur Gomme, founded the English Folklore Society. In 1894 and 1898, Gomme published two volumes titled *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (Gomme, 1894 and 1898). The volumes contain over eight hundred descriptions of children's games, songs and rhymes that were collected by Gomme and a number of other researchers in various parts of England, Scotland and Ireland. Gomme outlines how the material was largely collected from children and their parents. In 1894, Gomme stated that children played an important role in the transmission of traditional folklore and repertoire**.** Her writings reveal that

although she considered children as important in the folklore tradition, her understanding of children was confined to one of imitator of folklore traditions. She argued that:

> Children do not invent, but they imitate or mimic very largely, and in many of these games we have, there is little doubt, unconscious folk-dramas of events and customs which were at one time being enacted as a part of the serious concerns of life before the eyes of children many generations ago (Gomme, 1894:x).

Although the focus of the collections was on the contemporaneous existence of games, Gomme emphasises that the repertoire gathered is an important part of folklore studies and reveals much about the traditions of the period. Gomme collaborated with her husband Arthur on a number of significant collection projects including *Children's Singing Games* (two vols. 1894).

William Newell was a collector of children's games, rhymes and songs in the American context. The majority of the material he collected is published in the pioneering text entitled, *Games and Songs of American Children* (1884). This work is the first known collection of children's folklore in America. The collection contains over one hundred and ninety examples of children's folklore. The material was collected in New York around the 1880s. Although the collection features some material gathered from children, most of the material was collected from accounts of adults recalling examples of material from their childhood. Newell suggested that the material had been transmitted from generation to generation and preserved very close to its original form with only small instances of variations. Unlike Newell, Gomme did not claim that the games recorded in her collections were 'traditional in their present form or have independent origins' (1894:x). She points out that although it may be impossible to observe a contemporary game that is exactly the same as it was one hundred and fifty years ago, there would be similar forms and methods used in a game. Though Newell's collections primarily include older traditional pieces, there are a number of new rhymes that are included in the collection that Newell feels may have been created by children

themselves. Similar to Gomme's observations, Newell also felt that for the most part of the collection, the material was not created by children but by adults. Newell also states that although the material in the collection 'belongs to children' that they are also favoured by adults. These early studies were primarily based upon adults' recollections of the games and songs they had experienced throughout childhood.

The above collections of children's folklore marked the beginning of an increased interest in the study of children's musical cultures. In her historical survey, McCarthy emphasises the importance of these early studies as having 'laid a foundation for future studies, brought to the surface the richness of children's songs and games, and established children's culture as a valid area of folklore studies' (2009:2). The collections also provide insight into views on the origins of children's repertoire and in particular about children's social and cultural roles at the time.

Throughout the 1950s, interest in collecting and preserving children's folk songs and repertoire continued with the publication of many studies in the fields of folklore and anthropology. Iona Opie (1923-) and Peter Opie (1918-1982) were a husband and wife team of English folklorists who were renowned for their collection of children's folklore and their contributions to children's literature. Commencing in the mid-1940s, the Opies published over thirty books on children's culture. *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (1952), *The Lore and Language of schoolchildren* (1959)[7] and *Children's Games in Street and Playground* (1969) included significant accounts of the folklore of children. Unlike the earlier collections of children's folklore such as Gomme and Newell, the Opies collected much of their data directly from the lives of contemporary children. [8]

During the second half of the twentieth century, the Lomax family worked extensively in collecting folk songs from various parts of the US. Their collections feature a range of songs collected from both adults and children. One of the most significant texts to

[7] Their seminal text entitled, The Lore and Language of school Children (1959) highlights the importance of childhood traditions and the relationship between the media.

[8] Opies (1985) detailed account of singing games revealed children's songs and thier connections to courtship dances and medieval carols in various other parts of the world.

emerge from the Lomax collection was compiled by Ruth Crawford Seeger and entitled *American Folk Songs for Children* (1948). The text contains a collection of songs from the Lomax Collection chosen for their suitability to use with children. The increased interest in the study of children's folklore throughout the mid twentieth century gave rise to a number of other studies of children's games, rhymes and songs including Abrahams (1969), Bronner (1988) and Brian Sutton-Smith's *The Folkgames of Children* (1972).

Throughout the twentieth century in Ireland, there have been a number of collections of children's songs and rhymes. One of the most significant works to be carried out on children's folklore collections in Ireland was by writer, broadcaster and musician Davy Hammond. Hammond's seminal television programme *Dusty Bluebells* broadcast on BBC in the late 1980s reveals children engaging in a variety of games, songs and rhymes. Father Damien Webb also collected children's games in Tralee, Co. Kerry. In 1960, he recorded more than forty children's games and produced a recording called *Mickey Mouse, Rock and Roll.* Other publications that collect and document children games, rhymes and songs include: *All in! All in! a selection of Dublin children's traditional street-games with rhymes and music (*Eilís Brady*:* 1984*), Pentatonic Folksongs: Folk Music for Irish Wee Folk – A Teacher's Manual* (Albert Bradshaw: 1988), *The Lore of the Playground: One hundred years of children's games, rhymes and traditions* (Steve Roud, 2010)[9], G*irls and boys come out to play: Irish Singing Games (*Maurice Leyden*,* 2005*) and At Play in Belfast: Children's Folklore and Identities in Northern Ireland* (Donna M. Lanclos, 2003). Most recently there has been a focus on publications of Irish language songs and rhymes such as: *Gugalaí Gug: Rhymes from Irish tradition* (Mac Dhonnagáin & Ryan, 2005), *Peigín Leitir Móir* (Mac Dhonnagáin & Ryan, 2005) and *Báidín Fheidhlimidh* (Mc Gee & Brennan, 2012).[10] Other Irish language recordings include, *A Stór Is A Stóirín* and *When I was Young* (Padraigín Ní Uallacháin and Len Graham 1994 and 1997). Although I witnessed a few examples of traditional songs being sung by

[9] This collection concentrates on the British Tradition but does include some instances and references to Irish traditions.
[10] Ionad Oideachais Ghort an Choirce.

children as part of this research study, there was limited evidence to suggest that the above resources are used in the teaching of music at primary school education today. Further research to consider the value and use of these resources and the impact of other mediums such as radio, television, and records, in the transmission of songs is required, to understand the historical development of children's musical cultures in Ireland.

The above studies of children's songs and lore highlight the renewed interest in children's folklore throughout the later part of the twentieth century. The value of the collections are emphasised by Campbell when she states that, 'Collections of singing games and song texts assert children's poetic sensibilities, their playful interactions and social networks, and their linkages to their community' (Campbell, 2010:884). Although children's musical songs and games were valued and considered important to document in collections, the aim was to preserve repertoire that had been transmitted from older generations. In this present study, I observed a few instances of children singing Irish traditional songs, from the above-mentioned collections. Children appeared to sing these songs as part of group music activities in school, in the playgrounds during free-play time and often as part of informal musical gatherings in after-school settings. Similar to Marsh (2008) and Campbell (1998/2010), I also observed children singing newly composed songs that children created themselves during free play time in school contexts.

One of the most recent developments in the study and collection of children's folklore has taken place in the UK. *Children's Playground Games and Songs in The New Media Age 2009-2011* is a collaborative project between the Universities of London, Sheffield and East London with the British Library. The project aims to develop an increased understanding of children's playground games and songs, building on the Opie Collection that currently exists at the British Library. *Playtimes: a century of children's games and rhymes* is a one of the main strands of the project.[11] It is a web resource as part of the

[11] Web resource available at: www.bl.uk/playtimes, accessed October, 2012.

British Library Learning Collection which explores children's games, songs and rhymes over the last century. The collection brings together a century of children's songs, rhymes and games and presents an interesting snapshot of children's culture in the UK. The website features audio recordings and footage of children's games collected in the UK from 1900 to the present day. It features a large number of field recordings collected by folklorists between the 1960s and 1980s including some from the Opie's and Father Damien Webb. It also provides more recent recordings of children's contemporary folklore collected in a number of primary schools in London. The recordings provide insight into the games that were collected throughout the middle part of the twentieth century. The resource outlines the games according to genre and contains a discussion on the relationship between the historical and contemporary collections. The resource reveals instances of how certain types of games have altered and adapted to contemporary contexts. [12] In my study, I did not focus on the collection of games or rhymes in the school yard specifically, however my observations of children's singing and engaging in musicking in school yards suggests that games and rhymes form a core part of children's musical cultures in primary schools in Ireland.

### 2.3 Interdisciplinary Perspectives: exploring ethnomusicological and music education studies

Since the 1950s, the study of children's music has emerged as an important area of study within the discipline of ethnomusicology. Ethnomusicologists began to include and consider children's music in the context of their cultural studies of music. Since the late 1980s, interest in the study of children's musical cultures has expanded to the field of music education. Research studies within the disciplines of ethnomusicology and music education have enriched the landscapes of thinking about children's music and culture. Studies have taken place in a variety of cultures and in a range of contexts around the world. Studies have been carried out with the Yirkalla of Aboriginal Australia (Waterman,

[12] The collection is divided into a number of categories including: Songs, Pretend Play, Ball Games, playing with things, skipping games, Running Around games, Clapping games, Jokes and rude rhymes.

1956); in the West Indies (Lomax et al 1997); with the Venda people in South Africa (Blacking, 1967) and with the Pitjanjara Australian Aboriginal children (Kartomi 1980). [13] Concepts of repertoire, musical creativity, the transmission process and enculturation have been the focus of many studies as in Campbell, (1998/2010), Marsh (2008) and Emberly (2009). Gender issues have also been to the fore of studies such as Gaunt (2006) and Campbell and Wiggins (2013). In more recent studies, the influence of media and concepts of globalisation have also featured (Emberly, 2009, Pieridou 2006, Green 2011). In the following section, I discuss some of the studies and focus particularly on those that are particularly relevant to this study of children's music cultures in an Irish context.

One of the most significant studies on the musical culture of children was carried out by anthropologist and ethnomusicologist, John Blacking. Blacking's *Venda Children's Songs (1967),* based on his observations of the Venda Community in the Northern Transvaal, South Africa is a landmark publication which sought to raise awareness of children's music as an autonomous culture and an equally valid area to research and understand. Blacking initially focused on studying the musical cultures of the local community. Following on from Merriam's *Anthropology of Music* (1964), which advocated for the importance of studying music in its cultural context, Blacking was influenced by Merriam and he started to focus on understanding the musical cultures of children and the relationship between the lives of children and adults in Venda society.

Five of the most significant studies carried out by ethnomusicologists and music educators provide valuable insights into the musical cultures of children and reveal insightful methodologies of carrying out fieldwork with children in a variety of formal and informal contexts. They are as follows: Kyra Gaunt's *The Games Black Girls Play: Music Body and Soul* (2008), Patricia Campbell's *Songs in Their Heads: Music and Its Meaning in Children's Lives* (1998/2010), Katherine Marsh's *The Musical Playground*

[13] During the 1970s and 1980s, ethnomusicological research started to focus on urban and rural communities within their own culture alongside writing about the musical culture of cities, institutions and various education environments (Nettl 1978, 1983, 1995; Finnegan 1989; Kingsbury 1988; Campbell 1998).

(2008), Avra Pieridou's *The Construction of Musical Identities by Greek Cypriot School Children* (2006) and Andrea Emberly's *Mandela went to China … and India too: Musical cultures of childhood in South Africa* (2009). These studies create an understanding of the musical cultures of children in various contexts and inform appropriate methods of studying children within various formal and in-formal settings.

Gaunt's (2008) study focuses on the musical cultures of children as they engage in free play. Her research argues that the games African American girls play are connected to traditional African American music and that they are used as a means of transmission, enculturation and to aid a socialisation process. Similarly, Marsh (2008) focuses her study on children's musical playground activities. Her cross-cultural study highlights the significant cultural influences that are evident in the study of children's musical songs in the playground. As well as documenting how children transmit and maintain cultural influences in games throughout various cultures, Marsh also includes evidence of children's ability to improvise and create their own games and songs during their free play time. Campbell's (1998/2010) study of children's musical cultures focuses on a diverse range of in-school and out-of-school contexts. Her study highlights how children's spontaneous music making is not just confined to free play time in the playground. Her research reports that spontaneous music making occurs throughout children's everyday lives in various formal and informal contexts. Pieridiou's (2006) study on Greek Cypriot children reveals how children's music making in rural and urban schools is influenced by local and global processes and how this impacts on their construction of musical identities. Likewise, Emberly (2009) highlights how children's everyday music making is influenced by local, national and global contexts.

A number of recent journal articles are of particular significance to this study as they create a historical snapshot of the study of children's musical cultures (Minks, 2002; McCarthy 2010; Campbell 2007). In the articles, the authors trace the historical views of childhood and explore the scholarly conceptions and representations of childhood in a number of disciplines such as anthropology, ethnomusicology, sociology and education

and folklore. The articles highlight themes and concepts that are pertinent to the evolving concept of childhood and the study of children's musical cultures.

Although there have been several significant developments in the study of children's musical cultures in the twentieth century, the study of children's music is still a relatively small area of study with much scope for development. The following section will explore some of the emerging themes and concepts from the literature outlined above. It begins with an overview of the socio-cultural value of music and continues with a discussion of how children's musical cultures are considered autonomous and worthy of study (Blacking, 1973). It considers how children's musical worlds are rooted within musical and extra-musical purposes, and, are related to customs of practice (Mans, 2009). Concepts such as creativity, spontaneous musicking are explored and the role of transmission and enculturation are considered. The discussion of the above-mentioned themes and concepts will provide an important springboard into a discussion of the musical cultures of children in the Irish context.

**2.4 Defining Musical Cultures**

Ethnomusicologist John Blacking defines music as 'humanly organised sound' (Blacking 1973:3). He argues that music is a central part of all societies, a cultural expression of human relationships and a phenomenon that is at the foundation of society. He contends that music making is 'an inherited biological predisposition which is unique to the human species' (1973:7). Writing about the connection between music and human relationships, Blacking states that the role of music is to,

> …enhance in some way the quality of individual experience and human relationships; its structures are reflections of patterns of human relations, and the value of a piece of music as music is inseparable from its value as an expression of human experience (Blacking, 1995:31).

Christopher Small also emphasises the socio-cultural value of music and how music and social relationships are intertwined. While discussing the meaning of music in people's lives, Small argues that 'It is only by understanding what people do as they take part in a musical act that we can hope to understand its nature and the function it fulfils in

human life' (Small, 1998:8). Writing about the concept of "musicking", Small states that, 'to music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing' (Small, 1998:9). During my observations for my research study, I was mindful of Small's concept of musicking. I wanted to ensure that I was open to include all types of musical activities that children engaged with and created. Due to its all-encompassing meaning, I use the term musicking throughout my discussions of children's musical cultures.

Bonnie Wade suggests that 'although music is meaningful in peoples' lives all over the world, different societies, cultures and people use music in different ways' (2004). The importance of observing the ways in which children engage with music has been discussed in a number of key international studies that inform this study (Campbell, 1998; Lum 2009; Lum & Campbell, 2007; Ward, 2012). Campbell emphasises the importance of observing children in order to realise the 'wealth of musical resources' that children carry with them (1998:40). Minnette Mans study, *Living in Worlds of music: A view of education and values* (2009) provides a theoretical framework for understanding the musical worlds of children. Mans' description of a musical world informs the thinking in this dissertation. She describes it as:

> customs of musical practice based on a system of knowledge, understanding, and behaviours brought about by individual and collective musical experiences within a given cultural context(s) (2009:14).

Mans' argues that 'musical practice within a culture does not just "happen"' and that it is as a consequence of a range of 'complex factors' including: 'musical, historical, economical, religious, and educational thought, growth, and exchange in societies over a period of time' (2009:19). Mans' theory suggests that there are three core principles that are part of the formation of a musical world. They are as follows:

- 'Musical worlds are fundamentally rooted within musical and extra-musical purposes' and are 'related to cultural practices and customs'.

- ‘Musical practices are socially motivated and have meaning and value. Musical sounds are probably never processed as sound only’.
- ‘Information in and about music is categorized and that this improves efficiency of information processing’ (Mans, 2009:25).

Later in this dissertation I highlight customs of musical practice that I observed within schools including specific traditional music groups, vocal ensembles, the use of music as part of specific events and festivals. I also reveal how traditions of musical practice outside of the school are a central part of children’s musical cultures. Mans’ critiques the field of music education maintaining that there is much disconnection between how music exists both inside and outside of the formal education system. Later in this dissertation, I draw on Mans’ musical worlds theory and I consider the relationship between the musical worlds of children interviewed in this study and the music that they engage with in both in-school and out-of-school contexts.

Ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin’s theory of ‘micromusics’ ‘small units within big music cultures’ is useful to this exploration of children’s musical cultures. He argues that people live at the intersection of three cultures, the super culture, the sub culture and the inter-culture and that these cultures are appropriate to understanding children (Slobin, 1993). The super is an ‘overarching category’ such as children. Several sub-cultures are embedded units such as gender, age, middle childhood etc. Intercultures are defined as ‘a cross-cutting trend’ such as shared global popular music interests. Slobin’s theory emphasises that all children begin in the ‘nuclear culture of their family’ and then move out and connect with others (Slobin, 1993:55). Campbell draws on Slobin’s theory of cultures and defines children’s musical cultures as ‘large and multifarious and dividedly pluralistic’ and her study of children’s musical cultures reveals a diverse range of ‘play preferences, vocabulary, and expressive styles, and musical uses’ (Campbell, 2010:235). She suggests that the musical cultures of children can be broadly considered in relation to children’s ‘big and ‘little’ cultures. Children’s ‘big’ culture is connected to how their ‘worldviews are different from adults and adults with longer life experiences’. Their

perceptions are influenced by their 'sociocultural surroundings' and that children share a similar extent of 'knowledge, as well as play preferences and interests that are associated with their similar intellectual, social and physical development' (ibid). Campbell suggests that age, stages of learning and locations of schooling are some of the main factors that allow for children's cultures to be understood as 'little' 'subcultures (ibid).

In her seminal work on exploring the transmission of music in Irish culture, Marie McCarthy writes about the important links between the development of musical cultures and community contexts. She highlights how musical cultures are created within community contexts and are influenced and shaped by the socio-cultural contexts that surround people. She writes,

> Musical culture is created within community; efforts by communities to pass on their traditions create canons of practice, of repertoire, and of pedagogy; the transmission of music is facilitated by a broad range of communication media and technologies; such technologies can themselves be canonic, analogous to the belief that 'the medium is the message (McCarthy, 1999:9).

The above interpretations of the term musical cultures inform the thinking within this dissertation. They highlight the fluid and diverse meanings of the term 'musical cultures' and bring to the fore the need to consider the study of children's musical cultures in terms of 'community', 'social values', 'plural' and in 'local, national and global contexts'. I continue with an exploration of definitions of children's music and in particular their spontaneous musicking.

### 2.5 Creativity and Children's Spontaneous Musicking

Children's desire to express themselves creatively is a central theme in many studies of children's musical cultures outlined above. The concept of creativity is defined in multiple ways and similar to the concept of musical cultures, there is no general consensus on one definition. Creativity has been described as 'a state of mind in which all our intelligences are working together' (Lucas, 2001) and as an 'imaginative activity

fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are original and of value (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, 1999:29). In their philosophical statements, UNESCO articulate that 'the encouragement of creativity from an early age is one of the best guarantees of growth in a healthy environment of self-esteem and mutual respect, critical ingredients for building a culture of peace' (www.unesco.org, accessed November, 2013).

It is important to consider the child-led spontaneous musical activities that children engage in alongside adult-led, structured activities. Lum (2009) reveals that children's spontaneous musical activities [14] are most notable during periods of what he refers to as 'down time' and when children are free from adult instruction; examples of 'down time' include: children en route to classes, in between break-times, in between classes, play time, lunch time and in the schoolyard and during after-school clubs**.** Glover (2000) has classified children's musical behaviours into two broad categories of voice play and instrumental play (See Figure C).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Category 1: | Voice Play: | Free Vocalisation<br>nonsense play with language<br>speech<br>chant<br>sing-song<br>song |
| Category 2: | Instrumental Play: | Making sounds by striking, shaking, blowing or scraping objects leading to music patterns |

Figure C: Children's Natural Musical Behaviours – Glover (2000)

Other scholars (Lum, 2009; Lum and Campbell, 2007) identify three main categories of children's spontaneous musical behaviours: melodic utterances, creation and recreation of familiar songs, and rhythmic play (See Figure D).

[14] The term 'natural musical behaviour' is used throughout the literature to refer to how children engage, interact and create with music during moments of free play and/or times without formal music instruction.

| | Categories of Children's Music Behaviours |
|---|---|
| 1. | Melodic utterances |
| 2. | Rhythmic Play |
| 3. | Creation and Re-creation of familiar songs |

*Figure D: Children's Musical Behaviours – Campbell (1998)*

Musical utterances are defined by Campbell as spoken words or syllables that are sung. They are generally short in duration. They are often 'fragments of short songs' that are sung by children or 'composed songs' by children. They are defined as the 'musical phrases that flow effortlessly from ideas somewhere deep within the mind's ear' and a vocalisation of 'the conscious or subconscious thought which an individual may have'. (Campbell 2010:97). The term "rhythmicking" created by Campbell (1998) refers to a person's engagement in any type of rhythmic behaviour. Campbell suggests that "rhythmicking" is similar to Small's "musicking" and states that it 'is the individual's engagement in some manner of rhythmic behaviour' (2010:99). In Lum's observations of a group of primary schoolchildren in Singapore he notes the different functions of rhythmic play and melodic utterances: 'the children tended to motivate and encourage each other in their daily activities through the use of rhythmic play while melodic utterances seemed more prominently tied to expression and communication' (Lum, 2009:27). In an Irish context, Ward (2012) also observes many examples of how children 'use music naturally in their play and that music it is an integral part of some children's play' (2012:65).

Although melodic and rhythmic utterances were observed during the fieldwork phase of this study, they were not as prevalent in this age-group in question, 6-12 year olds. The third category of musical behaviours outlined by Campbell in figure D, the singing of songs, featured strongly in my observations of children in middle-childhood. Children sing songs that they have learned from various sources including parents, family members and teachers. It is widely acknowledged that children also learn songs from their exposure to media such as television, recordings, radios and electronic games (Campbell, 2010; Green, 2011). Children's re-creation of familiar songs most often

occurs in informal unstructured free play and down time contexts. Lum and Campbell's study (2007) highlights the schoolyard as an important site for the singing of songs they have learned. New songs composed by children are often partial imitations of songs they have already heard. Marsh describes this as an 'innovative process' where children often add or omit 'words, lines, stanzas, opening and closing formulae or substituting and reorganizing textual and melodic material, and movement to "go with" the songs' (Marsh, 1995:221). Chapter Five and Six reveal children engaging in the process of newly composed melodies and songs that are often influenced by adult-led structured music experiences. Some of these examples emerge from observations of children musicking and others from children sharing parts of their musical activities that they engage in privately.

The above definitions and understandings of the terms musical cultures and children's natural musicking and rhythmicking inform this research study. A consideration of Mann's theory of musical worlds facilitates children's views on their musical lives inside and outside of educational contexts. In the following section, I further explore the relationship between children's and adults musical cultures.

**2.6 Cultural Contexts of Children's Music**

The idea that the musical cultures of children can reflect the music of the adult culture and also be a separate music in itself emerged as an important theme in ethnomusicological studies. Nettl refers to how these differences vary depending on the society and cultural context,

> The children of the world participate in music-making in various ways, but societies differ in the degree to which they create a separate repertory for children or designate certain songs or pieces as children's music (Nettl 1983, 428).

Nettl continues by stating that 'children are also musically separate, the youngest minority' (Nettl 1983, 428). Blacking (1967) and Kartomi (1980) had previously highlighted differences in the style of music of children and adults. Blacking's seminal work and his theory on children's musical culture was a significant starting point that

advocated the view that children's musical culture was a valuable area of study in its own right. Blacking examined the musical and social and cultural patterns and their relationship to music of the adults. He was interested in how Venda children became adults and he was particularly interested in exploring how culture and music were learned from adults. Blacking's fieldwork highlighted significant differences between the children's musical culture of the Venda and the adult culture. Commenting on this he writes that he was 'puzzled by the apparent lack of relationship between the styles of children's songs and other Venda music. This seemed illogical in a society in which there was no nursery culture, and in which children were frequently involved in adult activities, though as junior spectators…(Blacking, 1967:28-29). He was shocked to find out that much of the children's music sounded different from the adult repertoire. As a result of these observations and findings, Blacking argued to view children's music as a separate and autonomous musical culture to that of adults. He suggested that 'each social group has its associated style of music, its audible badge of identity' (Blacking, 1967:29). Similarly, writing about Australian Aboriginal children, Kartomi (1980) argued that there was a difference in style in children's musical cultures suggesting that '...because the children perform, reproduce, and create according to their own sense of priorities as children' (1980:211). Kartomi draws on Blacking's work and also argues that children's culture is unique, she writes,

> The children are not just little people learning to become adults. They have sets of values of their own which are expressed in and expressive of communal and individual play situations, and which include certain unique musical attitudes and preferences that children's play songs exist as an identifiable musical type (Kartomi 1980:209).

Similarly Blacking's observations revealed that it was 'conceivable that many of the songs were composed by children and not handed down to them' (Blacking, 1967:29). Campbell suggests that children's musical cultures may be a combination of existing musical culture influences by adults and children's own musical and cultural values. She writes,

> The music that children make may be partly derived from the cultural heritage in which they are steeped, and yet there is also the sense that they have musical and cultures values of their own making (Campbell, 2007:885).

McCarthy emphasises how the transmission of music is an integral part of the generational transmission of culture, occurring primarily during childhood and adolescence (McCarthy, 1999:2). Drawing on Blacking's view, McCarthy shares Blacking's statement on the connections between children and culture, 'Children as carriers of culture, and childhood where so much learning occurs, must be seen as crucial to the reproduction of culture' (ibid). In his discussion of the various uses of children's music in cultures around the world, Nettl notes that instances of truly separate children's traditions observed by Blacking may be relatively rare (Nettl, 1983:429). Nettl suggests that ethnomusicological studies on children's musical cultures indicate that the majority of children's music is controlled and directed by adults (ibid:429). Nettl states that 'Children's songs in many cultures are not simply a kind of *gradus ad Parnassum* through which one learns, in stages, the music-making capacity of adults'. He suggests that 'studying the separateness and heterogeneity of children's repertories has many-sided significance to ethnomusicology' (Nettl, 1983:430). Campbell attributes the lack of studies on children's musical cultures to the fact that children's musical cultures are not viewed as separate and individual. She states, 'The absence of children from ethnomusicological descriptions confirms adherence by these scholars to the paradigm of children as reproductive of the music of their elders' (Campbell 2007:885). The lack of musical description of children's musical cultures means a 'micro music' is absent from ethnomusicological discourse.

Some of the earliest ethnomusicological studies on children's musical cultures concentrated on exploring the idea of universals in children's music. The idea that children were part of a homogenous international culture of their own first emerged in two cross-cultural studies (Herzog 1947; Brailouio 1954) which suggested that there was a significant amount of similarities in children's music. Herzog's cross-cultural study of European Children's songs identified similar forms of music in various locations such as

Central and Western Asia, the Baltic States and the Middle East. Brailouio's (1954) cross-cultural study of children's musical play in Europe, West Africa, Russia, Canada and Japan, argued that children's rhythms were universal and based upon a binary eight bar rhythmic structure. It is suggested that Brailouio's argument was limited to analysis of notated songs and lacks any contextualisation of the songs and rhythms observed (Marsh 2008). Marsh writes that the 'rhythmic characteristics or any associated movements or the relationship bet-ween these elements' is omitted from the analysis (Marsh, 2008:15).[15]

Following on from these earlier conceptions of universals in children's music, many studies that followed disputed the notion of universals in children's music and revealed that children's music was more complex than this and that it held unique aspects that were specific to the particular cultural context. The notion that children's 'international' culture could transcend the local environment has been largely refuted by many studies. One of the first substantial studies to argue this was Blacking's work with the Venda in South Africa. Blacking (1967, 1995, 1985) argued against the notion of existing universal rhythms in children's music and that children's music was not an easier and simplified version of adult music, a view that had been assumed by European Folklore Pedagogies such as those developed from the work of Carl Orff (1895-1982) and Zoltan Kodály (1882-1967). More recent studies of children's music have also supported the idea that children's musical rhythms are complex and they refute the notion that there are universals in children's musical play (Marsh 2008; Campbell 1998, 2010). Marsh's (2009) cross-cultural study of children's musicking reveals some instances of commonality between the function, context and even content of children's songs and musicking in playgrounds in Australia, Norway, America and other locations.

[15] Marsh's concerns also extend to Brailouis' view of children's repertoire as being 'contaminated' by the music experienced in the media (ibid).

## 2.7 Concepts of Transmission, Enculturation and Globalisation

Concepts of transmission, enculturation and globalisation feature as important considerations throughout the literature on the study of the musical cultures of children. Enculturation is defined by Merriam as 'the process by which the individual learns his culture, and it must be emphasized that this is a never-ending process continuing throughout the life span of the individual '(1964:146). Blacking (1967) was particularly interested in how children were integrated into the musical culture around them. Along with engaging in music and song for mere enjoyment and 'aesthetic' purposes, Blacking noted that children's engagement with the songs was also a way to engage in cultural learning. They learned the songs so that they could acquire more knowledge of the social and cultural values of the Venda adult culture. Blacking's analysis of songs was an important source for understanding children, their musical thinking and their development. Blacking's observations of play of the Venda children suggests the social significance of the songs stating that, 'Knowledge of the children's songs is a social asset, and in some cases a social necessity for any child who wishes to be an accepted member of his own age group' (Blacking, 1967/1995:31). The relevance of Blacking's theories is reinforced by contemporary studies of children's musical cultures which also focus on analysis of songs (Marsh, 2008; Gaunt, 2006; Campbell, 1998/2010).

Concepts of enculturation and the social context of children's learning has also been the focus of a number of music education studies that combine ethnomusicological and ethnographic methodologies (Marsh, 2008; Harwood, 1998; Addo, 1996; Campbell, 1998/ 2010). These studies highlight informal processes of musical learning, transmission and creation. Their observations and findings reveal that many children learn by watching, listening and imitating songs and pieces from their peers. Their findings are in contrast to conventional educational practice which suggests that children learn by breaking down pieces into small repetitive units. In her work, Campbell emphasises how 'children are members of an autonomous culture that is still linked to the mainstream culture of their elders' (2007:881). Merriam also advocates for the link between learning and culture suggesting that 'Culture obviously persists, and since

culture is learned behaviour, learning must take place' (1964:146). It is clear that children are influenced and shaped by the culture in which they live and the members of that culture that they engage with. Children adapt and develop according to the families, neighbourhoods, and communities that they are surrounded by in their immediate environments. They are socialised within the various family and local community groups and are products of their perspectives (Campbell, 2007:178).

In her discussion of children's musical learning: Campbell outlines three categories of children's learning in which they use their senses to adapt to the environment. They range from informal, natural learning, to part structured learning to highly structured learning. Writing about the process, Campbell states:

> Enculturation can occur as children passively receive their cultural norms in and through music, and also in instances where children hone their expressions as reflective (although not necessarily imitative) of the music that has been transmitted to them (Campbell, 2007:178).

The following Figure E outlines these and suggests the setting that enculturation is most likely to occur within:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Enculturative, natural and without formal instruction** | Outside of school |
| **Learning partly guided by informal and non-consecutive directives** | In-school and out of school contexts |
| **Highly structured and sequential in process** | Inside of school |

*Figure E: Categories of Children's Learning – Campbell (2007)*

Concepts of globalisation and the influence of technology and popular musics have emerged as important considerations in the study of children's musical cultures. The theoretical models of Arjun Appaduri (1990, 1996, 2006) and Urie Bronfenner (1979) have also been applied by some scholars in their discussions of children's musical cultures and the connection and relationship with globalisation processes. Emberly's

(2009) study of the musical cultures of children in South Africa region in another example of how children can be viewed as members of a broad childhood context. Returning to the same location as Blacking carried out his work, in 2009, Emberly traces children's songs considering the local, national and global perspectives. She reveals how children's musical cultures moves beyond the local context and how their musical worlds and songs link into the national and global contexts. Similarly, Pieridou argues that Greek Cypriot children's musical play has been significantly influenced by process of globalisation. Her findings reveal the playground to be highly vulnerable to the effects of globalisation as her observations reveal a large amount of global and Greek popular musics as influencing the musical lives of the children.

The role of technology has also emerged in the recent revised edition of Campbell's study of children's music (2010). She discusses how twenty-first century children are surrounded by technology and 'living in an era of Internet and iPods, and of music that is streamed and beamed at them from every technological angle' (Campbell, 2010:x). Campbell's examination of children's musical cultures now includes musical games and how their 'musical hero's dance across TV, computer, and game screens more than ever, singing and playing musical instruments as they go' (ibid). In the context of a discussion on globalisation, Green (2011) consider how children are influenced by the readily availability of music via MP3s, internet and other electronic forms. Green writes about the 'push-and-pull effect of globalisation versus localisation stating that 'Such children are negotiating these globalised identities with other identities formed at both the local and the national level' (Green, 2011:14).

Gender also plays a role in how children experience and engage with certain areas of their musical worlds. Writing about the significance of gender Campbell and Wiggins suggest that 'the extent of musical engagement of children does not tilt in the direction of one gender over the other, and boys as well as girls are enmeshed in music as children, though somewhat differently' (2013:20). They also note that before children engage in primary school education, most boys and girls 'enjoy making music, listening to it and

responding to it through movement and dance' (2013:20). They suggest that 'societal notions' begin to influence boys' and girls' engagement in musical activities. This might include higher instances of girls singing games in the playground than boys and less involvement of boys in informal singing groups and choirs (ibid). In this present study I noted similar observations to Campbell and Wiggins (2013). There were more instances of girls singing and involved in spontaneous musicking and dancing activities in the school yard. For the most part, boys appeared to be engaged in more football and other games.

The perceived physical benefits of engaging in musical activities emerged in some conversations with children in this study. Unlike the majority of themes discussed throughout the interviews, there was an obvious gender difference in the discussions that emerged on this topic. For instance, a significant number of girls spoke about the physical benefits of music in relation to their participation in music and dance related activities. Leanne (age 7) stated: 'I like music, because I like dancing to it… (I like) crazy dancing'. In my group conversation with Eva (age 7), Kelly (age 6), Kerry (age 6) and Megan (age 7), similar responses emerged where they indicated that they liked music very much because of the fact they can 'dance to it', 'sing and dance to it', 'you can dance around to it' and that 'it is entertaining'.

**2.8 Summary of Chapter**

A review of the above studies reveals that the musical cultures of children have emerged as an important and significant area of study, in particular since the 1960s. The concepts reviewed in this chapter inform the theoretical perspectives in this study of children's musical cultures in Cork. In this chapter, I have highlighted how the study of children's musical cultures is significant. Our understanding of children's musical cultures has expanded from focusing on children as imitators of a tradition to them as inventors of their own unique musical cultures. This study is informed by this overarching perspective and throughout my fieldwork I aimed to be open minded in understanding how children's musical cultures might be informed by repertoires transmitted by parents,

teachers and other members of the community alongside the musical cultures that are created by children themselves, individually and in collaboration with their peers.

# Chapter 3: An Overview of Music, Education and Cultural Policies for Children in Ireland, with a Survey of Music Education Provision in Cork.

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss policy and legislation in Ireland focusing on the areas of children, culture, education and music education. I explore how music features as part of various policy documents and I consider how this relates to the overall provision of music for children in Ireland. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section discusses children's cultural rights in Ireland concentrating on recent legislative developments. One of the most pertinent developments in public policy for children in Ireland has been the ratification by Ireland in 1992 of the 1989 UNESCO Convention of the Rights of the Child. Since this ratification, public policy has begun to focus its attention on children. This is demonstrated in a number of initiatives and reports including, *The National Children's Strategy* (2000), *The Education Act* (1998), *The Arts Bill* (2002) and *The Children's Act* (2001).

The second section explores the role of music in the curriculum at early years and primary level in Ireland. Curricular developments that are relevant to the discussion include *Aistear*, the early years curriculum, and the 1999 Revised Primary Curriculum.[16] In the third and final part of the chapter, I consider other areas of local and national policy developments in a number of organisations that provide music and cultural experiences for children. I outline the role of the Arts Council and other organisations such as Music Network, Music Generation and Local Education Partnerships in facilitating the development of policy for music and children in Ireland. I also examine a number of key projects that have contributed to the thinking around children and music provision in Ireland. I then give a brief summary of the provision for music education that exists in Cork.

[16] Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (2009). Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. The New Revised Primary Curriculum (1999). Dublin: Department of Education and Science.

### 3.2 Policy: An Overview of Children's Rights in Ireland, with a Survey of Music Education Provision in Cork

In the last 30 years, there has been a dramatic increase in how children's rights are viewed at national and international levels. In 1979, the International Year of the Child was celebrated in various ways across the world. This celebration was an important landmark in the history of children's rights globally, and it created a forum for dialogue surrounding children and their rights. Following on from this celebration, the UNESCO Convention of the Rights of the Child was initiated and developed by the United Nations partners. In 1989, The UN General Assembly unanimously adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). The convention outlines the basic human rights to which children everywhere are entitled. These include the right to survival; the right to the development of their full physical and mental potential; the right to protection from influences that are harmful to their development; and the right to participation in family, cultural and social life (The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989:1-15). The convention protects these rights by setting minimum standards that governments must meet in providing healthcare, education and legal and social services to children in their respective countries. [17]

#### 3.2.1 Ireland and Children's Rights: The National Children's Strategy

In 1992, the UNESCO Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) was ratified in Ireland. Since this ratification, public policy has begun to focus on children. This is demonstrated in a number of initiatives and reports. In 1994, the first appointment of a Minister for State for Children; In 1995, the Children's Research Centre was established; In 1995, the Ark, A Cultural Centre for Children was established in Dublin; In 1999, the National Childcare Strategy was introduction; In 2000, The National Children's Strategy was published and as part of the aims of the strategy the National Children's Office was

[17] The guiding principles of the Convention are that:
-all children should be entitled to basic rights without discrimination;
-the best interests of the child should be the primary concern of decision-making;
-children have the right to life, survival and development;
-the views of children must be taken into account in matters affecting them (The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990:1-15).

established in 2000. In 2005, The Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) was set up as one of the offices of the Irish Government. In 2011, it was renamed the Department of Children and Health (DCYA). The role of the DCYA is to improve the lives of children in Ireland as outlined in the *National Children's Strategy, Our Children – Their Lives* (DCYA, 2000) and *The National Strategy for Research and Data on Children's Lives 2011 — 2016* (DCYA, 2011). It focuses on providing more coherent policies for children in Ireland. The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the National Children's Strategy and coordinating government policy for children. [18] The Minister has specific statutory functions in three primary government departments namely: Health and Children, Education and Science, and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The primary aims of the DCYA is to facilitate children in Ireland to have 'a stronger voice on issues that affect them' (*The National Children's Strategy -Our Children -Their Lives*, 2000:4) and to contribute their views in relation to all areas that affect their lives.

The National Children's Strategy, *Our Children-Their Lives* 2000-2010 (2000) was a ten-year plan of action established in Ireland as a direct result of the UNESCO Convention of the Rights of the Child. The strategy aimed to involve all formal and informal statutory and voluntary agencies in working to improve and enhance the quality of all children's lives in Ireland (2000). It was the first comprehensive national policy document for children in Ireland. The document outlines a number of actions to be taken across a wide range of areas of children's lives. One of the primary aims is to 'give children a voice in matters which affect them and to ensure that their views are given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity' (The National Children's Strategy, 2000:30). The strategy emphasises the important contribution that children can make in 'shaping their own lives' (The National Children's Strategy, 2000:6). It emphasises the importance of

[18] In 2011, Francis Fitzgerald was appointed the first Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. Up until her appointment, the position was a junior ministerial position in the Department of Children, referred to as The Minister of State for children. She held the position until May 2014. The post was then held by Charles Flanagan (May 2014- July 2014), James Reilly (11 July 2014 - 6 May 2016). Katherine Zappone is the current Minister.

giving children the opportunity to develop their understanding of 'Civic values in society so that they can act as responsible citizens and contribute fully to their families, schools and local communities' (The National Children's Strategy, 2000:30). The strategy was developed with extensive consultation with children, parents and groups that work closely with children in various contexts in Ireland.

The three main goals of the National Children's Strategy are outlined in Figure F. [19]

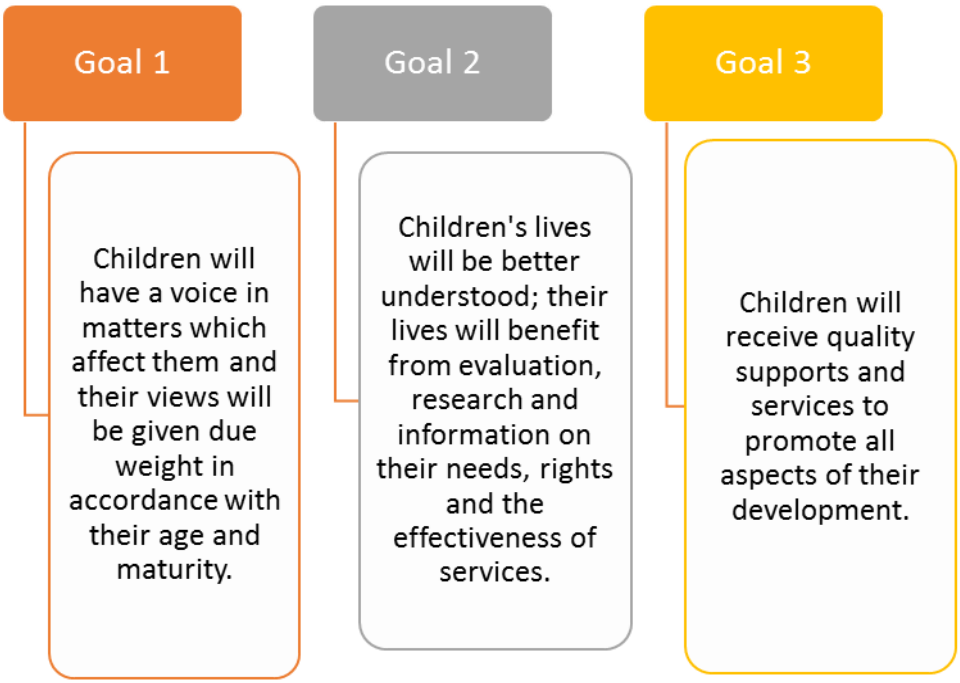



*Figure F: National Children's Strategy Goals (2000).*

The implementation of the National Children's Strategy was a major initiative to progress the implementation of the convention in Ireland. The strategy was a framework for

[19] A significant amount of research has taken place under the OMCYA which has taken into consideration the main goals articulated in the strategy. A number of research studies have focused on understanding a wide range of areas of children's lives. Other projects have focused on understanding the role of children in a range of health care, child-care and education settings (Lambert, 2009; McGovern, 2012; Davidson, 2010).

action. It provided a clear vision for children in Ireland outlined in the following statement:

> An Ireland where children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and a voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realise their potential (The National Children's Strategy, 2000:4).

The importance of facilitating children's views in matters that affect them is clearly articulated in the National Children's Strategy. This study acknowledges the importance of this philosophy. It focuses on understanding how music is part of children's lives in Ireland, and by listening and talking to children, it aims to raise children's thoughts, interests and views in relation to the provision of the arts and music education in Ireland. In terms of arts and culture, the National Children's Strategy specifies that 'Children will have access to play, sport, recreation and cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood' (2000:1). This statement provides a particular opportunity for ensuring that the arts are integrated as a key dimension of children's development. In order to realise and support the implementation of the National Children's Strategy in the context of the above statement, it is important to understand the meaning and role of music and the arts to children in Ireland. The music that children have within them, as well as their thoughts about music are starting points for understanding their values, their knowledge, and their needs (Campbell, 1998). One must also consider the spaces in which children experience music as part of their everyday lives. This study explores the relevant issues by focusing on spaces within and outside the school context.

### 3.2.2 Department of Children and Youth Affairs research on children in Ireland

In recent years, a significant amount of research on children in Ireland has taken place under the auspices of the DCYA. Analysis of the research initiatives highlights that research is taking place in a wide range of areas that affect children's lives in Ireland. [20]

[20] Implementation of the National Children's Strategy is monitored by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA). There have been a number of progress reports on the implementation of the National Children's Strategy (2002, 2003,2005). National Strategy for Research and

A clearer understanding of children's needs in relation to many areas of their lives has emerged from findings in recent studies. These include insight into areas such as children's health and well-being, family relationships, child protection and provisions in education. The *National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland, Growing up in Ireland* is funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in association with the Department of Social Protection and the Central Statistics Office. The study is monitoring the development of more than 18,000 children comprising an infant cohort of 10,000 and a nine-year-old cohort of over 8,500 children. The aim of the study is outlined as follows:

> to examine the factors that contribute to or undermine the well-being of children in contemporary Irish families, and, through this, contribute to the setting of effective and responsive policies relating to children and to the design of services for children and their families (*Growing Up in Ireland: National Longitudinal Study-The Infants and their Families*, 2010:5).

*Growing Up in Ireland* was set up to progress Goal Two of the National Children's Strategy (2000): 'Children's lives will be better understood; their lives will benefit from evaluation, research and information on their needs, rights and the effectiveness of services' (National Children's Strategy, 2000:37). Research to-date has provided a rich source of data from children and their parents on a wide range of issues that are central to their children's lives. The most recent findings have been published in Growing Up in Ireland-The Lives of 9-Year-Olds (2009) and Growing Up in Ireland: National Longitudinal Study-The Infants and their Families (2010). Findings emerging from the study cohort of nine year olds reveal that overall children in Ireland have position outcomes in three specific areas of focus: health, educational and emotional well-being. However, it also noted that there were 'substantial social gradients' across all these areas of children's lives which were impacted by family social class, level of mother's education and family income (Growing Up in Ireland-The Lives of 9-Year-Olds Executive Report, 2009:24). The

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Data on Children's Lives 2011 — 2016 (2011) DCYA and the National Statement for Strategy 2011-2014 (2011).

impact of the increased knowledge on children's lives emerging from the research studies have started to influence decisions at policy level. [21] Some examples include the introduction in 2009 of the The Early Childhood Care & Education Scheme (ECCE) and two important initiatives to support Early Childhood practice in Ireland: *Síolta* and *Aistear*. *Síolta* is a quality framework for Early Childhood Education in Ireland and *Aistear* is a new curriculum for early learning in Ireland. [22]

Although children's rights have become an important area of consideration in various aspects of policy development in Ireland, there has been little focus to date on understanding cultural provisions that are relevant to children in Ireland. The UNESCO guidelines make reference to the entitlement of children to cultural engagement and play (Article 31 of The UN Convention). With reference to this article, the National Children's Strategy states there is a need for more research on this area as 'Comparatively little is known about children's participation in recreational and cultural activities outside of the education system' (2000:51). A greater understanding of children's own appreciation and engagement with music would inform the further development and implementation of a children's strategy.

### 3.3 Section Two: Arts Education Policy and Formal Education in Ireland

Arts Education and Cultural Policy for Children in Ireland exists within a number of government sections and organisations. The Department of Education and Skills and The Arts Council of Ireland are two main departments where music education policies have had an impact on the provision and role of music in children's lives in Ireland. An examination of the philosophies articulated within these policies provides an opportunity to understand ways in which children's music in Ireland is provided for at

[21] In November 2010, at the launch of *Research Cluster ISO22* for people working with children, at University College Cork, Dr Sinead Hannifin, head of DCYA (then called OYMCA) emphasised the importance of raising the profile of the research being carried out with children and in particular the importance of presenting research studies on children in Ireland to policy makers.

[22] The Early Childhood Care & Education Scheme (ECCE) provides two years of free pre-school education to every child in Ireland aged between 3 years 2 months and 4 years 6 months on 1st September each year.

policy and curricular level. It will also provide an opportunity to contrast the findings from this research study with the various policies that exist. In the following sections, I explore the current provision of music for children at policy levels focusing first on early years education and primary level education in Ireland. The aim is to understand the provision and consider the relationship between the current provision for children at policy level and the views and perspectives of children in relation to their musical interests and preferences gathered as part of the fieldwork for this study.

### 3.4 Early Childhood Education in Ireland

Early Childhood in Ireland refers to children from birth to six years of age (Childcare Act, 2011). In recent years, there have been many developments in public policy and legislation that highlight the importance of children in these formative years.[23] In 2002 the Minister for Education and Science launched the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education.[24] This marked a significant development for early childhood in Ireland and was set-up as a result of the recommendations of the *White Paper, Ready to Learn,* published by the Department of Education and Science on early childhood education (1999). The main aim of the white paper was to 'facilitate the development of a high quality system of Early Childhood Education' (Department of Education and Skills, 1999a:43). White Paper, *Ready to Learn* identified that early education takes place in a wide variety of settings in Ireland. It highlighted both the education and the care of young children as two important areas of consideration, stating that '...we must recognise that young children have needs for both education and care and that the focus can never be exclusively on either' (DES, 1999a:3). The White Paper outlines how this development can be achieved throughout a wide spectrum of

[23] *The Child Care Act* (1991); *Ireland's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1992); *The Child Care* (Pre-School Services) *Regulations* (1996, 2006); *The Primary School Curriculum* (1999); *The National Children's Strategy* (2000); *The National Play Policy* (2003); *Síolta*, the *National Quality Framework for Early Childhood* Education (2006).

[24] The Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) was established by the Minister for Education under the management of the Dublin Institute of Technology and St. Patrick's College of Education, Drumcondra.

areas including curriculum development, teacher training and the introduction of a quality system surrounding qualifications (ibid).

In association with the DES, the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education began to focus on a quality framework for early childhood education.[25] In 2006, *Síolta*, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education was launched as part of the on-going commitment to early childhood provision in Ireland. *Síolta* provides a framework for the development of quality education for children across a range of settings including: full and part-time day-care, child-minding, sessional services and infant classes in primary schools. *Síolta*'s vision is outlined as follows:

> …all children are afforded equity of access to early education opportunities that enrich their lives and contribute positively to their optimal well-being, learning and development (*Síolta*, The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education Handbook, 2006:3).

Following on from developments with the introduction of *Síolta*, in 2009, the NCCA launched a curricular framework for early year's education in Ireland entitled *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. [26] The creation of *Aistear* represents one of the first steps to provide a comprehensive strategy and curriculum for the education of pre-school children in Ireland. [27] The curriculum framework is designed to cater for children from birth to six years of age. It 'celebrates early childhood as a time of being, and of enjoying and learning from experiences as they unfold. This early learning also lays important foundations for later learning' (Aistear, 2009:6). [28] The aim of the

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[25] A comprehensive Programme of Work was agreed with the DES for the Centre (CECDE, 2001), which focused on the following three objectives: To develop a quality framework for early childhood education; To develop targeted interventions on a pilot basis for children who are educationally disadvantaged and children with special needs and; To prepare the groundwork for the establishment of an Early Childhood Education Agency (ECEA) as envisaged by the White Paper on Early Childhood Education, Ready to Learn (DES, 1999a).

[26] *Aistear* is the Irish word for Journey.

[27] In January 2010, The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme was introduced in Ireland. The scheme is administered by the DCYA and it provides a year of free early care and education for all children of pre-school age in Ireland.

[28] In January 2010, The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme was introduced in Ireland. The scheme is administered by the DCYA and it provides a year of free early care and education for all children of pre-school age in Ireland. According to Early Childhood Ireland statistics, there are over 4,600 ECCE

curriculum is to provide 'information for adults to help them plan for and provide enjoyable and challenging learning experiences, so that all children can grow and develop as competent and confident learners within loving relationships with others' (Aistear, 2009:6). The curriculum has four broad and interlinked themes which are outlined as follows:

- Well-being,
- Identity and Belonging
- Communicating
- Exploring Thinking

(Aistear, 2009:13).

Although the role of specific curricular areas are not outlined in this document, music and the creative arts are connected to many of the principles. The role of music is outlined in the suggested guidelines of the curricular framework. The increased emphasis on the importance of early years education in Ireland has resulted in an increase in music projects for this age-group. In the following section, I discuss how music is currently developing within the area of early years' education in Ireland and I outline some examples of recent work in this area. I also highlight some of the findings from recent research reports in Irish contexts that reveal some of the connections between the early years curriculum and music-making.

### 3.5 Music and Early Years Initiatives in Ireland

Recently, there have been a number of significant developments in relation to understanding the role of music for children in early years in Ireland. The majority of these have taken the form of research based projects which aim to explore music for young children. *BEAG* was an early years pilot project that took place in 2011 in twelve early childhood settings in Cork city and county. The project was commissioned and

services with 25,000 Staff. 96% of eligible children take up ECCE place. Approx. one third of childcare services are in areas of disadvantage (www.earlychildhoodIreland.ie accessed November, 2013).

funded by a range of partners including the HSE South Arts and Health Programme, Cork City Council and Cork County Council. *BEAG* involved three artists with expertise in a range of art forms including drama, music and visual arts. A practice-based research methodology was used throughout the research. Since 2011, The BEAG early years project has continued to work in early years settings in Cork city with a team of artists engaging in integrated arts team work, individual residencies and projects.

*Tiny Voices* was another landmark research project based on music and early years education and care. The project was commissioned by Common Ground, an arts development organisation set up in Dublin in 1999. *Tiny Voices* was a collaborative project, involving Common Ground and Early Childhood Ireland as the two leading partners. It was based in two child care locations in Dublin. The project consisted of two artists who spent sixteen weeks working on a specifically designed music project in each setting. The project featured a strong research focus and findings were published in *Tiny Voices: An Early Years Music Report* (2013). The project set out to make direct links between the *Aistear* themes and how music can feature as an importance tool in the development of these themes for children.

The *BEAG* and *Tiny Voices* projects inform this present study in a number of ways. They both argue for the inclusion of music activities for young children in early years settings. While the focus of the *Tiny Voices* report is on individual musicians working in early years settings, the *BEAG* report suggests benefits of an integrated artistic team approach stating that '…the integrated approach had the potential to provide a richer experience for all participants, reinforcing learning for the artists in a uniquely supportive model…an enhanced capacity for creative engagement with the activity on the part of the childcare workers and the children' (*BEAG,* 2011:39).

The *Tiny Voices* research study notes the value of music in early years settings stating that 'Music is a powerful means of communicating, through which young children can share emotions, intentions and meanings in a non-verbal but nonetheless efficient manner (*Tiny Voices*, 2013:15). It also discusses the importance of engaging musicians

and creative practitioners in collaborative projects with children and early childcare practitioners stating that, 'Music as an art form is a dynamic 'hands-on' experience, and in the control of a qualified musical artist and with the support of the childcare practitioners, it can become a slipway into a sea of learning activities and new knowledge' (*Tiny Voices*, 2013:21). The *BEAG* and *Tiny Voices* reports also integrate elements of a collaborative reflective research approach where children's engagement and responses are valued. [29]

The development of policy and a curricular framework for early years' education in Ireland enhances the provision of education for children in Ireland. It raises the importance of the need to consider the provision of music education for children at a young age. International research on the development of music for children highlights the significance of musical development for children from 0-6 years of age (Smithrim, Upitis et al, 2007). The growing body of research studies in Irish contexts also highlights the significance of understanding the role of music as a form of creative expression for children in early years contexts (*BEAG*, 2011; *Tiny Voices* 2013).

Developments in the national framework and curriculum for early years education alongside the investment in early years education are initial first steps in providing access to early years education for children in Ireland. The role of music and creativity as part of early years provision in Ireland requires further research and consideration to consider how music education provision can be accessed by children attending early years settings in Ireland. I continue my exploration of music education for children in Ireland with a discussion of the role of music in the primary education system.

### 3.6 Primary Education in Ireland

The primary education system in Ireland is regulated by the Department of Education and Skills and includes state-funded primary schools, special schools and private primary

[29] Other developments in the area of childcare and music have taken place as part of on-going work of the arts department at Tipperary Arts Council. In 2013 *Music in Childcare Settings: research, design, delivery in North Tipperary* 2006-2013 (Shanahan, 2013) was published.

schools. The majority of schools are state-funded schools and these include religious schools, non-denominational schools, multi-denominational schools and Gaelscoileanna (Irish language schools). Almost all children in Ireland begin primary school between the ages of four years and five and attend an eight year cycle up to age twelve before progressing to secondary level education. The cycles are: junior infants, senior infants, and first to sixth classes. The DES fund the majority of capital spending including building and running costs of schools. They also pay teachers' salaries.

96% of schools in Ireland are owned by Religion patrons with 90% of these currently under Catholic patronage. Since the formal introduction of state education in 1831, the system has 'evolved as a partnership between state and patrons' (Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector, 2014:5). A significant population of people in Ireland were part of Christian denominational churches with most belonging to the Catholic Church. Up until recently, the profile of schools reflected the belief system of the majority of the population in Ireland with denominational patrons forming an important part of this structure (2014:5). Based on the changing ethnicity of the population which includes many different nationalities and religious beliefs, The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector was set up in 2011 to recommend and advise various approaches to be undertaken to ensure a 'greater diversity of patronage' (Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector, 2014:2) in primary schools in Ireland.

The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector highlights how 'Irish society is transforming rapidly' and reveals that 'our schools are catering for a significantly more diverse population nowadays than the population that they traditionally served' (Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector, 2014:6). It emphasises how the education system needs to 'adapt continuously to the changing profile of the Irish population' (Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector, 2014:6). The report highlights some of the steps taken in response to the changing demographics including: the introduction of new processes for the establishment of new schools which focus on the setting up of multi-denominational primary schools. These include both

Educate Together Schools [30] and Community National Schools, a new enrolment legislation aiming to ensure an equitable system of admissions process in all schools, a move towards identifying structures and methods to accommodate diversity in schools, a consultation process to investigate methods for divesting patronage of existing schools and the development of a new curriculum on education about religious and beliefs and ethics. [31]

Figure G outlines statistics based on the number of primary school children in Ireland, no of teachers and pupil teacher ratios. It also includes statistics for Cork which is the location of this study. Although these average statistics appear to be almost close to the EU student teacher ratio average of 20, the reality is that the 2012/13 statistics revealed that more than 120,000 children (23.5 %) of primary school children in mainstream schools are in classes of more than thirty students. The impact of class sizes on children's learning has been the centre of much debate in Ireland. The Irish National Teacher's Association (INTO) articulate the benefits of reducing the class sizes in all schools in Ireland, emphasising that smaller student numbers in classes provide teachers with an increased opportunity to work with individual pupils and allow them to implement the child-centred ideology as intended (www.into.ie, accessed November, 2013). The implementation of the child-centred ideology and the development of music as a curricular subject with large pupil-teacher ratios is a challenge within the current format and structure of primary education in Ireland. In addition, the absence of a long term curricular implementation strategy that includes professional development support for primary school teachers encumbers teachers' confidence to facilitate music within the classroom contexts.

[30] Educate Together is an educational charity which represents sixty-eight Educate Together National Schools in Ireland. It was set up as part of an education movement in the 1970s which aimed to focus on multidenominational education.

[31] From 2007 to 2014, sixty-one new primary schools were established in Ireland. Forty-four were multidenominational.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Number of Primary Schools in Ireland** | 544,696 (2014/2015) |
| **Number of First Level Teachers in Ireland** | 33,613 |
| **Pupil-Teacher Ratio in all National Schools** | 16.2 |
| **Average Class Size in Mainstream Classes** | 24.9 |
| **Number of Pupils in all National schools Cork City** | 14,096 |
| **Number of Pupils in all National schools Cork County** | 47,401 |

*Figure G: Summary of Key Statistics of Primary Level Education in Ireland 2014/2015*

Source: www.education.ie, accessed November, 2013.

### 3.7 The Primary School Curriculum in Ireland

The Revised Primary Curriculum (Department of Education and Science, 1999) is the national curricular document for all primary level schools in Ireland. [32] The curriculum was developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in partnership with a committee comprising parents, teachers and principal teachers. This partnership approach was also a feature of the implementation of the curriculum in schools. Between 2000 and 2005, The Primary Curriculum Support Unit (PSUP) assisted in the implementation of the strategy for the new curriculum. This involved both in-service training for teachers and planning at school and classroom levels. The revised curriculum was the first curriculum to be introduced on a phased basis, with in-service (teacher-training) and planning days being provided for all teachers and schools

[32] The curriculum was revised in response to the growing demands from teachers who were finding it increasingly difficult to implement areas of the previous 1971 curriculum (INTO Curriculum Questionnaire Analysis, 1976; Conference of Convent Primary Schools in Ireland, 1975).

throughout Ireland. The curriculum is based on a child-centred philosophy of education. It articulates the importance of acknowledging the uniqueness of the child, stating that primary education should 'celebrate the uniqueness of a child' and 'ensure the development of the child's full potential' (New Revised Primary Curriculum 1999:14). The child-centred ideology was first introduced in the Irish system as part of the 1971 curricular document. The concept is further articulated in the New Revised Primary Curriculum document (1999).

Pre-service training for teachers is undertaken in the format of a four-year Bachelor of Education undergraduate degree programme which can be undertaken at six colleges in Ireland. [33] As part of pre-service training, students engage in a wide range of modules that relate to pedagogy, assessment and curricular development. Students engage in music modules that focus on developing a wide range of skills that support the teaching and development of music education within the classroom contexts. In response to a report published by the Department of Education and Skills in 2014, there have been dramatic changes to how music is offered as part of pre-service training for students. The report entitled *Better Literacy and Numeracy: A Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools* (2014), documented the numeracy and literacy concerns that were emerging through research as part of primary level education in Ireland. The report documents the need for pre-service training and classroom teachers in Ireland to prioritise the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills for children in Ireland. The immediate impact of this report has seen the reduction in the timetabling of music contact hours at the various colleges by the Department of Education and Skills. For a practical subject, such as music, this will impact teachers' abilities to facilitate music as part of their classroom practice. It also may contribute the devaluing of music as an

[33] The following are the institutes where students can undertake Bachelor of Education Degrees: St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin City University; Mary Immaculate College, Limerick; Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education at NUI Maynooth, Co. Kildare; Colaiste Mhuire, Marino Institute of Education, Dublin, and Hibernia College, Dublin.

important subject and worthy of inclusion in its own right as part of children's primary level education in Ireland.

An examination of the aims and objectives outlined in the *New Revised Primary Curriculum* emphasises that promoting equal opportunities for all children is central to primary level education in Ireland. It outlines how the curriculum is designed to 'nurture the child in all dimensions of his or her life - spiritual, moral, cognitive, emotional, imaginative, aesthetic, social and physical' (*Revised Primary School Curriculum,* 1999:6). The curriculum also articulates how it aspires to:

> enable the child to live a full life, realise his or her potential as a unique individual, enable the child to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others, contribute to the good of society and prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning (Revised Primary School Curriculum 1999:7).

The justification for arts education as part of primary level education is outlined in the introduction to the curriculum. It states that:

> The curriculum enables the child to perceive the aesthetic dimension in every area. This enriches the learning experience for the child and the different aspects of conceptual development. The uniqueness of the child is perhaps most apparent in the innate creativity of each individual, while valuing the child's creative response and expression of perceptions, insights, interpretations and knowledge is an important principle of the curriculum (Revised Primary School Curriculum, 1999: 15).

The aims of arts education at primary level are outlined below. They state that children should be enabled to:

- Develop an appreciation and enjoyment of aesthetic activities, including music, visual arts, dance, drama and language
- Develop the skills and knowledge necessary to express himself or herself through various aesthetic activities, including music, visual arts, dance, drama and language

(*Revised Primary School Curriculum*, 1999:34-36).

The arts education curriculum consists of the visual arts, music, and drama. The music curriculum incorporates the child centred principles of the previous curriculum, *Curaclam na Bunscoile* (1971), but also includes new content and embraces innovative approaches and methodologies. The curriculum outlines a number of issues relating to the role and use of music in the primary education system, and proposes that music is for all teachers and children. It places a strong value on music as 'an art form deeply rooted in human nature' (ibid, 1999:7). The curriculum aspires to developing lifelong opportunities for 'the development of imagination, sensitivity, inventiveness, risk-taking and enjoyment' (Revised Primary School Curriculum, 1999:7). According to the curriculum, music and music-making can play an important role in the development of a child's self-esteem (ibid).

The aims of the music curriculum are articulated in the curricular document and outlined as follows:

- To enable the child to enjoy and understand music and to appreciate it critically
- To develop the child's openness to, awareness of, and response to a wide range of musical genres, including Irish music
- To develop the child's capacity to express ideas, feelings and experiences through music as an individual and in collaborating with others
- To enable the child to develop his/her musical potential and to experience the excitement and satisfaction of being actively engaged in musical creativity
- To nurture the child's self-esteem and self-confidence through participation in musical performance
- To foster higher-order thinking and lifelong learning through the acquisition of musical knowledge, skills, concepts and values
- To enhance the quality of the child's life through aesthetic musical experience.

The Revised Primary Curriculum in Music (1999) is divided into three strands which are developed progressively through four levels. The four levels, usually defined by two-year age bands, are:

- Infants Classes – Junior and Senior,
- First and Second classes,

- Third and Fourth classes,
- Fifth and Sixth classes.

The three strands of music education identified in the *Revised Primary Music Curriculum* are:

- Listening and responding
- Performing
- Composing.

The listening and responding strand focuses on the importance of exploring sounds through listening and responding to music. It emphasises the importance of 'active listening and meaningful responses'. It states the importance of giving children the opportunity to experience a wide range of sounds and musics and to respond to them imaginatively. The performance strand incorporates the skills of singing, early musical literacy and playing musical instruments. It emphasises the important use of the voice to explore musical sounds and to develop musical skills including rhythm and pitch are explored within this strand unit. The opportunity to perform musical instruments is also articulated with the emphasis on rhythmic percussion instruments and melodic instruments such as the tin whistle and recorder. The composing strand aims to explore the child's creativity by facilitating possibilities for improvisation and creativity in various forms.

Cross curricular integration is an important principle of the primary curriculum in Ireland. It features in all of the curricular guidelines for the various subjects and aims to facilitate children's engagement in 'activities that encompass a number of objectives from different strands or from different subject areas' (Revised Primary School Curriculum, 1999:9). The concept of integration is a widely adopted teaching and learning tool that allows teachers to deal with the large number of subjects through thematic learning. In terms of the primary music curriculum, 'links within music itself are referred to as linkage, while connections that occur between music and other subject areas are described as integration' (ibid). The facilitation of a child-centred ideology throughout primary education in Ireland is challenging considering the class teacher ratio as outlined

previously. The implementation of the aims and objectives of the music curriculum as outlined above in this current educational environment is also problematic. In Chapters five and six, I report on children's experiences of music within primary education system. The inclusion of their experiences and perspectives will enhance our understanding of music education provision for children in Ireland. In Chapter seven, I consider the connections between children's engagement with music and the various curricula, strategies and policies that relate to music for children in Ireland.

Alongside the formal curricular policy provision for children at both early years education and primary level education, there exists a wide range of policy provisions that stem from other statutory organisations and agencies including the Arts Council of Ireland and Music Network. In the following section, I discuss these organisations and I focus on the various policy and strategies that exist in relation to the provision of music education for children in Ireland. I consider how access to and provision of music education for all children in Ireland has been to the core of many of the developments. I begin with a review of provision at national levels and I then examine access to music education for children in the local Cork context.

### 3.8 Section Three: The Arts Council, Music Network, Music Generation and Arts Organisations

The introduction of The Arts Act in 1951 marked a significant milestone in arts and cultural development in Ireland. The subsequent setting up of the *An Chomhairle Ealaíon,* the Arts Council, an independent agency was a key element of this new legislation and a substantial mark towards the development of arts education in Ireland. Although the Arts Council is not responsible for the direct provision of arts education in formal education, the council are involved in the development of arts education in both the formal and informal contexts, inside and outside the formal education system. The Arts Council have played a central role in advocating and facilitating debate surrounding the provision of arts education in Ireland through the commissioning of various education reports and publications. Since the late nineteen seventies, The Arts Council

has produced a number of reports that focus on the provision and the role of music education in the Irish education system. The desire for the provision of the arts in Irish education is well documented throughout these reports and documents. In 1976, The Arts Council published the report, *Provision for the Arts* (J.M. Richards). This landmark report discusses national provision of music education, the involvement of local government and the role of the arts in education. In 1979, The Arts Council published the report *The Place of the Arts in Irish Education*. It notes the absence of a high value being placed on the arts in Irish society in general and in the education system specifically. Ciarán Benson opens the report with the statement that 'The arts have been neglected in Irish education' (1979, 6). Similar conclusions were found in *The Deaf Ears?* report (1985), that 'Young Irish people have the worst of all European "musical worlds"'(1985, 50). The neglect of the arts in the Irish education system continued to be reiterated in many reports published by the Arts Council (The Arts Council:1976, 1979, 1989). These reports have provided a further source of debate and discussion around the arts in Irish education. The findings from the Arts Council reports are frequently used as a focal point in discussions and writings on education in Ireland.

In 1993, The Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht was established to contribute to the development of arts planning and provision in Ireland. As part of its work, the Arts Act 2003 was introduced. The Arts Act 2003 aimed to expand and promote the arts at local, national and international levels. It specifically focused on improving the ways in which grants were obtained and it required local authorities to plan for the development of the arts while consider the government policies on the arts. *The Public and the Arts (*2006) study focused on the public's attitude and behaviour toward the arts and it highlighted how arts provision for young children had been ignored. In 2010 The Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, renamed the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport was set up. Its aim was to:

> …provide an appropriate resource, policy and legislative framework to support the stimulation and development of the Arts in Ireland, such that economic returns and employment, and access to and

participation in the arts by all sections of Irish society, are maximised' (www.culturalpolicies.net, accessed November, 2013).

In 2006, a Special Committee on the Arts and Education was set up by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism as a direct result of the aims of the 2003 Arts Act.[34] This committee marked a significant step in the relationship between the arts and education in Ireland; it was the first opportunity for formal collaboration between the Arts Council and the Department of Education and Science. The Special Committee engaged in a process of consultation, research, reflection and writing. The work of the committee culminated in a report entitled *Points of Alignment* (2008). *The Points of Alignment* (2008) report outlines the challenges for children's engagement in the arts in Ireland, stating that 'Arts provision for children and young people both in and out of school is arguably the single greatest fault line in our cultural provision' (*Points of Alignment,* 2008:3). At the heart of that action plan in Points of Alignment, is a four-point proposal which the Arts Council developed. The plan is outlined in Figure H.

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| **Point 1** | A joint structure to oversee developments arising from the report and with senior representatives of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, the Department of Education and Science, and the Arts Council. This structure would provide a strategic, high-level, and ongoing point of contact between the policy-makers and key funders in the fields of arts and education. |
| **Point 2** | A national arts-in-education development unit attached probably to an existing third-level institution with a demonstrated commitment to the arts and ideally involving primary teacher education. This unit to be adequately resourced so as to allow it to implement a strategic action-research work programme and related functions in terms of professional development, information, advice, documentation, evaluation and dissemination. The unit's staff would need to be composed of senior, expert and experienced personnel if the unit was to evince at executive level its appropriate status, mandate and strategic intent. An initial cohort of 6-8 people would be required if the unit was to be able to function effectively. The unit to be overseen by |

[34] See section 21 of the Arts Act 2003.

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| | an appropriate board or steering group which would secure high-level access to both government departments and to the Arts Council, so as to build synergies. |
| **Point 3** | Significant additional resources for the Arts Council from the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism to allow the council implement recommendation three of the report which focuses on the need for a much more extensive programme of direct and indirect supports for this field of activity and for a dedicated arts-in-education team in the Arts Council. |
| **Point 4** | The development of a dedicated arts-in-education portal site. |

*(Points of Alignment, 2007)*

*Figure H: Arts Council of Ireland Points of Alignment Aims (2007)*

The points of alignment report is another significant development in terms of aspiring towards a growth of a music education system in Ireland whereby all young people have access to a quality music education experience regardless of socio, economic or geographical circumstances. However, the aims have not all being implemented yet and overall there has been little support to prioritise arts education in any meaningful, systematic way throughout the education system. The publication of an *Arts Charter* discussed later in this chapter is a direct outcome of point one of the report. The web portal www.artsineducation.ie, accessed November, 2013, was also launched as a direct outcome of point 4 of the report.

In their Developing the Arts 2011-2013 strategy, the Arts Council continue to emphasise the importance of providing high quality arts experiences for young people and in the report they indicate that they intend to build on the Report of the Special Committee on Arts and Education (2008), emphasising the intention to work in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills and the Office for the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and the National Youth Council of Ireland (Developing the Arts in Ireland, Arts Council Strategic Overview 2011-2013 (2013:9). The strategic overview document outlines its work and sets out the main strategic principles that will inform its funding decisions in the forthcoming years. The wider context of the support of music and traditional arts are included as part of this strategy.

In terms of support for the promotion and development of arts activities for young people and children, the Arts Council provide funding initiatives that are targeted at individual artists and groups of young people.[35] Young People, Children and Education (YPCE) is one of the cross artform practices that caters specifically for children. In its statement on the artform, the Arts Council target audience is over one million children and young people in Ireland. Outlining the significant of its work and emphasising the importance of inclusion of all children, the council states that:

> their number and their economic dependence, combined with the critical, development nature of childhood, are factors that continue to inform YPCE policies that are aimed at establishing equal access to quality arts experience appropriate to age, ability and cultural tradition (www.artscouncil.ie, accessed November, 2013). [36]

The Arts Council also run a number of other schemes in collaboration with external agents. Schemes that are particularly focused on children and young people include: The Children's Laureate /Laureate na nÓg, Arts in schools Scheme, Music Capital Scheme and the Artist in Community Scheme. There has been a significant development in the provision of arts education for primary schools in Ireland with the introduction of new curricular programme in 1999. These developments have ignited a range of programmes run by various community groups and organisations to take place involving the primary level age group. Examples include the Vogler Quartet residing in Sligo. From 1999 to 2004, The Vogler Quartet took part in a residency in a number of primary schools in Sligo. The initiative was developed and managed by the Sligo Arts Council. Following the publication of the 'Live Music in the Classroom report (2006), Sligo Arts Service and Sligo Education Centre, together with primary school teachers around the county and musicians from Ceoltáras Ceolman, Sligo Academy of Music and Sligo Jazz Project formed

[35] Examples of schemes that apply to individual artists include: commissions, bursaries, project awards and travel and training. The Young Ensemble scheme is an example of a funding strand for groups of young people.

[36] Encountering the arts conference was a one-day conference that took place at the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin in November 2010. This conference was part of a number of events throughout 2010 which were organised to respond to the Points of Alignment Document published by the Arts Council in 2008.

a partnership to develop and deliver a programme of music education at primary school level' (www.sligoarts.ie, accessed November, 2013). This programme had grown out of the Vogler Quartet in Sligo Residency, an innovative use of an international string quartet as the central resource in a programme of long-term music education and development in Sligo which took place from 1999 to 2004. The work of the residency in the education field has had a strong impact, and the engagement of teachers and artists with this project continues to drive developments in this region. The programme commenced in 2006 and brings live music to primary school classrooms around the county. Participating teachers work collaboratively with trained musicians in the design of a six week programme, tailored to enrich the creative experience of music in schools and enhance the delivery of the primary music curriculum in Sligo. The period of preparation by teachers and students culminates in 'in-class' workshops with musicians. The programme includes resources that focus on listening and responding, composing and performing as well as cross curricular ideas and activities (*Live Music in the Classroom*, 2006).

**3.9 Music Network**

In 1986, Music Network was set up by the Arts Council of Ireland to act as a national music and touring agency. One of its primary aims is to 'make high quality live music available and accessible to people throughout Ireland, regardless of their location or circumstance, while supporting the career development of musicians' (www.musicnetwork.ie, accessed November, 2013). Since its inception, Music Network has played a significant role in advocating and supporting the educational development of music in Ireland. In 2001 Music Network was jointly commissioned by the Department of Education and Science, and the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism to produce a feasibility study which would examine how a national system of music education in schools might be provided for and supported outside of the formal education system in Ireland. In 2003, the report entitled *A National System of Local Music Education Services – Report of a Feasibility Study* was published as part of the commission.

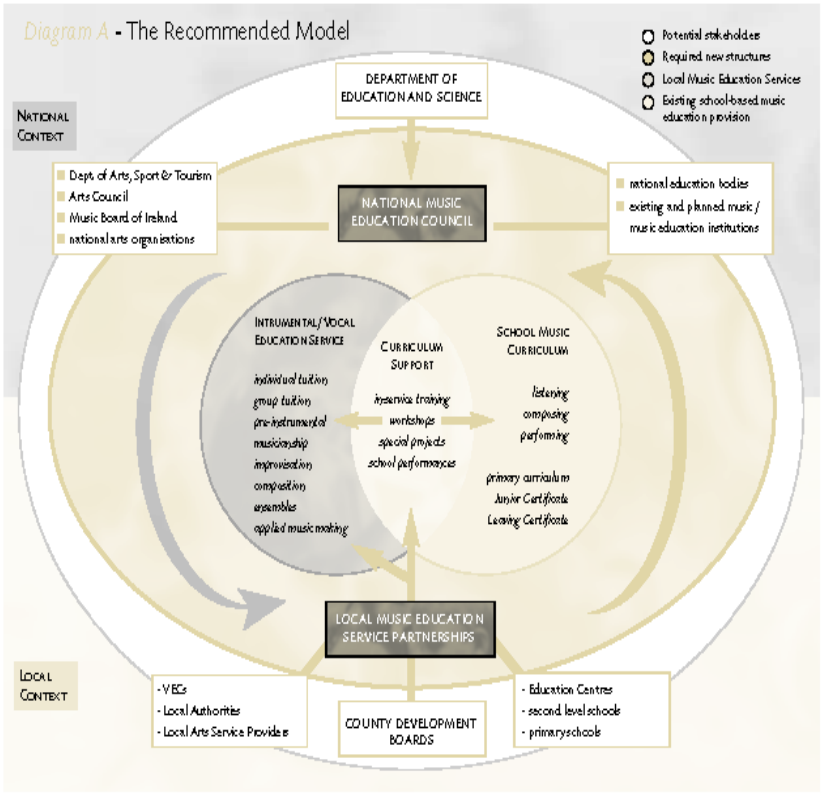



*Figure I Music Network Feasibility Study*

Following on from the publication of the feasibility study, in 2004 pilot schemes took place in Donegal and Dublin.[37] In 2007, a working group was set up by Music Network to raise the profile and awareness of the value of music education in Ireland. The group outlined the key recommendations of the feasibility study report to the Special

[37] Funding of €100,000 per annum, per location made available to pilot schemes in County Donegal and City of Dublin.

Committee on Arts and Education that was established in 2006. In 2009, evaluation of the pilot projects occurred and the report outlines the significance of the partnership model as a framework for the national provision of music education throughout Ireland (Report of the Evaluation of the Music Network Partnerships in Donegal and Dublin, 2009).

### 3.10 Music Generation

In 2009, Music Generation was initiated by Music Network with support from seed funding that was donated by philanthropic donations from the band U2 and the Ireland funds. This philanthropic funding was to facilitate the roll out of the National Feasibility Study Report's recommendations as outlined above. This was to occur on a phased basis between 2010 and 2015 with the aim to help children and young people access vocal and instrumental tuition in their own locality. Since 2014, Music Generation is co-funded by U2, The Ireland Funds, the Department of Education and Skills by Local Music Education Partnerships. Music Generation offers funding and support to establish local Music Education Partnerships (MEPs) throughout Ireland. The MEPs work with Music Generation to develop and establish vocal and instrumental services in their local area. [38]

In its Strategic Plan for 2010 – 2015, Music Generation set out its vision for the development of a national music education service 'where every child and young person in Ireland has local access to high-quality music education' (2010:1). Focusing on the area of 'performance music education' which they recognise in its broadest sense in diverse contexts such as in mainstream education, in a community setting or through a music school, Music Generation aim to develop an 'infrastructure' for 'performance music education' though a model of community partnership. Alongside advocating for 'high artistic and educational standards', they also focus on inclusiveness in terms of all children having the opportunity to participate in music education (ibid). They have a

[38] MEPS are currently based in Carlow, Cork City, Clare, Laois, Louth, Limerick City, Mayo, Offaly/Westmeath, Sligo, South Dublin and Wicklow.

strong advocacy role and focus on increasing public awareness of the significance of performance music education in the lives of children and young people. Since its inception, Music Generation have lobbied for the development of a public supported national system of music education. [39]

The *Music Generation Annual Report* (2014) articulates a range of developments including an increase in participation rates in their programmes whereby over 26,000 children and young people participate in Music Generation programmes during July - December 2014. It cites that they are involved in eighty-three diverse programmes in over three hundred tuition centres throughout the MEPs. Since, the initial funding phase of Music Generation ended in 2015, there have been further developments which aim to contribute towards the sustainability of the programme. A further philanthropic donation of three million euro by U2 and The Ireland Funds combined with a commitment from the Department of Education to ensure that programmes will continue long term through a 50/50 matched funding process where Local MEPs raise fifty per cent of the fund at local levels. The 2016-2020 plan is to develop a further nine MEPs in other areas of the country (www.musicgeneration.ie, accessed November, 2013).

Although the establishment of Music Generation has increased opportunities for music provision for children in parts of Ireland, the structure and format create challenges for the development of music education for all children in Ireland. Music Generation may be considered a central provider of music education activities for children in Ireland and this is challenging, considering the private nature of the funding that is part of MG's structure. The structures that have been established by MG through external expertise committees, research strands and community partnerships are a valuable addition to many music projects in the various MEPs nationwide. However, it may be that some of

[39] Music Generation's total income for 2014 was €2,523,702. Core funding of €2,154,067 was received from The Ireland Funds and €300,000 was received from the Exchequer through the Department of Education and Skills (DES). Music Generation also received €53,405 through their partnership with the Arts Council which adds value to core MEP programmes.

the new programmes developed in the MEPs may be considered as replacing classroom music curriculum teaching. Additionally, new challenges are presented for music educators and community music practitioners who have developed their work largely outside of the formal education system and now are becoming part of a new national structure.

### 3.11 The Arts Charter

The *Arts in Education Charter*, published by the Department of Arts and Heritage (2012) marks a significant moment in the development of overall arts education policy for children in Ireland. It is particularly significant as it involves the Department of Arts and the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in partnership with the Arts Council. The development of relationships between these departments and organisation is significant and marks a huge step in the securing a long-term strategy for the recognition of the role of arts education for all children in Ireland both within formal school context and outside. The opening preface to the report outlines the importance of exposing younger children to creative opportunities. It states:

> We believe creativity must be placed at the heart of our future as a society and a country. The arts are our first encounter with that rich world of creativity, and we believe in placing the arts, alongside other subjects, at the core of our education system (2012:3-4).

The charter also makes reference to early years provision in the document highlighting the importance of giving children the opportunity to engage and experience the arts:

> Universal pre-school provision presents a significant opportunity to enable young children to experience of a wide variety of the arts including music, painting, dance and drama (ibid:7).

The charter outlines the commitment from the DES to 'Continue to support the arts as one of the key components of a holistic education' at all levels of education in Ireland' (2012:19). A high-level implementation group has been created to ensure that the guidelines are carried out appropriately.

One of the significant challenges to the development of a music education system in Ireland is that of socio-economic disadvantages. This present study reveals that children often have the opportunity to engage in further musical activities outside of school but many children cannot afford private education. Programmes such as Music Generation aim to address some of this socio-economic disadvantage through targeted programmes and funded instruments banks in RAPID [40]areas but these programmes are limited to specific areas.

### 3.12 Irish Traditional Music Education

Irish traditional music features as a central part of children's musical culture in Ireland (McCarthy, 1999; Vallely et al, 2004). Children experience Irish traditional music through various spaces including home, school, after-school and local community organisations. Irish traditional music features as part of the primary and secondary level music curricula. The nature and content of how this is transmitted at local classroom and whole school levels varies depending on each local context. Some schools have an extensive range of opportunities for children to learn to play Irish traditional music instruments, sing Irish traditional songs in the traditional idiom and learn to Irish dance, while other schools have limited focus on this aspect of music. Workshops at festivals such as Miltown Malbay, Scoil Éigse and Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann cater for young musicians to engage in instrumental, song and dance workshops with well-known and established musicians.

Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann is the largest network for the promotion and teaching of Irish traditional music in community contexts in Ireland. In 1951, the organisation was set up to promote and support the transmission of Irish traditional music in Ireland and worldwide. Currently, there are over one hundred branches dispersed throughout Ireland offering over one thousand classes where young people learn to play a range of instruments (See Figure J for outline of distribution of branches). As Kearney (2009)

[40] RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) Programme is a Government initiative set up to support disadvantages areas throughout Ireland.

highlights, the distribution of branches is uneven, as is the size of membership and activities of each branch. Thus, some areas of the country are very well serviced by the organisation through the efforts of local committees and teachers while other areas lack opportunities for engagement in the traditional arts through the organisation, although other opportunities may exist.

Alongside the support in the transmission of the music, many braches organise live music sessions and performances for young people and adults to participate in and attend. The following statements by CCÉ highlights how they believe that all children should experience the traditional arts throughout their education:

> Comhaltas believes that every child should be given the opportunity in school to experience the traditional arts and should have the choice to pursue them as part of their normal education. It is a right that should not be denied to any child (*Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann Development Programme for the Irish Traditional Arts,* 2004:25).

Similarly, in her ethnographic fieldwork study with Irish traditional musicians, Cawley (2013) highlights how established Irish traditional musicians all cite the formal education system as an important place for children to learn about Irish traditional music. Many of her respondents reveal how influential the primary schooling system was to their musical development.

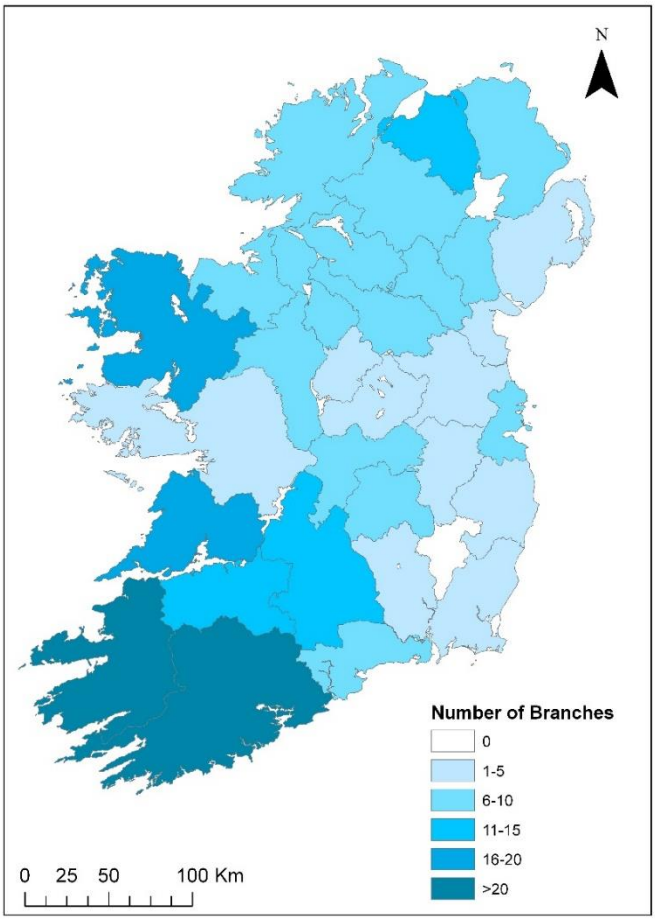



*Figure J: Distribution of branches of* Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann *in 2008, Kearney (2009)*

Research studies of the role of Irish traditional music provision within the formal education system in Ireland largely suggest that the provision of Irish traditional music education within the formal education system is not adequate and that Irish traditional music is for the most part transmitted outside of the school context through the medium of CCÉ and private teachers (Cawley, 2013; Vallely et al, 2004). In 1999, Mac Aoidh, writing about the provision for Irish traditional music states:

> Despite being a recognised portion of the curriculum traditional music in primary schools must be said to be a hit and miss affair... (Mac Aoidh, 1999:107-8).

In 2004, a report published by CCÉ entitled, *Development Programme for the Irish Traditional Arts* also articulates a dismal picture of the role of the traditional arts in

Ireland. It makes specific reference to an unevenness surrounding access to and provision of Irish traditional music for young people:

> The traditional arts are for everyone. Despite the great progress in promoting the traditional arts, there are many Irish people today who have little interaction with the traditional arts during their lives. As a consequence, local communities and society generally have not reaped the social, cultural and economic benefits that should flow from the traditions. At one end of the spectrum many people will not have an opportunity to experience the traditions, while at the other end the contribution that our arts can make to community cohesion and identity and the formation of social capital is inevitably restricted. The development of the art forms too is impoverished by this situation (*Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann Development Programme for the Irish Traditional Arts,* 2004:23).

The report also refers to the unevenness in terms of the experiences that children encounter depending on the interest of the teacher and/or school community:

> Although recognised within the school curriculum, the teaching of the traditions and music in particular, is far from satisfactory. The location of schools and the personal interest of the teachers will determine to a very large extent whether or not they will feature on the timetable (*Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann Development Programme for the Irish Traditional Arts,* 2004:23).

The lack of overarching policy for the development of traditional arts increases the challenges to the development and promotion of Irish traditional music for young people. However, in contract to the above statement, there is much work being done in certain schools to develop the traditional arts for young people. Alongside a private network of teachers who assist in the development of this, a large number of CCÉ branches and individual members facilitate the development of music in local areas by organising traditional music teachers to visit schools to teach instruments to children (?REF). There are also a number of instances where Comhaltas branches are collaborating with Education and Training Boards to increase the provision of instrumental classes in Irish traditional music in various locations throughout Ireland.

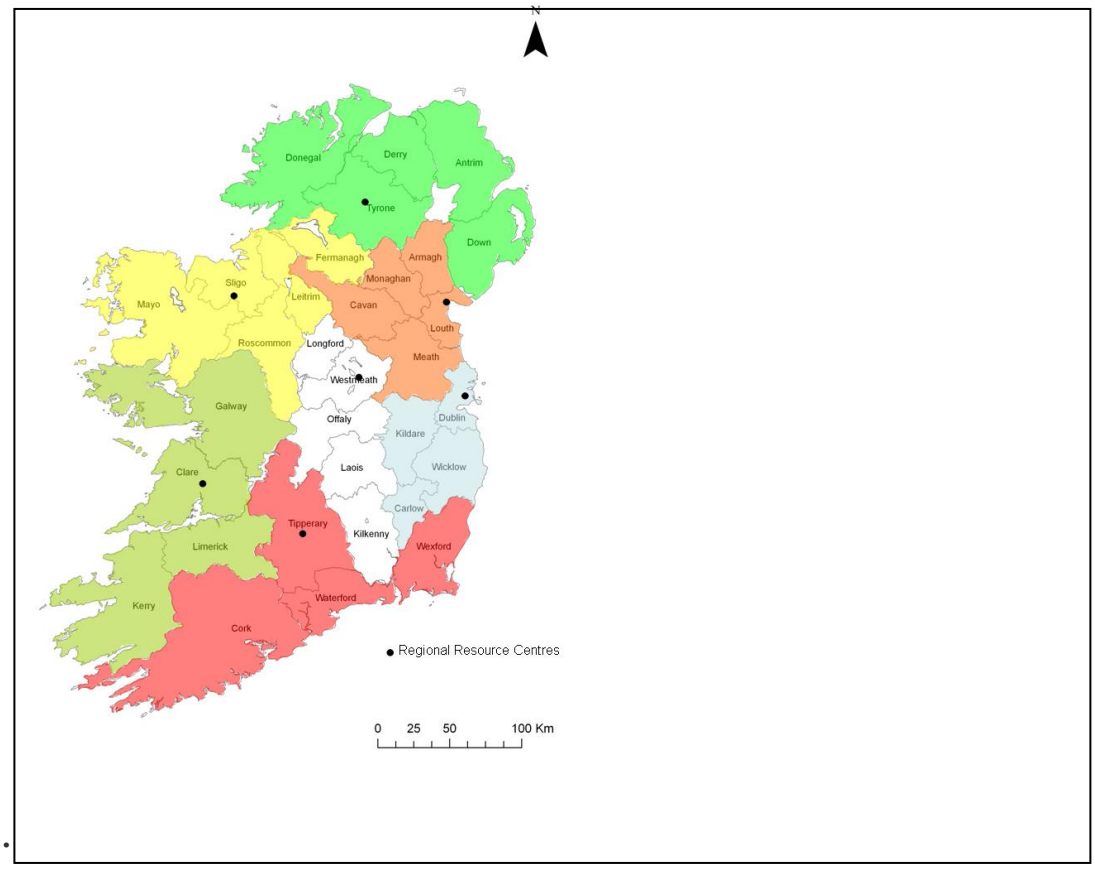



*Figure K: Map of* Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann *Regional Centres.*

*Outreach projects are taking place in seven regions in Tipperary, Clare, Dublin, Sligo, Louth and Tyrone. Source: Kearney (2008).*

### 3.13 Overview of Music Education Providers in Cork

A diverse range of organisations, music schools, festivals and local community projects provide children with the opportunity to engage in music activities outside of statutory education throughout Cork city and its suburbs. Some of the participants in this study engage with varied musical activities outside of school. In the following section, I provide a brief summary of musical activities in Cork city and the local county area. I begin with an overview of Music Generation Cork City. I then provide a summary of the festivals and other main providers of music education programmes for children in Cork.

#### Music Generation Cork City Programmes

MGCC is based on a community partnership model with local music education providers where they work to create and develop diverse music education programmes in a range

of primary and secondary schools and in other youth education settings. MGCC specifically work with areas that are part of the RAPID area in Cork city and those who have identified as having gaps in music education provision. Music Generation Cork City is underpinned by a commitment to community education principles and achieving 'social inclusion through music', as outlined in Cork City Council's report on the use and role of music throughout the City (Music Generation Cork City, 2013:8). Music Generation Cork City work with community-based providers of music learning, to 'support the provision of performance music education opportunities for children in a variety of settings, encompassing diverse formal, non-formal and, informal approaches and methods' (Music Generation Cork City Annual Report, 2013:9).

Music Generation Cork City's programme consists of three main elements as follows:

- Build: A core programme of performance music education opportunities
- Inspire: A complementary programme of performance and creative music-making opportunities
- Sustain: A programme of capacity building with providers towards lifelong music learning in Cork (*Music Generation Cork City Annual Report*, 2013:9).

Music Generation Cork City focuses on the 'development and delivery of quality music education in communities with little access to, and consequently little or no tradition of, formalised music education' (ibid). The music partners and programmes that are run in collaboration with MGCC are outlined in Figure L.

| | |
|---|---|
| SoundOUT | SoundOUT is an inclusive music programme for children and young people with special needs founded by Dr Gráinne McHale. SoundOUT provides a range of inclusive music education projects, involving over 300 young people, throughout various schools in Cork City, in partnership with Music Generation Cork City. SoundOUT also provides community based projects throughout Cork City. |
| Cork Academy of Music | Cork Academy of Music school outreach programme offers a range of vocal and instrumental tuition to children in various schools and community settings in Cork city. |
| Barrack Street Band | A Brass & Wind Programme takes places in schools and community settings throughout Cork city. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Creative Tradition | A community based Irish traditional music programme based on the North Side of Cork City. Focusing on providing Irish traditional music lessons to over 200 students at St Mary's on the Hill, Knocknaheeny during school time, Creative Tradition also run an after-school club where young people can engage in music lessons on flute, fiddle, whistle and bodhrán. |
| Ballyphehane Youth Project | After-school band and songwriting project for young people. |
| Youth Work Ireland Cork | Instrumental, vocal and rap programme in partnership with The Hut and Youth Work Ireland Cork. |
| MIC | Music in Community run a YES Project (Youth Enterprise Scheme), music programme for at-risk young people. |

*Figure L: Music Generation Cork City Overview.*

MGCC in collaboration with the community-based providers aim to 'embed a culture of music-making' and to provide 'sustainable contexts for lifelong music-making' (ibid). Capacity building with local community and education providers are a core element of how MGCC are achieving their long term strategic goals.

**Music Organisations in Cork**

Music organisations in Cork are organised as a network with various interconnections. Many children, parents and teachers are stakeholders in more than one organisation and together these organisations form a musical ecosystem that shapes the musical culture and experiences of children. The diverse organisations provide opportunities for different forms of learning, engagement with multiple genres of music, and contexts for different types of performance including social, competitive and examination based.

Comhaltas Ceoltoirí Éireann currently have two branches based in Cork city. The largest branch has over three hundred members and is the main provider of Irish traditional music lessons for children in the city. The Cork School of Music and the Cork County Music School also provide options for children to engage in instrumental learning and ensemble playing in a wide range of instruments and genres. The Cork School of Music (CSM) was founded in 1878 and it was the first municipal school of music to be set up in Ireland. In 1993, in collaboration with the Crawford College of Art and Design, the Cork

School of Music became affiliated with Cork institute of Technology (CIT). Alongside its provision of courses to study music at tertiary level, the CSM provides students with a broad range of musicianship classes and instrumental tuition in a range of instruments. Focus in on learning within the western art idiom. Lessons take place in a purpose built building on Union Quay which was opened in 2007.

The Cork County School of Music provides instrumental tuition programmes in both classical and Irish traditional music as well as opportunities for students to engage in diverse ensemble performance opportunities and musicianship classes.[41] The school of music works with over thirty schools, organisation and educational centres throughout Cork County. [42] It currently has over 2,500 pupils of ages 6-18 on its register. The CCSM also provides support to students who are undertaking music as a curricular subject at secondary school through a combination of private and small group theory and performance based classes. Programmes include piano, strings, woodwind and percussion instrumental classes and classes in Irish traditional musical instruments. Alongside weekly tuition and group rehearsals, students of the CCSM participate in a range of performances and annual events including a Christmas concert series, an awards ceremony and gala showcase. Throughout the programme, students also participate in a range of ensembles including orchestras and group ensembles in woodwind, brass and Irish traditional music.

Other music organisations and voluntary organisations that also offer children the opportunity to engage in diverse music learning and music making opportunities are outlined in Figure M. These include festivals that are unique to the Cork context and are specifically focused on young people such as the Cór Fheile and Feis Maitiú and other festivals that provide some opportunities for young people to engage with, including the Cork International Choral Festival and The Cork Folk Festival.

[41] In 2014, Cork City VEC and Cork County VEC merged and are not under the umbrella organisation of Cork Educational and Training Board (Cork ETB).
[42]CCSM organise music classes in over thirty venues throughout county Cork.

| |
|---|
| Cork School of Music (CSM) |
| Cork County School of Music (CCSM) |
| Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCÉ) |
| Cor Fheile |
| Feis Maitiú |
| Cork Pop Orchestra |
| Cork Folk Festival |
| Music 4 Children |
| Voice Works |
| Cork Youth Orchestra |
| Musicians in the Making Suzuki Cork |
| Cork City Music College |
| Academy of Popular Music, Cork School Music |

*Figure M: Music Education Providers in Cork City.*

The above section provides a summary of the opportunities that children have to engage in music activities in Cork city and its immediate environs. Cork city is renowned for its diverse opportunities for children to engage in musical learning and although there are other parts of Ireland that offer similar opportunities, they often are located close to city areas or places where music can be studied at higher education levels. Rural areas and even places that are not close to city centre facilities are often much more limited in terms of the opportunities for children to learn. Although there are many opportunities in Cork for children, their engagement is often influenced by socio-economic difficulties. The Music Generation project specifically aims to address these inequalities in the Cork contest, this is still at an early stage and the lack of financial resources contributes to the overall access issues.

### 3.14 Summary of Chapter

In this chapter I have highlighted some of the significant developments that influence policy and legislation in the area of children's musical cultures in Ireland. The discussion on children's cultural rights highlights how children have become an important area of focus since the development of the 1989 UNESCO convention on the rights of the child. The subsequent development of initiatives and reports such as the The National

Children's Strategy (2000), The Education Act (1998) and The Arts Bill (2002) reveal the commitment by policy makers to children's lives in general. Although developments in the role of music at curricular level suggest that music is considered an important and valuable subject, the lack of resources, professional development strategies, combined with the reduction in contact hours while studying to be a teacher, highlight how music in undervalued and not a priority overall for children in Ireland. The engagement of the Arts Council of Ireland and other organisations such as Music Network and Music Generation highlight the increased momentum for creating an equitable system whereby all children have access to music activities for all children in both in-school and out-of-school contexts. This present study highlights that even with the advancement in policies, there remain serious gaps in the provision of music for children in Ireland. My observations of music in primary schools highlights how children's access to music activities is influenced by the profile and geographical location of the school and by children's social and economic backgrounds.

The primary education system remains an importance place where children have the opportunity to be supported to engage in diverse music activities throughout their childhood. While most schools emphasise the importance of music and aim to create opportunities for children to experience music, there are many difficulties to implementing this vision. The large student-teacher ratio combined with the lack of physical resources and professional development for teachers are some of the reasons why the development of music for all children is constraint. The lack of connection between music teachers and community music facilitators who facilitate music for children but are not part of the formal state education system also contributes to the challenge of developing an equitable music education system in Ireland.

In this chapter I emphasise the significance of including the children's voice in matters that affect their lives and I review the literature and policies that support this argument. My review of the curricular developments and other policies on music for children suggest a lack of inclusion of children's views and perspectives on how music features in

their lives. This present study argues that research with children on their musical lives is significant and valuable to creating access to and provision of appropriate music education activities for children in Ireland. A quality and relevant music education system must be created considering the children themselves, their views, desires and needs. It must also be mindful of the ways in which children engage in music spontaneously and without the formal structure from adults.

An overview of developments in the provision of music education in both in-school and out-of-school contexts provides insights into the opportunities that exist for children to engage in music and the diversity of opportunities that may exist. It is evident that some of the opportunities are limited by the socio-economic circumstances and geographical location of children and their parents. The opportunity to engage in multiple musical spaces, including attendance at concerts and festivals is often limited to children whose parents can allocate the time and money to these activities while others can often access these events through initiatives such as Music Generation Cork City. In the next chapter, I discuss the methodology used in this study which aims to address this lack of insight into children's perspectives. In the following chapters I reveal how children's views and perspectives can inform policy and the overall development of music education in Ireland.

# Chapter 4 - Listening to Children: Research Methodology and Ethical Considerations

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the methodological approach used for empirical aspects of this study. I begin with an outline of how research with children has evolved in the last decade, focusing on how children have become more centrally involved in research studies. I discuss two frameworks developed to increase children's active engagement in the research process: First, I outline Hart's 'Ladder of Participation' (1992), a reference tool used for planning children's participation levels in research studies. Next I discuss the Mosaic approach (Clark and Moss, 2001) which is a multi-method approach to carrying out research with children that focuses on a diverse range of methods of carrying our research with children.

In the second part of this chapter, I outline the ethnographic methods employed in this study. Ethnographic fieldwork was carried out in three primary schools and in three after-school settings as part of the research. I discuss how sets of observations and semi-structured group interviews with the research participants were carried out in the various contexts. I consider the ethical issues that emerged in the planning and outline the safeguards that were put in place to overcome these issues. I also discuss the approach used in the analysis of the data and the methods that were used to create the ethnographic narrative.

In the final part of the chapter, I provide an overview of the main research sites where I engaged in fieldwork for this study. I outline the profiles of the various in-school and out-of-school locations. I also present details of the extra-curricular music activities that take place in each setting.

## 4.2 Research with Children: Historical and Contemporary Developments

Up until recently, the direct participation of children in research studies across many disciplines has been limited. The marginalisation of children and their views from research studies is often considered to be connected to how children were viewed in society at large. Holloway writes about the historical role of children in sociological research, stating that:

> Children tended to be seen as human becomings rather than human beings, who through the process of socialisation were to be shaped into fully human adult beings (Holloway et al, 1999:4).

Hogan (2005) suggests that even when research studies have taken place with children, they often have not sought to understand children's 'subjective experiences and their worlds' (Hogan, 2005:22). The focus has remained on the views of adults rather than capturing 'children's own perspectives on their behaviour, on their feelings, and on their evaluation of the kinds of services they receive' (ibid). Similarly, Kellett & Ding (2004) emphasise how the focus in research studies has been 'on children' and not 'with children'.

The growing concern for children's rights internationally has influenced the awareness of including their voices in research studies. Since the 1990s children have become more central to many research studies and viewed as 'active researchers' or 'participants' rather than 'objects' of research (Kellett, 2005:5). Emphasising the importance of children in the research process, Kellett states that 'children are party to the subculture of childhood which gives them a 'a unique 'insider' perspective that is critical to our understanding of children's worlds' (Kellett, 2005:1). Although there has been an increase in studies aiming to include children as active participants, Kellett suggests that these studies are primarily managed by adults and that children must become more involved as co-researchers in the research process. Kellett's recent work on this area suggests that enabling children to engage in research method training is one of the first steps to empowering children as 'active researchers' (ibid). Her studies reveal interesting methods of facilitating and supporting children to carry out child-led research studies themselves (see Kellett 2002; 2003; 2004; 2005 and Kellett et al 2004). In 2002, Kellett led a research project in a school in Oxfordshire with a group of seven children (aged 9-10 years). Twelve sessions of extra-curricular research methods training were provided for the students. The students were then supported to design, plan and evaluate their own research projects. A follow on strand focused on working with larger groups and partnerships were facilitated between different schools. Research methods training was

provided as part of the curriculum. Findings revealed that children's participation and engagement in the research projects had a 'positive effect on the children's self-development' (2005:14).

The Children's Research centre at the Open University was established to support and promote research by children. Kellett discusses another similar initiative in Hungary where fifty-one schools have included a research methods training for children as part of their national curriculum (2005). Other projects which have included children as researchers as a way to generate their own ideas and execute their own research projects include: Fielding 2001, 2004; Kellett et al, 2004 and Kellett, 2005. [43]

### 4.3 Frameworks for Engaging Children in the Research Process

Hart's Ladder of Participation (1992) and The Mosaic Approach (2001) are two methodological approaches that focus on increasing awareness of children's active participation in research studies. Hart's Ladder of Participation (1992) is a reference tool divided into seven stages outlining various participant levels that children can engage in during a research study (See Figure N). Through the development of this approach, Hart advocates for increased levels of participation of children in research studies. The reference tool outlines the levels ranging from non-participant (levels/rung 1, 2, 3) to full participation (levels/rung 7, 8). At full participation, adults and children share decisions that affect their lives.

Hart defines participation as a 'process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives' (Hart, 1992:5) and he emphasises the link to a democratic society and how participation is the 'fundamental right of citizenship' (ibid). The ladder of participation is created to 'serve as a beginning typology for thinking about children's participation in projects' (Hart, 1992,9). Hart explains that the first three

[43] Similarly, the children's research centre as part of the Open University, UK and the Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland have been set up to empower and support children to carry out their own research led projects.

levels, manipulation, decoration and tokenism are models of non-participation of children. Manipulation is where children are not consulted in any capacity regarding their views and or if they are consulted, they are not given any feedback on the relevance of their ideas. Decoration is where children are included in events but have no knowledge of what it is related to. One example is of children performing in an important event but they are unaware of the meaning of their participation. Tokenism is described by Hart as a process where children are 'apparently given a voice' (Hart, 1992:9) but have no opportunity to convey their own opinions on it. Hart refers to the fourth rung of the ladder of participation as 'assigned but informed'. In this type of project, children 'understand the intentions of the project… they know who made the decisions concerning their involvement and why…and they have a meaningful role' (Hart, 1992: 11). The fifth state of the ladder is entitled 'Consulted and informed' and this is similar to stage four as the projects are run by adults but children's views are treated seriously (ibid). The sixth rung 'Adult initiated, shared decisions with children' is referred to by Harte as 'true participation'. Even though these projects are initiated by adults, children are involved in the decision making process. Rung 7, 'Child-initiated and directed' is a process were children are facilitated to initiate and direct their own research projects with the support of adults. The final stage, Rung 8, 'Child initiated, Shared Decisions with Adults' is also projects that are initiated by children but where they collaborate with adults to make informed shared decisions on matters that affect their lives. Hart notes that projects that represents the highest rung the ladder of participation are rare.

Hart's Ladder of Participation is an important reference tool that aims to encourage researchers to consider the levels of participation of children in research studies. Since its development, it has been widely used in a range of disciplines that aim to involve children in their research studies, however, it has also received negative criticism for what Kellett refers to as its 'over simple linear approach to the concept of participation' (Kellett, 2005:7). Although I do not directly adopt Harte's ladder of participation in this study, the theory influenced how I developed my methodological approach in Chapter 4. In the context of this study, Harte's ladder emphasises the importance of considering

how children were included in the research process. It also brings to focus some of the limitations that emerge when aiming to involve children as active participants. Similar to the definition of Rung 5, this study was initiated by me, an adult researcher and the engagement of children's views is informed and highly valued. Later in this chapter, I discuss the ways in which children were encouraged to participate in this research study. In the final chapter, I consider ways in which further studies of children's musical cultures could be developed considering higher levels of participation.

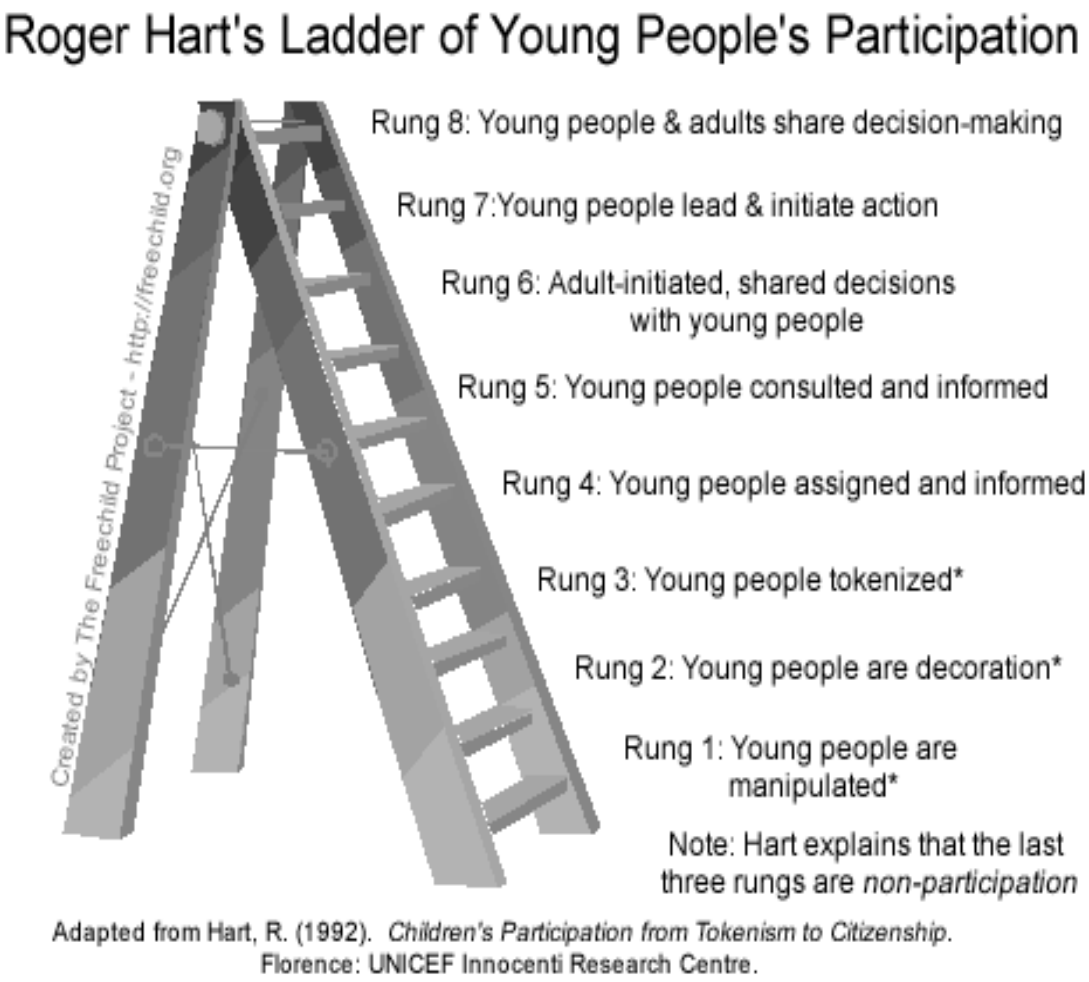



*Figure N: Roger Hart – Ladder of Participation (1992).*

The Mosaic approach is a multi-method framework developed for listening to young children's perspectives on their daily lives. In 1999, the integrated approach was initially

devised for working with under five year olds. In recent years, the method has been adapted for use with older children. The Mosaic approach aims to involve children in the research process and is considered as 'a way of listening while acknowledging children and adults as co-constructors of meaning' (Clark and Moss, 2005:1). The approach combines traditional methods of observing children with participatory methods of interviewing children including visual and verbal techniques during the interview process. Writing about the concept of the Mosaic itself, Clark and Moss reveal that:

> A mosaic is an image made up of many small pieces, which need to be brought together in order to make sense of the whole. The Mosaic approach gives young children the opportunity to demonstrate their perspectives in a variety of ways, calling on their 'hundred languages' (Clark & Moss, 2005:1).

The method recognises the different 'voices' or 'languages' of children and emphasises how children are experts in their own lives. A variety of techniques is explored to enable young children to communicate their ideas and feelings to adults in symbolic ways (ibid).[44] These techniques are used as a 'springboard' for talking, listening and reflecting with children.

The Mosaic framework for listening is outlined in Figure O:

| | |
|---|---|
| Multi-method: | recognises the different languages or voices of children |
| Participatory: | treats children as experts and agents in their own lives |
| Reflexive: | includes children, practitioners and parents in reflecting on meanings and addresses the question of interpretation |
| Adaptable: | can be applied to a variety of early childhood institutions |
| Focused on children's lived experiences: | looking at lives rather than knowledge gained or care received |

[44] Techniques include the use of visual and written materials, drawings and children taking photographs, observations and verbal communication with children, child conferencing (interviews with children), map making and children led tours of settings.

| | |
|---|---|
| Embedded into practice: | a framework for listening which has the potential to be both used as an evaluative tool and to become embedded into early years practice |

*Figure O: The Mosaic Framework for Listening – Clark and Moss (2001, 2005).*

Within this framework, a two-stage approach to gathering data is outlined in Figure P:

| | |
|---|---|
| Stage One: | Children and adults gather documentation and practitioners and parents reflect on what they think life is like for the child(ren) |
| Stage Two: | Piecing together information for dialogue, reflection and interpretation and practitioners and parents listen to the child(ren's) own perspectives |

*Figure P: The Mosaic Research Approach – Clark and Moss (2001, 2005).*

Clark and Moss (2005) argue for the importance of understanding listening as a process which is not confined to the spoken word. They suggest that the 'voice of a child' could indicate the transmission of ideas not only through words. They argue for the importance of listening to children and the need for this to be a 'process which is open to the many creative ways young children use to express their views and experiences' (Clark and Moss, 2005:5). Although the value of talking to children is not ignored, the approach suggests other valuable symbolic ways of enabling young children to communicate. Clark and Moss (2005) advocate for a participatory approach to listening that is mindful of children's views and of their silences. In relation to this they state that 'It is not only a question of seeing the world from children's perspectives but of acknowledging their rights to express their point of view or to remain silent' (Clark and Moss, 2005:7).

In the context of this study, the Mosaic framework informed elements of my approach to fieldwork. I was mindful of creating multiple ways for children to express themselves and share their ideas on their musical lives. I interviewed children in a variety of different contexts. In some cases, children enjoyed sharing their thoughts while a rehearsal was taking place in the background, or during their free play in the school yard or during a

group activity in the school hall. Others were much more comfortable discussing their views in a quieter setting. I explored different methods of data collection including the traditional methods of observations and interviews with the use of other participatory tools such as drawings, tours and images.

The multimethod mosaic framework facilitates what Clark refers to as a 'pedagogy of listening' emerging from Reggio Emilia practice. [45] The three strands of listening outlined by Rinaldi (2005) as internal listening, multiple listening and visible listening informed my fieldwork approach. Internal listening described by Clark as a 'reflective process for children to consider meaning, make discoveries and new connections and express understandings' (Clark and Moss, 2005:17) informed my decision to use open ended questions in interviews to allow children to respond and express their views and to leave the space for children to consider and reflect on their views during the process. The process of using open ended question where there are no 'wrong' answers, facilities children to 'explore without the fear that they have to second-guess the intended response'…and to support internal listening as a 'creative process' where there is freedom to 'express a new idea for the first time or in a new way' (Clark and Moss, 2005:17). Multiple listening is a process where 'practitioners, groups of children and individual children listen to each other and to themselves' (Clark, 2005:19). It focuses on a 'web of interactions' where space is given for the sharing and discussion of ideas (ibid). In the context of this study, a multiple listening space was created in some of the larger focus group interviews with children. Visible listening is a process of 'documentation… which allows listening to take place at multiple levels and with a range of individuals and groups' (ibid: 23). Visible listening encourages the sharing of experiences and promotes the sharing and discussion of research experiences with others.

The process of reflection of children's views by adults and other members was beyond the scope of the study due to time constraints and limitations within the various settings. It is envisaged that this process will take place after the completion of this dissertation

[45] Reggio Emelia is an educational approach to pre-school education developed in Italy in the 1990s.

and as presentations are made to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in the form of the policy document. It is hoped that the findings from the fieldwork will be presented to a wider audience which will facilitate further discussion and interpretation of the data gathered and promote a visible listening process.

A further methodological challenge is outlined by Holmes who outlines the limitations of the role of the adult as 'outsider' to the children's culture and suggests that the field researcher must attempt to experience the children's way of engaging with the world. She states:

> Adult fieldworkers are never fully accepted into children's cultures because they can never relinquish their adult status. Rather, the fieldworker becomes the learner and the children become the teachers in the fieldworkers' attempt to experience the children's ways of knowing about the world (Holmes, 1998:19).

In my fieldwork, I was conscious that I might be considered an expert in music and I was particularly mindful of this when I introduced myself to the research participants and explained my background and role. This was particularly useful in my conversations with the music teachers and facilitators as it was important that they understood my role in terms of research and not as an evaluation of their teaching or pedagogical approach. Barker and Smith (2010) argue that defining the relationship between researcher and participants as 'adult as powerful' is 'over simplistic', suggesting that children are a lot more knowledgeable of their own environments that the adult researcher is and could be regarded as a "novice" to the environment.

In the next section of this chapter, I discuss the methodological approach used in this research study. I highlight how the study aims to explore the musical cultures of children by embracing multi-methods of research with children and by focusing on increasing their participation levels and raising their voices using a multi-method approach to data collection.

### 4.4 Research Methodology – Ethnographic Fieldwork

Ethnographic fieldwork is a central component of ethnomusicological study. Ethnography has been variously defined as: 'the study of people in naturally occurring settings' (Brewer, 2000:6); 'the study of groups and people as they go about their everyday lives' (Emerson et al, 1995:x); 'the observation and description of culture' (Barz and Cooley, 1997:4); and as the 'observation of people in situ' (Myers, 1992:23). The term 'participant observation' is often used to characterise ethnographic fieldwork. Participant observation is a research process whereby a researcher aims to gain a close and intimate familiarity with individuals or groups of people within a particular setting, through an intensive involvement with people in their environment.

A qualitative approach was adopted in this study as an understanding of the musical cultures of children is not quantifiable in numbers. Denzin and Lincoln define qualitative research as, 'multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter' (1994:3). They refer to qualitative researchers as people who 'study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them' (1994:3).. Similarly, Layder states, that 'The status of the distinction is ambiguous, because it is almost simultaneously regarded by some writers as a fundamental contrast and by others as no longer useful or even simply as 'false' (Layder 1993:110).

In relation to the use of qualitative methods while researching children's views, Hogan (1998) outlines that it is 'an approach designed by openness and inclusiveness, it aims to capture children's lived experiences of the word and the meanings they attach to those experiences from their own perspectives. It allows them to describe those experiences without the level of restraint that is often used in quantitative approaches' (Hogan, 1998:2). Hogan's study reveals the positive effects on how children behave during the research process. Prout and James (1997) report that ethnography is a particular useful methodology for the study of childhood and that the approach 'enables children to have a direct voice and active participation in the production of data' (Prout and James, 1997).

Similarly, Noble-Carr (2006) states that qualitative research is the most appropriate method for carrying out research with children.

Methods of participant and non-participant observations and semi-structured group interviews were used for my research study. The approach is informed by my own acquaintance with the cultures of Irish primary classrooms and after-school clubs and also international studies of children's musical cultures which were discussed in some detail in Chapter Two (see: Campbell, 1998 & 2010; Gaunt, 2006; and Marsh, 2008). Observations within the school environment took place in various spaces including the classroom, playground, supervised excursions within the school day, music workshops and activities organised and facilitated by visiting music teachers to the school. At all times, a teacher or supervising adult was present in the room. I observed children as they engaged in musical activities in both in-school and out-of-school settings. I also observed children during sports activities, lunchtimes, and free play time in the playground. During my observations, I carried a note-pad and pen. I also had a camera and an audio recorder with me. I gathered data from the various sets of observations using written fieldnotes, written reflections, audio, and video recordings. Throughout my observations, I recorded and collected the various sounds that formed part of the musical soundscape of the children. The fieldnotes were often short words or diagrams that I quickly jotted down to remind me of the physical space and layout of some of the musical activities. These complimented the audio and video recordings that were also gathered and they enhanced the writing up of the observations. Throughout my observations, I often wrote down some questions for further discussion or consideration. These were particularity useful as I began to analyse my observations and consider relevant themes that were emerging. Reflections of my observations were for the most part recorded immediately after the observation or later that day as I had finished my visit to the schools and to the after-school clubs. The use of the recording device provided me with valuable data as it provided me with the opportunity to reflect and gather the data. Similar to the approaches outlined by Emerson et al (1995) and

Krüger (2008), the collection of data using this variety of techniques were valuable in the writing up of the ethnography.

### 4.4.1 Methodology Design and Ethics

This research study involves children as research participants and as a result, ethical approval was required before commencing the research. In February 2011, ethical approval was granted by the respective ethical committees at both University College Cork and St. Patrick's College, Dublin City University. The ethical process required me to focus specifically on the fieldwork plan and the methodological approach used in the study. The following section discusses the plan in detail. It outlines the safeguards that were put into place to ensure the safety of all research participants. It also discusses the child-friendly methods of acquiring informed assent and the multi-method approaches to interviewing children that were used in this study.

### 4.4.2 Fieldwork Location, Timeframe and Access

In May 2011, six primary schools in Cork city and county were contacted requesting permission to host the research project. Responses were received from all the schools of which three were selected, based on access and their willingness to facilitate the research during the time-periods required. The schools chosen were representative of some of the different categories of primary schools that exist in Ireland.[46] The real names of the schools are not mentioned in this dissertation to ensure anonymity of research participants and as required by the ethical procedures granted.

School A is a single-sex girls school, located in the south of Cork city. It is a designated Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools school (DEIS). [47] School B is a co-educational school with the curriculum taught through the medium of the Irish language. It is located in a southern suburb of Cork city. School C is a co-educational school, located

[46] In Chapter Three, I outline the structure of the education system in Ireland including an outline of the types of schools that exist.

[47] The DEIS programme is run by the Department of Education and Skills and represents a range of national programmes that aim to address educational inclusion throughout the public school system in Ireland. For more information: www.citizensinformation.ie, accessed November, 2013.

five miles from Cork city, in the western suburbs. All schools are run by the local Catholic patronage, in association with the board of management. [48] Fieldwork also took place in three after-school settings. The after-school clubs were chosen as they were located close to the areas in which the schools were located. After-School Club A is a community-based voluntary music club, located to the south of Cork city. It is also located in the same community as school A. After-School Club B is a branch of the national CCÉ organisation and classes take place in the school building of school B. After-School Club C takes place in the school C building and is organised by primary school teachers from the school.

Children from ages 6-12 were selected as the main focus of this research study for a number of reasons. Recent research on children and spontaneous music making has focused on children in early years of childhood (Ages 0-6 years). There is an absence of research with children in the middle childhood age-group in the national and international context. As interviews were one of the primary methods of data collection, it was felt that children ages six upwards would be able to participate in the type of questioning and activity based interviews I had hoped to use.

Fieldwork for this study took place in two phases from October 2011 to January 2012, and October 2012 to January 2013. The first phase of study was spent observing musical activities in primary school A and primary school B. The second phase focused on return visits to schools A and B. Further sets of observations took place at these locations along with activity based semi-structured group interviews. Sets of observations and interviews in school C, after-school A and after-school B also took place during phase two.

[48] In 2012, statistics released by the DES on the profile of schools in Ireland reveals that over 97% of primary schools in Ireland are run by the Catholic Church in association with the board of management and the DES. Alongside the categories such as single-sex, co-educational, English language medium, and Irish medium language schools, there exists other socio-economic differentiations such as DEIS schools and rural schools and urban schools.

Planning of the fieldwork occurred between May 2011 and October 2011. In June 2011, after initial correspondence with the principal teachers from the schools, meetings were arranged to discuss further details of the research project. In two of the schools, I liaised with the principal teachers. In the third school, I liaised with the resource teacher who coordinated music activities in the school. The initial meetings with the teachers focused on discussing the aims and objectives of the study and ethical issues such as parental consent and supervision of the research activities.

In September 2011, information packs, outlining details of the research, were disseminated to parents of the children. The packs contained documents requesting permission for parents to give permission for their children to become research participants.[49] Information packs were also distributed to principal teachers, assistant teachers, music leaders and after-school club leaders, requesting their permission to become involved in the research study. An ethics statement was included in the packs alongside child-friendly information leaflets that were created specifically for the research study (See Appendix C on page 256 for a sample of the information packs).

The child-friendly brochure included in the information pack, was created in collaboration with an illustrator. The objective was to convey the aims and objectives of the research study with the use of child friendly images and appropriate language. Two versions of the brochure were created. The first one was designed for children ages 6-8 years and was specifically for parents to read with their children. The second version was aimed at children ages 9-12 years and was designed considering the reading level of children in that age group (See Figure Q for sample of information flyer). Irish language versions of the brochures were also created and distributed with the English language brochures in school B and after-school club A.

[49] Overall, parental consent for their children to become research participants was quite high with over 96% positive response rate from the forms distributed




*Figure Q: Children and Music in Ireland Information Flyer.*




*Figure R: Children and Music in Ireland Classroom Poster.*

In addition to the distribution of the information packs, information sessions were also carried out in classrooms to further explain elements of the research study. During these sessions, child friendly illustrations were used by the researcher to discuss the research study with the children (See Appendix F on page 287 for outline of images used in the presentation). The information sessions were an important way for children to get an opportunity to learn more about the research, to discuss ideas of what a research study is, and, to consider their role as research participants. It also provided an important opportunity for children to get to know the researcher. A poster was displayed in each classroom where children were participating in the study. The poster summarised the research study and provided children with a further opportunity to view the details after the session. It also provided an opportunity for any children that might have been absent on the day of the information session to learn about the research project (See Figure R for poster sample).

Student consent forms were also circulated to children in advance of carrying out the interviews (See Appendix C on page 256 for sample form). These forms were read out to students by the researcher before the interviews. They provided an opportunity for children to indicate if they did not wish to participate in the interviews. All children reported they were happy and willing to participate in the interviews.

### 4.4.3 Interviews

Semi-structured group interviews took place with children, teachers and music facilitators. All of the interviews were audio recorded and were transcribed afterwards verbatim.[50] Pseudonymous were allocated to all respondents to allow anonymity. Interviews were carried out in over fifteen different locations in various in-school and out-of-school contexts. Eighty-one children were interviewed in a variety of small group and larger focus group interviews. Fifty-three were girls and twenty-eight were boys. Informal conversations and interviews were carried out with ten principals, principal teachers, music teachers and after-school club leaders. A total corpus of 69,704 words was collected from the children's interviews and 15,205 words were collected from adult interviews. Interviews with children were facilitated by the researcher in collaboration with the classroom teachers or music facilitators. During the interviews with the children, I aimed to facilitate flows in conversations with the children as they engaged in activities. This allowed for a more informal group conversation which was considered to be more appropriate for the children. The activities created an interactive and comfortable environment for the children which in turn allowed them to share their thoughts and views during the conversations. After my initial observations and discussions with children regarding the ways in which they experience music, my aim was to explore the various contexts that they indicated as relevant to their musical experience. Some larger focus group interviews, provided the opportunity for children to listen to each other's thoughts on their musical lives and to comment and share their

[50] A first draft of transcriptions of interviews was completed by a professional transcriber. A second, final set of transcriptions was completed by the researcher which added additional relevant details to the transcripts based on fieldnotes gathered during the interviews.

own ideas. I had originally thought that this process might generate similar ideas and that children might be influenced about what their peers had said. For the most part, this did not appear to be the case. Children were interested in sharing the common experiences that they shared with their peers and were extremely keen to talk about those parts of their musical worlds that were different.

Interviews with adults all took place in a one to one capacity and varied from informal spontaneous conversations to semi-structured interviews. In comparison to interviewing children, these interviews were more conversation based and required less prompts. Adults seemed to appreciate the more formal structure and respond to my questions directly. All adult respondents were more than willing to share their ideas with me, however, at times, I felt they were keen to explore some of the ideas that they thought children might think about in relation to music. In all cases, it was important to spend some time talking about the research project aims and objectives and about the desire to facilitate children to share their views on their musical lives.

A multi-method approach was used in the interviews with the research participants. This allowed children to share details of their musical worlds combining the 'verbal' and 'visual' (Clark and Moss, 2005). Worksheets and drawings were used to allow children to respond to questions using visual tools. A list of sample questions was used as a guide for the interviews. The questions were adapted from a research study of the musical culture of children that took place in a US context (Campbell, 1998). Campbell's ethnographic narrative highlights that her conversations with children reveal much about themselves and their musical lives. The 'initial details' questions provide an opportunity to gauge personal characteristics of the children. Similar to Campbell, they enhanced the writing up of the conversations later as they helped remind me of certain characterises of the children and the conversations I had with them.

The questions which are listed below in Figure S were used as prompts in the interviews with children. They provided children the opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas on their musical interests. The order of questions varied according to the 'flow of

the conversation' (Campbell, 1998:230). I also abandoned certain questions where children's 'streams of consciousness' led me elsewhere (1998:9).

Introduction

My name is Michelle. I want to know more about what music you listen to, the music you like and the types of music you do. I play music all the time. I love listening to it, in the car, when I make my dinner and when I am going to bed. Today I want to ask you some questions and do some activities.

Initial Details - The Child and Setting
Name of Child (real for records only)
Pseudonym (assigned by me)
Interview Setting
Teacher
Others in the interview

General Questions

- Do you like music?
- What do you like about it?
- What kind of music do you do?
- Do you have a favourite sound?
- Do you play a musical instrument? Which one(s)?
- How did you learn to play the instrument?
- Do you friends or family play musical instruments?

Listening to Music
(Home, school, After-school, Bedroom, Kitchen, Living Room, school Yard, Playground, concerts, car).

- Do you listen to music? Where and when?
- What kinds of music od you listen to?
- Where do you hear music when you get up during the day?

- Do you sing when you're at home?
- Do you parents sing?
- What kinds of songs do they sing /music do they listen to?
- Do you ever make up songs?
- Do you ever make up tunes?
- Do you dance/ do you like to dance to music?
- What kind of music do you like to dance to?

- Do you like fast/slow music? Loud/soft music?
- Do any of your books or toys make music?

Singing

- Do you like to sing?
- What types of songs do you like to sing?
- How did you learn them?

- Do you sing songs in school?
- Do you have a favourite song? Can you sing some of it for me?

Where you sing or play music

- Do you sing or play music in school?
- Do you sing or play music outside of school?
- Do you sing or play music with your friends?
- When you grow up what would you like to be?
- Do you sing or play music with your family?
- Is there anything about music that you don't like?
- You do music at x and y - what kind of music do you like the most?
- Is there any music you'd like to do more of in school or at home?
- Live music?

Tell me more about that?

What do you mean by that?

*Figure S: Music and Children in Ireland – Interview Outline.*

Interviews were carried out in various locations that were considered most appropriate in each school and after-school setting. Locations included classrooms, school halls, school library, art room, resource room and playgrounds. It is widely acknowledged that the context in which interviews are carried out have a significant impact on children's ability to participate, engage and respond in an interview setting. Writing about this, Clark and Moss (2005) discusses how young children respond in a more positive way to interviewing if the interview takes place in a familiar environment with a trusted adult. He also stresses the importance of 'maintaining rapport' and how 'monitoring the child's comfort is an on-going process' (2005:20).

All interviews were carried out in small group contexts as they were considered to be less overwhelming for the children than one-to-one interviews. In most cases, the teachers choose the groups of children to be interviewed together. In some cases, children decided themselves and as a result, there were some obvious instances where there were close friendships in the groups. This often impacted the conversations I had with children - friends often started to reveal aspects of their musical activities that they engaged in together at their homes. The free-flowing nature of the conversations facilitated children to talk spontaneously about different aspects of their musical lives.

There were many instances where the conversations flowed into different areas and some instances of where I was unsure of the exact conversation details. There were other occasions where children spoke about a song or musical artist or computer application that I was not familiar with. In those cases, I invited them to explain more about the unknown references to songs or artists.

Barker and Smith (2001) suggest that the relationships between the researcher and research participants are not fixed and that our identities as researchers are constructed in relation to the research participants (Barker & Smith, 2001). Writing about this, Holmes (1998:19) refers to the importance of adopting the 'friend role', which is outlined by Mandell (1988:433) as being one in which the fieldworker exerts no authority over children. Holmes suggests that the key ingredients to achieve this are 'expressing positive feelings and a desire to be with the children, the failure to deliver discipline, and treating the children with respect' (Holmes, 1998:19). In the context of this study, the time spent visiting and observing children as they engaged in musical activities provided multiple opportunities for the researcher to develop a strong relationship with children in advance of detailed conversations with them as part of the study. During my conversations, I sat with children in diverse locations. Sometimes we sat at tables, on their chairs, on the floor or close to a school fence outside.

At the end of the interviews with children, I thanked the children for participating and explained that I was now going to listen again to the recordings and start to write about their collective ideas of the role of music in their lives. In the case of adults that participated in the research, I thanked them for participating and assured them of anonymity. I outlined that I was going to write up a thesis and if they were interested that I would forward them sections of the work including their quotations before submission of a final draft. This process gave the adult participants the opportunity to withdraw or alter any ideas or quotations that had been gathered throughout the interview process. It also gave them the opportunity to submit any additional comments

or thoughts that had come to mind after the interview process. One interviewee decided to forward me additional comments via email.

### 4.4.4. Data Analysis

The process of analysing data for this study is informed by approaches to data analysis of ethnographic material and to the creation of ethnographic texts, as outlined by Richards (2005); Cook & Crang, (1995); and Maykut & Morehouse (1994). Similarly, literature that focuses on the areas of ethnography (Krüger (2008) and Emerson et al (1995)) and narrative enquiry (Clandinin and Connelly (2000) informs the creation of the ethnographic narrative. The transcriptions of the sets of observations and the interviews with children took place after the fieldwork phase was completed.[51] The transcription of any supplementary interviews with adults such as teachers, music coordinators or visiting music specialists also took place at this time. The transcripts combined with fieldnotes and reflections were used in the analysis of the data. Drawings and images collected during the interviews were also included in the analysis. [52]

Once all of the transcriptions were read and reviewed individually, a system of coding of data began. Keywords and ideas were circled in each interview transcript and inputted into an Excel file. Approximately one hundred and twenty keywords were created during this method. Writing about this process, Krüger (2008) states that 'The coding of data begins at a basic level so as to identify 'meaning units' in the data' (2008:111). She emphasises how complex this process is and how there often is lack of transparency in how this emerges in ethnographic data analysis. The keywords were reviewed and grouped into the provisional themes and strands as outlined in Figure T below. Themes emerged in various ways but most particularly from repeated keywords that were linked or connected. Once the themes were identified, files were created and themed sections of interviews were inserted into the relevant files. In instances where some passages of

[51] See Appendix E on page 267 for sample of transcription.
[52] See Appendix F 287 for sample of activity sheets.

material linked to more than one theme, the material was coloured coded and inserted into two or more themed files.

### Themes Emerging from Analysis of Observations

| Theme Heading | Sub-themes |
|---|---|
| **Children's engaging with music (Agents and Spaces)** | In-school<br>Out-of-school |
| **Musical Activities in school** | School choirs<br>School bands<br>Irish traditional music bands<br>Music and religious ceremonies<br>Music in the yard<br>Performance groups<br>School and community performances |
| **Musical Activities outside of school** | Transmission of music<br>Irish traditional music<br>Music after-school clubs<br>Private teachers<br>Local organisations |
| **Performance** | School performances<br>Community performances<br>National performances (Music Generation, CCÉ, Peace Proms)<br>Community links |
| **Composition** | Music in the yard (peer to peer learning)<br>Music in the classroom (creating songs)<br>New words / recycled melody<br>Popular music influences |
| **Transmission** | Pedagogical approaches to the transmission of music<br>Kodály, Suzuki, teaching of Irish traditional music. |

*Figure S: Summary of Themes from Data Analysis of Observations.*

### Themes Emerging from Data Analysis of Interviews

| Theme Heading | Sub-themes |
|---|---|
| **Why do you like Music?**<br>**The benefits of music from the Perspective of the Children** | Physical, Emotional, Social, Musicality and Talent Career |
| **Musical activities in school** | School Choir<br>Music and Cross Curricular Links: Religion and Irish and Drama<br>Music in the Yard<br>Performance Groups<br>School and Community Performances |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Musical activities outside of school** | Transmission of Music<br>Irish traditional music<br>Music and Gymnastics<br>Music and running<br>Performances, events and Concerts |
| **Performance** | Benefits<br>Enjoyment<br>Repertoire<br>Groups<br>Competitions<br>Community Links |
| **Composition** | Song Writing<br>Music in the Yard<br>Making up songs at home with friends<br>New words / recycled melody<br>Popular music influences |
| **Musical Tastes / Preferences in formal education** | Bands / Groups / Artists that they like<br>Music in school – music at home / preferences<br>Repertoire in school preferences |
| **Listening / Popular Music Culture and Preferences in general** | TV<br>Technology<br>Home |
| **Transmission** | Peer to Peer Learning<br>Friendship Groups<br>Parents<br>Teachers<br>Schools of Music |
| **Music at Home** | Listening<br>Family Influences<br>Popular Music<br>Music and Media |
| **Music and Sport** | Benefits of Music<br>Links with music and performance<br>Similarities and differences |

*Figure T: Summary of Themes from Data Analysis of Interviews.*

Following Krüger (2008), Richards (2005), Cook & Crang (1995) and Emerson et al (1995) I analysed the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the interview and observation data. They are combined into three areas which are outlined in Figure T and discussed further in the following fieldwork chapters.

### 4.4.5 Combined Themes of Study

**Context of Children's Musical Engagement**

- Curricular and extra-curricular music activities in school
- Music at home
- Music in the yard

**Nature of Children's Musical Engagement**

- Formal, structured, adult led musical activities
- Children's spontaneous, child led music activities

**Children's Musical Worlds**

- Parallel musical worlds
- Listening
- Musical value /perception
- Musical identity

*Figure T: Emerging Themes of Fieldwork Analysis.*

## 4.6 Summary of Chapter

This chapter explored how children's views have become central in research studies across a wide range of disciplines. It discussed frameworks of participation in research studies and methodological approaches to carrying our research studies that informed the approach used in this study. Ethical considerations are central to carrying out research with children. Working ethically at all times is vital and parameters exist to how research is carried out with children. This chapter discussed in detail how I carried out the research with due consideration of ethics and how this was negotiated at every stage of the research process. This chapter also provides insight into the approach used in the data analysis and interviews and how this data was used to create the ethnographic narrative which follows in the next two chapters.

# Chapter 5: Ethnography Part 1, in-school and out-of-school observations

## 5.1 Introduction

Fieldwork for this research study took place in three primary schools and three after-school music locations. In the first part of this chapter, I outline the profiles of the various in-school and out-of-school locations. I discuss the geographical locations of the various settings, along with school policies, school ethos, and demographics. I present details of extra-curricular activities and a brief overview of the music activities that take place in each location. Figure U provides a summary of the profile of the three schools and the three after-school settings. To protect the identity of the children approximate numbers of the school roll are included over exact numbers. The second part of this chapter focuses on a number of central themes that emerge from the analysis of the ethnographic data gathered for this study. I also present and discuss some of the conversations I had with children on the musical activities that they engage with during and after-school.

| School Name | Gender | Approximate number on school roll |
|---|---|---|
| **School A** | All Girls | 200 |
| **School B** | Mixed Gaelscoil | 400 |
| **School C** | Mixed Mainstream | 300 |
| **After-school Club A** | Mixed | 100 |
| **After-school Club B** | Mixed | 200 |
| **After-school Club C** | Mixed | 50 |

*Figure U: Summary of Fieldwork Locations.*

## 5.2 Profile of School A

School A is an all-girls, Catholic, English speaking primary school, located in the south of Cork city. There are approximately two hundred in attendance representing over fifteen nationalities. There are twenty-two teachers working at the school. The school was founded in 1957 by the Presentation Order of Catholic nuns and is still under the trusteeship of the Presentation sisters. The school is part of the DEIS programme run by the Department of Education and Skills. According to the school principal, the majority of children who attend this school are from a lower socio economic background, often both parents are unemployed and there are many instances of lone parenting.

An after-school club at School A runs every day from 2.30pm – 5pm. As part of the club the students complete their homework under the supervision of a teacher and have dinner together. They also have the opportunity to participate in a range of activities including art, football, music, basketball, computers and dance. The school has developed a school garden over the past few years. Children made frequent reference to the after-school club stating that it was 'a good space to get homework done' and 'great chance to get all the work completed and then be with your friends doing things'. The growing of fruit and vegetables in the garden is done as a collaborative initiative between students, parents and teachers. The school also places an emphasis on recycling and is aiming to become a 'Green school'[53]. Facilities in the school include a cookery room, a large school hall, a new modern computer room and interactive whiteboards in all classrooms. The school hall plays host to a number of school musicals and a performance each year. Children are very proud of their physical location and often refer to this in our conversations. The school hall is an important hub where children enjoy visiting and participating in music and sports activities. Katie (age 7) stated 'I love our school a lot and different parts of it but mostly the halla. [54] I really love when my mum and nana come to see me sing in the school show'. Similarly, Kayla (age 7) talks

[53]The Green-School is an award scheme which is part of an international environment programme to encourage and promote schools to engage in a whole school plan for environmental awareness.
[54] 'Halla' translates as 'Hall'.

about the *halla* as 'an exciting place, sometimes it's just like a *halla* but then it can be like a musical theatre'.

**Summary of Music Provision in School A**

The school has a very strong musical tradition which is evident from the moment one walks into the building. The numerous pictures that cover each side of the entrance hallway reveal a long history of musical performances and events that students and staff of the school have participated in over many years. One of the most striking photographs is an image of the school orchestra performing as part of a concert for the former President of Ireland, Mary McAleese. Other pictures show the various school musicals that the school has produced down through the years. Many images of the school choir performing as part of various school and local community events are also displayed. All students have a number of opportunities to engage in a wide range of music learning activities. The music curriculum is delivered by both the class teachers and external visiting music specialists.[55] Class teachers are responsible for the delivery of the literacy, composition and song singing elements of the curriculum. Children appear to have a very strong sense of musical identity in this school and in particular in relation to their future musical careers. For example, Lily (age 7) and Claire (age 8) make frequent references to how they are 'learning to becoming musicians' and that they are 'definitely going to try and make that their jobs when they get older'.

A visiting music specialist trained in the Kodály method works with all classes once a week on a range of musical areas, including sight reading, singing, composition and learning the recorder. Students in 2nd and 4th class also learn Suzuki violin in group class contexts. This is also facilitated by a visiting music specialist trained in the Suzuki approach. Children frequently spoke about the visiting music teachers. When invited to talk about music that they do in school, they often focused their entire discussion on the

[55] The term 'music specialist' is used throughout the thesis to refer to visiting music teachers who are involved in the teaching of music in a variety of contexts in primary schools. It is not an official formal position but there are many instances where visiting music teachers, tutors or specialists play an active role in the provision of music in schools.

music each week with the visiting teacher. For example, Kate (age 7) stated that 'I love music in school as we do it with Ciara. She comes each week and it's always different. Sometimes she brings the bee and other times the monkey does the singing with us'. Hannagh (age 8) also talks about the classes in group Suzuki violin each week, 'my favourite part of school is when Sarah comes and we do violin in the halla with her….I love being a musician and want to be one like Sarah when I am older'.

The after-school club provides the opportunity for students to take music lessons on various instruments, including the violin, flute and cello. [56] The school orchestra had benefited from students who learned both within the school context and particularity in the after-school activities. [57] However, due to financial difficulties, the orchestra ceased to exist in 2010. A minimal fee was required for tuition each week and most parents found this difficult to pay. There were other challenges such as the lack of access to instruments which also contributed to its decline.

A school choir practises once a week after-school. It is facilitated by a visiting music specialist and students from 3rd to 6th class audition to be part of it. This is supported by school funds and children do not have to pay to attend. The choir programme recently became part of the Music Generation Cork City programme as I outlined in Chapter Two on page 83. Members of the choir are very positive about their participation in the choir. For many of them, it was a huge part of their weekly routine and a significant part of their musical identities. Clair (age 8) states that 'It's just the best part of my week and I can't wait for it' (Clair, age 8)). Similarly, Lara (age 7) shares that 'Our choir is really good you know? We are so good, we get to go places and sing with others and sing in big concerts'. These responses from Clair and Lara were consisted with the majority of choir members that I interviewed. Members enjoy participating in the weekly choir rehearsals and they value the performance and travel opportunities that emerge through their

[56] A small fee for the term is payable by students who wish to undertake the after-school music lessons.
[57] The after-school activities provide children with the opportunity to learn instruments that require more one-on-one or small group tuition.

practicing in the choir. School A provides numerous opportunities for children to engage in musical activities without additional expense on their parents or guardians. These musical activities work in tandem with other cultural, social and sporting activities to create a sense of pride within the school community and a positive ethos amongst all stakeholders.

### 5.2 Profile of School B

School B is an Irish speaking Catholic School located in a southern suburb of Cork city. There are approximately four hundred children attending the school. There are currently eighteen teachers working in the school. The school was set up in 1985 and moved to its current location in 1996. The school building was extended in 2004 to cater for increasing student numbers.

The socio-economic profile of children who attend the school is mixed. Children generally come from middle to higher income families. According to the school principal, almost all families have one parent in full time employment and many have a second parent working in a part-time or full time capacity. The majority of children who participated in this study were Irish. The vast majority of children's first language at home is English with Irish spoken in just a few of the homes of children.

The school hall is the central hub of the school. Located at the intersection of the main school corridors, the hall is a bright space that showcases a large number of school activities through visual displays. The hall is also the location for many school activities, including dancing, rounders, music, choir and various school gatherings. One of my conversations with Fiachra (age 12) and Colin (age 12) moved from the School Library to the classroom and as we walked via the *halla*, they spoke about the significance of it to the social life of the school. Fiachra (age 12) 'It's really important you know. We use this for everything and it's always a competition for every class to try and get it every day, so we have a timetable to help with that'. Colin (age 12) states 'The thing about the hall is

that it means we can come inside early in the morning'. A new school library is another important room in the school that children and teachers frequent throughout each day.

**Summary of Music Provision in School B**

It is clear from the wide range of photographic and artistic displays around the school building that students participate in a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities. Music features as a central element of many of the displays. Musical images that are on display include a large wall mural containing over 10,000 buttons with images of musical instruments and various sports activities, reports of competitions, medals won, CDs and concerts that students have taken part in. Many of these displays features the 'banna cheoil' [58] group which takes place before school every Thursday morning at 8.10am. Run by a past-pupil and his mother, the group forms a central part of musical life in the school. The group consists of approximately thirty children drawn from first to sixth class. The students play a range of Irish traditional instruments, including fiddle, tin whistle, concertina, melodeon, banjo and bodhrán. The majority of these children learn to play the instruments in the local CCÉ branch which takes place after-school in the school building. Others learn in one-to-one lessons organised by the leader of the group. The group performs regularly at school events and also as part of many local events, including Cór Fhéile, Scór na bPáistí and Feis Maitiú [59].

[58] Banna Cheoil is the Irish for music band. Banna Cheoil is used widely in primary schools across Ireland and in CCÉ branches.

[59] The Cór Fhéile is a non-competitive festival, unique to Cork that was set up in 1947 by Fr. Matthew, President of the Fr Matthew Hall in Cork city. Over 60 schools in Cork city participate in the event each year, during which they showcase the musical activities they engage in during school. Choirs, action songs, dance, movement, choral verse, mime and various types of bands feature as part of the festival. Scór na bPáistí is a music, dance and cultural competition for primary school children that takes place throughout Ireland in the format of local, regional and national competitions. It is part of the cultural section of Ireland's national games organisation, The Gaelic Athletic Association of Ireland. Feis Maitiú is an annual, competitive music and drama festival that takes place each year at Father Mathew Hall in Cork city. The festival takes place between January and April and provides an opportunity for children to engage in a range of activities, including singing, instrumental performance, speech and drama. Awards are presented in a wide range of categories.

Class teachers are responsible for the delivery of the primary school curriculum and the nature of music in each classroom varies according to the class. Song-singing is a central part of the junior infant classes. There is also a school choir which consists of students from fifth and sixth classes. It is run by one of the school teachers and rehearsals take place in preparation for Christmas and various other school events, including communion and confirmation ceremonies. Classroom teachers also prepare students to provide music for various religious ceremonies.

Suzuki violin is also taught in the school. Children from junior infant classes upwards may take private lessons during school hours with a visiting Suzuki teacher. Parents of the students attend the lessons to support the Suzuki method. Suzuki students also take violin examinations organised through the Royal Irish Academy of Music or the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. After-school private instrumental music lessons run by a private music school, City Music College are also available for students attending the school. Students can choose to learn a wide variety of classical instruments, including violin, piano and guitar. They can also undertake examinations if they wish with the Royal Irish Academy of music. All of the students who participate in the extra-curricular music activities perform in the end-of-year school show.

The school also hosts the local branch of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann as part of an after-school club. Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann classes take place every Wednesday evening in the school. A significant number of students from the school participate in the after-school lessons. Students can learn a wide range of instruments in the traditional idiom, including: fiddle, banjo, tin whistle, concertina, accordion and bodhrán. Alan (age 10) and John (age 11), are both members of the after-school club and attend weekly. Talking about these experiences Alan reveals how he engages with the activities.

> I play fiddle, flute and some bodhrán and over the last three years, I've tried other instruments. I did not own them all initially but I still was able to try them. The after-school club does not just do music instruments. You get to do dancing and some singing also (Alan, Interview 4, School B, November 2012).

Alan's comment above is representative of many of the children in the study who appeared enthusiastic about the possibility of learning to play a wide range of instruments. Over one-third of the children I interviewed appeared to have difficulties with owning their own instrument and many indirectly suggested that they would like to play a particular instrument if that opportunity arose at some point.

Similarly, John talks about how he enjoys engaging in the group work in the after-school club. He considers how the group work encourages him to practice independently at home each week, so that he knows the material.

> The best part for me is the bands, like I don't particularly like the lessons as they mean I have to learn and perfect new stuff myself but in band I prefer this as we get to work together with different tutors and different friends and this makes it more of a goal. The performances are good fun, even though it is hard work getting ready for them (John, Interview 4, School B, November 2012).

John's comment is also representative of many of the students I interviewed in this study. Many of their conversations highlighted a preference for group learning within performance groups. Students who participated in the after-school club had the most opportunity to perform at local and national Fleadh Cheoil competitions. Unlike the other school and after-school clubs in this study, there were many opportunities for children who participated in these performance groups to engage in musical activities during the summer.

### 5.3 Profile of School C

School C is co-educational, English speaking, Catholic primary school, located in the outskirts of Cork city, close to the western suburbs.[60] It serves two townlands and caters for approximately three hundred children. There are currently twelve class teachers, four learning support/resource teachers and a school principal. The school was founded in 1848. The current building was erected in the early 1960s. School records show that

[60] Although the ethos of the school is Catholic, the documentation clearly states that children of other faiths, or none, can also attend the school.

the school has grown quite significantly since the 1940s, when there were only two teachers and approximately seventy-five students attending. Like the majority of Irish primary schools, school C is state-funded and run by a Board of Management under the patronage of the local Catholic bishop. According to the school principal, the socio-economic profile of children who attend the school is middle to higher income. Most families have two parents in full time employment.

**Summary of Music Provision in School C**

School C is part of a vibrant community where there is much focus on the organisation of local activities and community events. The school has strong links with organisations in the local community, including the GAA, soccer club and the local Scouts club. [61] A church is located next door to the school and it is used for performances and school masses. The local sports fields are used for various sports activities. The local village hall is used for fundraising events, such as cake sales and craft fairs. Participation in music and sports activities occur both as part of school based events and in the form of after-school clubs. Many pupils learn to play a variety of musical instruments during school and in the after-school classes. Song-singing features as a central part of the classroom music curriculum teaching. For students of junior cycle classes this is often connected to the Jolly Phonics English language programme [62]and for others it is generally connected to religion or Irish language programme. It is generally facilitated by the teachers in the school who have a keen interest in music.

After-school classes are run privately by a number of the school teachers. Activities include: speech and drama classes, Irish dancing, Irish singing (Seán Nós), [63] and instrumental and group tuition on a range of Irish traditional music instruments and

61 The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) is an amateur sport and cultural organisation which promotes Irish sports including hurling, camogie, Gaelic football, handball and rounders. Through national cultural competitions including Scór and Scór ná bPáistí, the GAA promotes Irish traditional music, dance and the Irish language.

[62] Jolly Phonics is a systematic synthetic phonics programme designed by two UK primary teachers to teach children to read and write. The programme was first published in 1992. It uses forty-two letter sounds of the English language and sound blending is used at various levels to develop reading and writing skills.

[63] Seán Nós is the Irish word for 'old style'. It is a highly ornamented unaccompanied singing style.

guitar. There are a number of music groups, bands and choirs in the school. The bands rehearse at various times during and after-school, and they participate in many local performances and competitions, such as the Cór Fheile, Feís Maithiú and the Christmas concert. Most recently, the school choir took part in a Peace Proms Concert with The Cross Border Orchestra [64]in Cork City Hall.[65]

### 5.4 Profile of After-School Club A

Club A is a community-based voluntary after-school music club located to the south of Cork City. [66] The club was set up in 2009 by a parent of children who attend the school. It takes place on Monday evenings in a local Gaelscoil building. The club was initially set up as a response to the demand for affordable music lessons for children and adults in the local area. Lessons initially took place over a number of afternoons per week but were quickly restructured to take place on just one evening. Its membership has grown from twelve to over one-hundred students. There are a few instances of up to three generations of the one family learning music at the Club.

Tutors at Club A are experienced members of the Irish traditional music community in Cork. They provide small group lessons on a range of instruments, including fiddle, guitar, tin whistle, mandolin, banjo, flute and bodhrán. Students engage in weekly lessons with their instrumental tutor and an informal session is led by one of the club tutors each week. The focus in the after-school club A is on learning and playing music, with no emphasise on examinations or competitions. Alongside the learning of

[64] The Cross Border Orchestra was established in 1995. Its members are young musicians from all over north and south of Ireland. The orchestra was set up as part of a peace initiative and its aims are to promote community relations.

65 The Peace Proms is a choral music education programme which is supported by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and the Department of Education and Skills. It is recognised as one of Ireland's most important and valuable Arts Education initiatives. Over 7,000 children from Primary schools throughout Ireland participate in Peace Proms annually. The Cross Border Orchestra of Ireland (CBOI) was established in 1995 as a peace initiative to promote musical collaboration between young people from both north and south of Ireland. There are currently one hundred and twenty members from both the north and south of Ireland.

instruments each week, a circle 'session' forms a core element of the after-school programme. [67]

### 5.5 Profile of After-School Club B

In 1997, Club B was set up by a group of parents in School B Gaelscoil. It is located in a southern suburb of Cork city. It was set up as a branch of the national CCÉ organisation. A voluntary committee comprising ten core members plays a central role into the organisation of the club. Classes take place in the building of School B every Wednesday during the school year. Students from across Cork city and beyond attend the club for small group lessons in a wide range of Irish traditional music instruments, including tin whistle, fiddle, flute, accordion, concertina, banjo, mandolin, bodhrán, harp, piano, singing and drums. The classes are taught by experienced city-based performers and teachers of Irish traditional music. The classes cater for all levels of students. Club B also runs group performance classes. These classes provide students with the opportunity to work on performance repertoire and prepare for competitions and performances. A session led by tutors takes place in the school hall. Students also have the opportunity to learn more than one instrument and many participate in the group performance classes and session.

Approximately one hundred and forty children participate in classes run by the club. They come from a wide range of areas across Cork city and county, with the children of school age representing approximately twenty-five different primary and secondary schools. The Irish language is an important part of the branch activities. Many teachers teach through the medium of Irish. Although the primary focus of the branch is on active participation in and enjoyment of Irish traditional music and dance, students also have the opportunity to compete in the Fleadh Cheoil competitions and undertake examinations if they wish to do so.

[67] Sessions are informal gatherings where people play Irish traditional music together.

### 5.6 Profile of After-School Club C

The after-school club which takes place in School C was set up in 2004 and it currently has one hundred and thirty music students that partake in after-school lessons. The lessons take place after-school on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. The after-school is run privately by three of primary school teachers. Students learn a range of instruments including tin whistle, accordion, bodhrán, fiddle, guitar and concertina.

In the first year, the after-school club originally organised three tin whistle classes and a Traditional Group, which is referred to as the *banna cheoil.* Following on from the success of this, extra classes in fiddle, concertina, bodhrán and guitar were added the following year. All students buy their own instruments and they choose their instrument based on the instrumental classes that are offered, and the availability of that particular instrument. The programme has also expanded to include other teachers from the school who teach classes in guitar, singing and Irish dancing. The main aim of the music lessons is to give children the opportunity to learn a musical instrument and to learn Irish traditional music. Due to demands on after-school activities and following on from the success of the music programme, other activities were set up in other areas, including art and speech and drama. At the time of the research, there were four teachers involved in implementing the music programme and three teachers offering after-school activities in other areas. The *banna cheoil* provides children with the opportunity to play music together and experience session-type music making.

Figure V provides a comparative overview of the provision of music in the three primary school settings in this study. The table is a summary of some of the music activities that are organised in each school. It provides a useful reference point as I continue a more detailed discussion of music activities that children engage with in the schools.

| School A | School B | School C |
| --- | --- | --- |
| •Classroom teachers and visiting music specialists implement classroom based music programme.<br>•Whole school activities organised by Principal with classroom teachers and led by visiting music specilists.<br>•Weekly group class suzuki violin for 2nd, 3rd and 4th class.<br>•Kodály music visiting specialist weekly classes from pre school to 6th class<br>•Annual school show for junior infants - 6th class organised by classroom teachers with visiting drama teacher<br>•After-school choir run by the school, directed by a visiting music specialist.<br>•After-school club run by the school providing instrumental classes in a range of classical music instruments.<br>•Strong community links with local funders and community organisations. | •Classroom teachers implement the classroom based music programme.<br>•Whole school activities organised by the music coordinator.<br>•School choir directed by classroom teacher during school hours. Members from fifth and sixth class.<br>•Before-school traditional band taught by visiting traditional musician with support from the school.<br>•One-to-one private lessons available in traditional music lessons, classical music instrumental classes and suzuki violin available during and after-school hours. Facilitated by visiting teachers.<br>•School venue is used for local after-school CCÉ Irish traditional music branch.<br>•School concerts take place throughout the year and feature students who are members of the school choir, those who participate in one-on-one private learning and those who are members of the Irish traditional music band.<br>•Students engage in examinations with the Royal Irish Academy and Associated Boards.<br>•Students participate in local and national performances and competitions such as Cór Fhéile, Scór na bPáistí and Feis Maitiú. | •Classroom teachers implement the classroom based music programme.<br>•School choir run by three classroom teachers.<br>•Irish traditonal music is taught to all children during class time. Emphasis on singing throughout the school.<br>•After-school private group classes are run by the primary teachers. Focus on Irish traditonal music instruments such as concertina, tin whistle, guitar, fiddle and bodhrán.<br>•Stong focus on performance of Irish traditional music by the school band which comprises children who pay for tuition in the after-school club.<br>•School choir and school band participate in a range of performances at local and nataional levels including the Cor Fheile, Scór na nÓg and the Peace Poms Concert. |

*Figure V Comparative Overview of Music in Fieldwork Settings*

**Comparative Overview of Weekly Classroom Music Activities**

| | Junior Cycle | Middle Cycle | Senior Cycle |
|---|---|---|---|
| **School A** | Song singing daily as part of Jolly Phonics English programme (20 minutes daily).<br><br>Kodály music specialist programme based on singing and movement (20 minutes weekly). | Weekly singing in classroom as part of Irish and Religion curriculum.<br><br>Kodály music specialist programme (30 minutes). Including learning how to sight read and play the recorder.<br><br>Group suzuki violin Lessons (30 minutes). | Weekly singing as part of Kodály.<br><br>Song as part of drama. |
| **School B** | Song singing daily as part of Jolly Phonics English programme (20 minutes). | Singing in classroom<br>Tin whistle lessons | Learning songs for Choir in the lead up to events. |
| **School C** | Song singing daily as part of Jolly Phonics English programme (10 minutes x twice daily).<br><br>Listening to music at lunchtime and during art lesson on Fridays. | Singing in classroom<br><br>Tin whistle lessons | Learning songs for events<br>Listening to music during art. |

*Figure W: Comparative Overview of Weekly Classroom Music Activities in Fieldwork Settings.*

## 5.7 Fieldwork Observations

### Introduction

In the first part of this section, I discuss three themes that arose out of my observations of children engaging in music activities The first theme focuses on the use of music as a cross-curricular subject and how music, and in particular singing, is prevalent in the primary classroom. The integration of music as part of the religious curriculum and as part of the preparation for religious ceremonies such as the First Holy Communion and Confirmation was prevalent. Singing is also connected to the development of the Irish

language and the development of oral language skills. The significant value of cross curricular linkage in promoting integration and developing extra musical skills in subject areas alongside communication, social and physical benefits is also explored. Challenges to the development of music as an individual subject emerge as it is often confined to its use as a cross curricular subject in classroom based teaching. Findings from my fieldwork reveal that music is predominately used as an aid to the teaching of religion, Irish and as part of the jolly phonics English reading programme. The absence of the teaching of music as an individual subject in the primary level classroom is highly problematic. It raises questions as to how music is valued within the primary education system. Findings suggest that music may be less valued as an individual subject and the preference for the use of music to aid other learning areas is prioritised. This requires further study and consideration for the overall development of music for children in Ireland.

The second theme explores the role of vocal ensembles and discusses the format and structures of the school choirs that I observed. It highlights how participation in vocal ensembles provides children with an opportunity to perform together and to visit other places outside of the school. It also considers the use of repertoire in choirs and children's perspectives on the songs chosen. The third theme examines the role of instrumental learning at primary education and in particular the prevalence of Irish traditional music education for children in after-school settings. Children who attend Irish traditional music after-school clubs enjoy the opportunities that they have to learn a wide range of instruments, participate in mixed group ensembles are able to perform as a group throughout the year.

A significant number of 'child-led' spontaneous musical activities were also observed in my fieldwork. In the second part of this section, I discuss some examples of these child-led activities, which typically took place during periods of 'down times' or unstructured 'free play' during the school day. I also share some of the discussions I had with children about the music that they create themselves in their spare time.

### 5.7.1 Music and Cross-Curricular Integration

In all schools visited, there was an important focus on cross-curricular linkage with music and in particular the subject of religion within the classroom contexts. Cross curricular learning is a widely documented pedagogical approach to teaching which facilitates a holistic approach to learning where subjects combine. The differentiation between 'linkage' and integration' as discussed in Chapter Three, is notable and in my observations for this study, the emphasise was primarily on the use of music in terms of 'integration' with other subject areas. There is an important emphasis on the role of music as part of religious ceremonies and events in schools visited. All three schools are under Roman Catholic Management. In School B and School C, children's primary engagement with classroom based music was with religion. Music activities feature as part of the teaching and promotion of Irish language in all schools and in particular in the Gaelscoil visited.

The following two fieldwork entries highlight two ways in which music activities feature as part of religious events. A discussion of the multiple ways in which music was part of religion programmes in schools follows. The first observation in School C highlights how school masses [68] are a central part of the school year and how they feature as a community gathering where family and community members attend. The second observation, in School A, also highlight students and teachers preparing for a school mass in their classroom. Both observations reveal how school masses provide an opportunity for school bands to perform and for students who play instruments to bring them in and play together.

> ***School C, Local Church***
> *The principal invited me to the church next door to the school this morning. As I arrived, I could see lots of the children being brought into the church in their respective classes. I walked in and spoke to some of the teachers and children passing. Parents were also attending the mass. The principal had informed me that the school masses take place about four to six times a year and they are a key part of the community*

[68] School masses often take place in school halls, community halls or in the local church. A mass is a gathering where the sacrament of the eucharist occurs and usually takes place in a Catholic Church.

*and musical interaction. They provide an opportunity for all the school to gather and for parents who are available to attend. The school band formed the main focus of the centre of the church. They performed a wide range of Irish traditional music airs and accompanied hymns that were sung by all the classes in the church throughout the mass. This was an important place for the entire school community to gather and - participate in a performance led event. Parents and grandparents attended and were delighted to see the various interactive music and song elements interspersed with the school mass (Reflective Diary, 10 March 2013).*

***School A, Classroom***

*I visited the sixth class group today. Their classroom is located on the first floor. The group were busy preparing for their school mass which was to take place in a few weeks' time. It was clear from observing that singing and instrumental music performing is a core element of the school mass. Sarah, Michael, Fionn and Cillian had their guitar, fiddle, banjo and bodhrán with them. They sat up close to the teacher's desk at the top of the room, facing the rest of their classmates. The teacher announced that they would rehearse the entire mass programme including the hymns and Irish instrumental pieces. All of the hymns were in the Irish language. The musicians accompanied the group songs and at various points, they performed some instrumental pieces including O' Carolan's Farwell, Inisheer and the Cork Hornpipe (Reflective Diary, 5 November, 2012).*

**Commentary**

The use of music as a cross-curricular subject and in particular its integration with the subjects of Religion and Irish is a significant finding in this study. A considerable number of observations of classroom based music was connected to the religious curriculum. The singing of hymns was a prevalent across classroom teaching each week. Using music as a tool for cross curricular learning is a central aim of the primary school curriculum. Cross-curricular integration is a method that facilitates a holistic approach to learning where subjects combine to enhance the teaching and learning experiences for children. However, writing about the use of music as a cross curricular subject, Philpott and Spruce (2012) refer to how music is most commonly used in a 'subservient' or 'hierarchical role' (2012:140). They define the hierarchical model as a process where 'One subject is used

to enhance understanding in another' (2012:140). Philpott and Spruce (2012) discuss the challenges surrounding this and highlight problems where 'music serves another subject, and little musical progression is likely' (2012:140). The large number of curricular subjects that are included in the Revised Primary Curriculum place great pressure on teachers as they adapt the national curricular documents to their whole school and classroom contexts. Cross curricular integration enables music to be included throughout the teaching of other subjects. Alongside the role of music in cross curricular integration and learning, there is a role for it to be integrated and valued as an individual subject in its own unique way.

Religious material and preparing for religious ceremonies in schools emerge as a central part of the discussions surrounding the types of music that children engage in as part of school activities. This practice was most evident in the second and sixth class groups interviewed. These groups comprised of students that were preparing for their Communion and Confirmation ceremonies. [69] Although children were interviewed at a different time of the year than the ceremonies were taking place, the topic still featured strongly in my conversations with them, and I observed a number of preparation ceremonies as part of the lead up to the ceremonies.

Some of the children I interviewed gave very positive feedback on the importance of the various religious ceremonies and the events they were hosting as part of the preparations for the sacraments. They appreciate the opportunity that this presents to invite their families to the school. In relation to the inclusion of music as part of the ceremonies, a significant majority of children were negative towards the focus on what they referred to as 'holy music' or 'religious music'. In these discussions, these children specifically focused on the negative aspect of trying to learn the various repertoires for the ceremonies and in particular hymns, prayers and poems. Many students were keen to emphasise how music in school was limited to religious music. Fiachra (age 12) stated

[69] 'First Holy Communion' and 'Confirmation' are sacraments of the Roman Catholic church. Almost all children who attend catholic primary schools in Ireland participate in ceremonies for both sacraments.

that ‘Most of our music is really like the…confirmation’ (School B). Similarly, Alan (age 12) said, ‘Yeah it’s just all religious stuff now and it’s not like real music we could be doing’ (School B). In the following discussion, Áine (age 12) and Daithí (age 12) who are both in sixth class share some of their thoughts on the music that they engage within at school. Their comments also reveal that music in their experience is predominantly focused on religious material during this year in question.

Michelle: Can you tell me a little about the music you are doing at school at the moment?
Áine: We do the tin whistle sometimes.
Daithí: Yeah.
Áine: There is so much singing as part of our confirmation
Daithí: Yeah. Like every day there is something and they are so long and hard.
Michelle: You are very busy, so, learning them.
Áine: Yeah.
Daithí: Yeah. There is lots of singing.
Michelle: Do you like singing?
Daithí: Yeah.
Áine: Yeah. They are OKAY.
Daithí: They are all kind of weird.
Michelle: Are they? Can you explain that?
Áine: Well. We are learning a Latin one at the moment and it’s really hard to learn.
Michelle: Oh, the words much be tricky
Daithí: Ya. Like I don’t know what they mean.
Áine: They are all very long too.
(School B, Interview 2)

Mark (age 12) and Cian (age 11) also discuss the emphasis on religious music and state that they find the repertoire challenging. In their discussion, they outline their difficulties with the Irish language songs that they learn in school.

Mark: A lot of the religious songs are hard to learn.
Cian We did some and a lot of them we were laughing.
Michelle: Your classmates is it?
Mark: Yeah, and I find some of it so hard to learn.
Cian: It’s like, impossible.
Michelle: Yeah?

Mark: Some of the Irish numbers are so hard.
Cian: Yeah.
Mark: I learned just an awful lot of them.
Michelle: What's most difficult about them?
Mark: I've done a prayer for the thing so I had to learn that as well.
Michelle: Okay. Oh, you're very, very busy.
Cian: Yeah.
(School B, Interview 1, October 2012).

Although some students mention that they did not enjoy learning songs for the confirmation celebration, many students that play instruments indicate that they liked the opportunity to bring their instruments to school to perform instrumental pieces at the confirmation ceremony.

In one of the schools, the mass is also seen as an event whereby music features strongly both as part of the religious ceremony but also as a performance opportunity to showcase the musical groups in the school and children who learn music outside of the school. It's viewed as an opportunity to engage in the performance of music and to highlight, to parents in particular, the musical learning that takes place within school. Although valuable, this system also prioritises children who have the opportunity to learn music outside of school.

The inclusion of music as part of religion in the curriculum and at religious ceremonies can be viewed as positive in terms of increasing children's exposure to music activities. It also presents many challenges to the development of music as a curricular subject. The central role that religious education plays in primary schools in Ireland has been the subject of much debate in recent years. A recent study that explores children's experiences, perceptions and beliefs surrounding their First Holy Communion in four communities in Ireland, *Making Communion: Disappearing and Emerging Forms of Childhood in Ireland* (Kitching and Shanneik, 2015) highlights the disconnection between children's experiences of religious ceremonies through school in Ireland and their own views on beliefs and belonging. Some of the key findings reveal that religion did not play a defining role in their experience of contemporary family life and a 'relatively small

number of children in the study reported attending frequent/weekly religious services with their families' (2015:28). In terms of their perceptions of the First Holy Communion, the focus was less on the significance of the religious ceremony but how the event contributes to a sense of family and overall the majority of children who participated in the study were 'less likely to have experienced/be dependent on formal religious community for a sense of belonging to their locality' (2015:29-30).

The focus on the integration of music with religion in schools which I observed in my fieldwork, combined with the views collected by Kitching and Shanneik, reflect some of the nature of children's experiences and views with regard to religion in schools in Ireland. The growth in non-denominational schools is an interesting development in the education system in Ireland. Further research is needed to explore how music is developed within this non-denominational curriculum and how it is provided for within these new structures and contexts. This study did not include an Educate Together profile school in the sample as it was not one of the main factors in a cross representation of schools in Ireland. Future studies that explore how children engage and experience music in non-denominational schools would contribute greatly to our knowledge of music in children's lives. Similarly, research that focuses primarily on children's views of music and its integration with religion in schools would be valuable and contribute to our further understanding of their experiences and perceptions.

Although not as prevalent as the integration of religion and music, the focus on cross curricular integration with Irish language songs and drama was also observed in my research study. I observed a wide range of singing of Irish language songs, in particular in second and third classes in Schools B and C. The majority of the repertoire used were songs taken from the Irish traditional music repertoire. Many of those songs feature in the collections outlined in Chapter Three. In School B, I observed many examples of teachers using popular music songs translated to Irish. The children appreciated this and enjoyed the fact that the material was familiar to them and part of the music that many

of them listened to at home. In my conversation with Brian (age 10) and his friends, they refer to a popular song translated and learned by their class.

> Michelle: And what kind of music do you do in school?
> Brian: We do, like, Irish stuff. All of it this year is confirmation, but last year we did, like, The Script[70] and…
> Michelle: Yeah.
> Brian: Yeah.
> Michelle: Do you remember how that goes?
> Brian continues to sing the first few lines of the Script song in English and then he repeats them in Irish. The others join in singing some words they remember.
> (School B, Interview 3, November 2012).

Although there were a few examples of popular music songs that were translated, the vast majority of songs I observed emerge from Irish traditional music collections. In her study of music in Ireland, Marie McCarthy (1999) highlights the presence of Irish traditional music and songs in many schools in Ireland and discusses how this is a residual of the 'Gaelic Revival Plan' developed in the late 1930s where the government's focus on the promotion of Irish heritage was a strong priority (see McCarthy, 1999:117-120). The promotion of such activities continue in other ways such as the *Seachtain na Gaeilge* [71] annual celebration.

### 5.7.2 Vocal Ensembles

School choirs were a central part of children's engagement with music for this study. Singing has been described as 'one of the defining features of humanity' (Welch, 2005:239), and 'a vitally important dimension of music education for children…' (Glover and Young, 1999:34). Each of the three primary schools ran a school choir. In this section, I discuss the characteristics of the three choirs and I share some of the children's

[70] The Script is an Irish rock band that formed in 2001. Band members are keyboardist and lead vocalist Danny O'Donoghue, guitarist and vocalist Mark Sheehan and drummer Glen Power.
[71] Seachtain na Gaeilge translates as Irish Language Week. It is an international Irish language festival of Irish language and culture that takes between 1st and 17th of March each year in Ireland and in other countries who celebrate Irish culture.

perspectives on their experiences of participating in school choirs. In the following ethnographic observations, I highlight the different types of structures of the choirs and the focus on preparation for performances.

***School A: School Hall***

*After spending the day visiting a range of music classes in school A, I planned on visiting the after-school choir which took place in the school hall. As I approached the hall at 2.20pm, there was a real bustling and noisy energy coming from the girls running in all different directions. There were three rows of chairs laid out close to the top of the room. They had been organised by the class teacher and were facing the stage in the hall. They were large, adult chairs, trimmed in gold with comfortable material covering on them. The girls were noisy, chattering and moving about. They were walking back putting their bags in various other areas of the halls. Next, in the midst of the noisy atmosphere, I heard a faint sound of the choir teacher singing 'OKAY'. The girls all respond back repeating 'OKAY'. Silence comes among the group and the teacher plays a note on the piano and starts to do a warm up. It moves up a semi-tone each time. The girls then begin to rehearse the 'Ballymun Lullaby' for the forthcoming concert… (Tuesday, 23 November 2012).*

***School B: School Hall***

*The school choir rehearsal was moved from the school hall today as the sports teams were inside due to the bad weather. The rehearsal took place in one of the bigger classrooms that could accommodate the bigger number of children. Children came from a range of classes to participate in the choir rehearsal. Two children from the main choir directors' class went around to the other classrooms to announce it to the other members. Today they were focusing on rehearsing for the up and coming Christmas carol performance that was to take place in the local shopping centre. The teacher asked them to clear the tables and create space for them to stand up. Once they had this organised, the teacher switched on the keyboard and opened up her music folder. The group started singing through a range of Christmas themed tunes including, 'Silent Night', 'O Holy Night', Jingle Bells, 'Oh the Weather Outside is Frightful' (Tuesday, 23 November 2012).*

***School C: Classroom***

*I was invited to visit one of the classroom prefabs out the back by one of the teachers I met in the staff classroom. She told me it was one of the final gatherings of the choir before their big performance in the Peace Proms. As we walked together towards the room, I noticed one full class of students were also trying to make their way into the*

*classroom. The teacher explained to me that they were bringing the two or three classes here for practice, and how it was the best option as they required an interactive board. As we entered the classroom, it was really busy and there was a bustling energy. I could hear groups chatting, some humming and singing to each other. Three teachers had gathered at the top of the room and, after a short conversation, they started to organise the group. They asked them to get into their place if at all possible, try and stand up close to the proper lines as possible… there was not much space for me in the classroom but I managed to find a stool up near the top of the class. 'Ok everyone, let's do one final run through and then that will be it'. The children sang the song 'Touch the Sky' and it was accompanied by an audio video sound track on the television at the top of the classroom. It was clear they knew the material well... The interactive screen was designed specifically for them to learn all the songs and the lines of the pieces they were going to perform. One of the classroom teachers stepped forward to direct everyone... She signalled to the other teacher to pause the video for a minute, after the pause everyone stopped singing and listened to the advice from the teacher (Tuesday, 23 November 2012).*

**Commentary**

The membership and format of the choirs varied from school to school. School B and School C choirs were classroom-based, and almost all of the children from fifth and sixth classes were involved. Choir rehearsals were held during school hours and led by classroom teachers. The choirs in School A and School B rehearse at certain times of the year only, including the lead up to events such as Christmas, religious ceremonies such as communion and confirmation, end of year shows and various school and community performances. While these choirs usually consist of students from fifth and sixth class, there are instances where other classes are involved. In both of the schools, children had the choice to participate or not. Alternative activities, such as reading or completing homework, are undertaken by students who decide not to participate. They generally complete this at the back of the school hall or classroom while the choir is rehearsing. By contrast with the other two schools, the choir in School A is an after-school activity. An audition process for it takes place each year and is open to students from third to sixth class.

School A choir rehearses in the school hall every Tuesday, from 2.30pm-3.20pm, immediately after-school. In 2008, the school choir was set up by the Principal of the school and is directed each year by visiting music teachers. The current director is a second year undergraduate music student at the local University. In September 2012, the school was chosen to be part of Music Generation Cork City programme. [72] As part of this programme, the school choir was selected to work on a newly composed choral piece entitled *The Ballymun Lullaby*. [73] The piece was written and arranged by Irish composer and arranger, Daragh O'Toole. The school choir participated in two performances of the piece as part of a combined choir that featured over two hundred children. The concerts took place in Cork City Hall on November 17th 2012, and in the National Concert Hall, Dublin on 26th November 2012.

Participation in the Music Generation Cork City project was an important development for the school choir. During September 2012 and November 2012, the choir rehearsed with their director twice a week. The majority of the rehearsals I attended were initially focused on rehearsing the *Ballymun Lullaby*. Time was allocated to perfecting and refining specific elements, such as dynamics, phrasing and articulation of certain passages. By the end of the rehearsal period it was clear that the children were very familiar with the material and had it well-rehearsed. In my discussion with the choir director, I learnt that the piece was quite challenging for children of this age to sing and the group had worked hard to perfect the performance of the piece.

In addition to rehearsing the *Ballymun Lullaby*, the choir focused on other repertoire that aimed to develop various vocal skills and technique. There was a particular focus on songs that incorporated actions and words including, for example, the song, 'My aunt came back'. Christmas repertoire featured strongly in rehearsals also, especially during

[72] See Chapter Three on page 82 for a discussion of Music Generation.

[73] The performance of the work stems from a collaborative project involving Dublin Institute of Technology's Ballymun Music Programme, Music Generation Cork City and the RTÉ National Children's Choir, Cór na nÓg.

November and December. I interviewed the choir members in the period after their performances in Cork City Hall and The National Concert Hall, Dublin.

In my conversations with the choir members, they were keen to talk about their recent participation in the performances. Brianna (age 9) spoke about how much she enjoyed taking part but admitted she was nervous initially.

> Brianna: I was really nervous about bring on stage.
> Michelle: Really? Tell me more.
> Brianna: When you first go up you're like scared. Then when you sing more than one song it's okay then.
> Michelle: Okay. So after a little bit of- time up on stage you feel a bit better?
> Brianna: Yeah.
> Michelle: And could you see everybody? What was it like?
> Brianna: It was… there was a lot of people.
> Katie: Yeah.
> (School A, Interview 16, October 2012).

Many of the children reflected on the overall experience of participating in the project. In some cases, their responses appeared mature for their age and perhaps reflected the influence of other adults who had been discussing the importance and significant of the performances for the children. Chloe (age 10) refers to the long term impact of the experience:

> It's an experience that, like, we're never going to forget. When you go up to Dublin and you're singing in the National Concert Hall and there's, like, loads of different people there… (Chloe, age 10, School A, Interview 17).

Similarly, in my conversation with Abbie (age 9) and Kate (age 10), they mentioned how the project was for 'un(der)privileged schools' (Abbie, age 9) and 'About some of un(der)privileged players. They get to get better and they do a performance' (Kate, age 10). The use of the term 'un(der)privileged' suggests an influence from wider adult discussions about the project and an awareness of socio-economic categorisation and identities amongst the children. It was interesting that the children were aware of the

connection with the Music Generation Cork city programme and how this collaborative project focuses on children from disadvantaged areas of Cork and Dublin. Alongside Music Generation's aim to 'promote inclusive access and participation in performance music education' (*Music Generation Strategy Plan 2010-2015,* 2010:5), they aim to 'Create increased public awareness about how performance music education can achieve the goals for inclusion within social, economic and cultural policy and enable community development' (ibid). As a result, the promotional activities such as radio interviews and newspaper publications with children, parents and teachers have increased the discourse on the significance of music in disadvantaged settings and possibly increased the awareness of children who participate in the activities.

In my conversation with Emma (age 10), she focused on how she enjoyed getting the opportunity to meet children from Dublin as part of the performance. In her conversation, she highlighted how the opportunity to get to know children from elsewhere changed her previous perceptions and fears of people from other areas of Ireland. Her descriptions reveal many elements of a successful intercultural exchange that broadened her experience on many levels. Her friends Courtney (age 7) and Andrea (age 8) also contribute to the conversation.

| | |
|---|---|
| Michelle: | The choir participated in a big event recently. Can you tell me a bit about that? |
| Emma: | It was *really* fun. |
| Michelle: | Was it? |
| Emma: | Yeah. |
| Michelle: | What was the best part of it? |
| Emma: | Well, my favourite part would be getting to know all the Ballymun crowd. They're really nice. |
| Emma: | If like they did not want to get to know them you might be afraid. |
| Michelle: | Right. Okay. So you're not afraid anymore then the fact that you know them? |
| Emma: | Yeah. |
| Michelle: | Why would you have been afraid? |
| Emma: | Because like they speak differently. |
| Michelle: | Because they speak differently? |
| Emma: | Yeah, and they're like not from where you're from. |

(School A: Interview 19, November 2012).

The above discussion highlights a number of interesting perspectives on the experience of participating in a choir and the opportunities to collaborate with other choirs nationally. Similar to research by Welch et al (2004), children who participated in the 'Sing up' Music Manifesto UK programme primarily focused on the social benefits of participating in the event. Little discussion emerged on the musical dimensions of their participation.

Many of school A choir members were keen to talk broadly about their experience of being members of the choir. Kerry (age 7), states she liked being a member 'Because you go places'. Her friend Kelly (age 7) agreed, 'Yeah, and you get to learn music and you have that behind you… like you're a good singer then' (Kelly). The opportunity to participate in a wide range of events is an important part of musical life in all of the schools and after-school spaces I visited. Children made frequent reference to their keen interest in performing and how this was one of the main reasons that they enjoyed participating in choirs. There were common school events that were mentioned by all children such as 'The Lord's Mayor's Visit'; 'The Cork team'; 'End of year show'. Performances at school masses were a central part of one school's events. School musicals also took place in the schools; they generally took place every few years or bi-annually in the case of one school. Visits to local communities were also a feature of the various school choirs and bands. This often included performing in the local shopping centre or community centre as part of Christmas events. Participation in the annual Cork events such as the Cor Fheile, Feis Maitiú were also central to the musical endeavours of many of the performance groups in each school. During the period of my observations in two of the schools, the school choirs were participating in national performance events namely: Music Generation – tale of two lullabies and The Peace Proms featuring the Cross Border Orchestra.

Many of the children in School C emphasised how they enjoy being part of the choir because they got the opportunity to perform in various places each year. Members,

Megan and David spoke about the importance of taking part in the Peace Proms emphasising the importance of representing your school and the value of learning to work in a group.

Michelle: Do ye enjoy being part of the Peace Proms?
Mega: Yeah.
Michelle: Why is that important?
Megan: It's because ...
David: Because like singing and all that...
Megan: In a group and getting better in a group so you will be able to work with people more often like.
David: And it's good to kind of represent your school as well.
Michelle: That's great.
(School C, Interview 3, January 2013).

In all schools, the option to partake in choir was optional. Students who were not members of the choir also brought up the subject of it during general conversations on music at school. Mark (age 12), Gearóid (age 11) and Cormac (age 12) spoke about their school choir and how they had a choice to participate or not. Cormac was the only one that decided to do so. They collectively spoke about the elements of the choir they liked and disliked. They were particularly negative towards the focus on Christmas repertoire and the long rehearsals that take place in the lead up to a performance.

Mark: There's a choir in school.
Gearóid: The two of us (Mark and Gearóid) did not do it.
Cormac: I did.
Mark: Well, three people in our class did not do it. It was me, him and another person. But he did it (pointing to Cormac)
Michelle: Okay. Tell me a little more about it Cormac.
Cormac: It was fun.
Michelle: Yeah.
Cormac: Except I did not really like the thing… because my throat got sore after about five minutes of Christmas carols.
Michelle: Okay. Yeah.
Cormac: And we did sing for about two hours, and that would take away from our lunchtime and our….
Michelle: Okay. So would you like to do more choir in your class or as part of your…?

Cormac: I like singing with my class because it's kind of fun. But I like doing it for about twenty minutes, half-an-hour… but after that it kind of gets boring.
Mark: Not two hours.
(School B, Interview 1, November 2012).

While discussing the reasons they were not keen on participating in the school choir, Gearóid, Mark and Cormac suggested some of the material they would have liked to do and made reference to some previous material that they did enjoy including a song from the Script, which was translated into Irish. The boys sang a small section of the song to highlight how it sounds.

Michelle: Okay. And what kind of songs would you like to do?
Gearóid: I like doing like Pogues.
Mark: Adele. Adele would be good.
Gearóid: Yeah, Adele is a really good singer so all her songs are high-pitched.
Mark: In the choir last year we did it though…it would good if we could do stuff by Adele because she has lots of good songs.
Gearóid: Our teacher last year, she was really nice. She did all these different things. She did songs. But she did The Script.
Mark: The Script. It was Irish.
Cormac: It was Irish.
Mark: Everything was in Irish.
Michelle: Oh. How does that go?
Mark: The Man Who Can't Be Moved. That one. I forget most…
Cormac: It's in Irish.
Michelle: That's cool. Can you even sing a tiny bit of it?
♫Mark: (Sings)
♫Cormac 1: (Sings)
Michelle: Wow. That's fantastic.
Mark: Yeah, it's cool.
Mark: I don't like slow music but it's still fun for the first half-an-hour until your throat starts to lose it.
(School B, Interview 1, December 2012).

It was evident that the older cohort of children interviewed had more opinions with regard to the repertoire that they were engaging with in school choirs. Boys were particularly vocal about sharing their views on this subject, however, when girls were

invited to reflect on the repertoire they were exposed to in school, they shared similar views. The above conversation highlights how school choirs form a central part of musical activities in all the schools visited for this study. The school choirs varied in their structure and format, however the primary role of all choirs was to represent the schools through performance at various events as outlined above. Children who have the opportunity to participate in the choir value this and they also enjoy the opportunity they are often given at choosing their repertoire. Many children who are members of school choirs reveal that they enjoy singing these songs and others outside of the rehearsals. They also are excited about the possibility of singing songs that are newly composed or ones that are part of the popular music genres that they are exposed to outside of school. Many children feel that it is important to learn how to sing and they link the idea of singing as a talent but something that generally they can all do and develop through participation in the choirs.

It is evident that choirs feature as a central part of children's experience of music education in primary schools in Ireland. The nature and role of choirs vary from school to school as discussed above. The structures of choirs are diverse and can impact children's own perceptions of their participating in the ensembles. Choirs that are compulsory might appear to convey an inclusive message that singing is for everyone and everyone can sing, however many children indicated they would prefer if it was optional. Instances where choirs are organised as an optional activity can be as inclusive and as valued by children. In the UK context, The Music Manifesto (2006) report states that singing 'is the most elemental form of music making' (DfES/DCMS, 2006:4). The report recommends that 'singing should be put back at the heart of all primary school musical activity, with group singing opportunities offered to every primary-age child' (ibid). There are many challenges to the successful development of vocal ensembles within the primary education system in Ireland that consider children's perspectives on how they function.

### 5.7.3 Instrumental Ensembles

Instrumental ensembles are a central part of how some children engage with music at primary level. The types of instruments that form the groups vary and are generally influenced by the instruments that children are already learning outside of school settings. There was a strong focus on Irish traditional music groups in two of the schools and three of the after-school settings. School bands enhance the musical reputation of schools and are considered important to the development of community (Davis, 2012; Creech and Gaunt, 2012; Berrill, 2014). My observations for this study revealed a strong focus on Irish traditional music instrumental ensembles in two of the schools and all of the after-school clubs. The following three observations highlight a few of the differences between the ensembles and reveal some of the repertoire they were rehearsing during my visits. I continue sharing children's perspective on the role and value of participating in groups.

***School A, School Halla***

> *The Banna Cheoil meet once a week early on Thursday mornings in the school hall. The group is led by Aoife, a traditional music teacher who was a former parent in the school. Aoife explained to me that it was quite difficult to get an evening that suited all the children, so they decided to have the group rehearsals early in the morning so all could attend. I spent a number of weeks visiting and observing the group to understand more about what happened. The group generally start each week learning a new tune. Today, Aoife announced that the new tune they were going to learn was a Jig and was called 'off she goes'. She asked everyone to tune up their instruments first. After a short tune up time, Aoife plays the first phrase on her fiddle – FAGB ABCD' anois.* [74] *All join in – first few times it sounds very scratchy but very soon it starts to sound clear. Fionn and Cillian are members of the group and are brothers. Aoife very early in the session asks them to work on harmonies as the others are still learning the tunes. Aoife gets the children to play the phrases individually and then all together. She advises each child on how to improve or adjust the phrase as they have their turn. Some of the children join the group late, Aoife greets them all in Irish saying 'Dia dhuit'*[75] *as they arrive. Two of the older boys in the group already know the tune but Aoife continues to challenge them*

[74] 'Anois' translates as 'now'
[75] 'Dia dhuit' translates as 'hello'.

*by asking them to work on ornamentation and harmonies. The teaching of the tune continues phrase by phrase. Aoife helps them now and again by telling them the note name if they are stuck. Once they go through the individual phrases they then start to combine them and play the first part together (Thursday, November 15th, 2012).*

***School C***

*The banna cheoil rehearse every Friday after-school in Ms Forde's classroom. As I visited this week, the children were just arriving and getting their instruments organised. They all appeared to know where to sit immediately. They generally sat with those who played the same instrument as each other. For this rehearsal, there was a group of fiddles, flutes, whistles, concertinas and Bodhrán. The teacher sat up at the top of the room and all of the groups faced her sitting on chairs and sometimes tables. This week they were not working on any new material but were having a practice session. The teacher sat at her piano at the top of the room and she asked the students to suggest what tune they would start with. 'Maggie in the wood' was suggested by one of the fiddle players. 'Okay, let's start after two' said Ms Forde. All the instruments joined in and they played the tune four times in total. Straight away after, one of the other fiddle players started to play another polka and without any discussion everyone, including Ms Forde joined in (Friday, 22 November, 2013).*

***After-School Club C***

*The after-school CCÉ branch lessons take place every Wednesday evening from 6pm. As I walked into the building to visit the space, I was met by a group of adults who were set up in the centre of the halla and there were children walking into different areas of the hallway, some carrying one instrument, a fiddle, concertina or flute case and a few children seemed to have multiple cases, carrying a number of instruments. In the centre of the open space hall, a circle had formed with one adult sitting down and children freely joined in at various times. I later learned that this was a type of rehearsal, session space that children could join in at various times they were not taking a music lesson throughout the evening. Many children learn a variety of instruments in the branch. I observed a range of classes where children were learning in small groups to play a variety of instruments of their choice. Fiddles, Flutes, Accordion, Whistle and Bodhrán were some of the most popular classes (Wednesday, 20 October 2013).*

**Commentary**

Irish traditional music forms an important part of the musical soundscape in Ireland. Children participate in Irish traditional music in different ways. Although there was a wealth of provision of music education in School A, there were little opportunities to learn to play Irish traditional music instruments. There were a few examples of Irish traditional music activities being integrated as part of classroom activities and in particular as part of the visiting Irish traditional music specialist curricular work in the form of listening activities. In School B and School C, there was a strong emphasis on Irish traditional music. In School B the school traditional music band was an important part of music activity. The teacher responsible for setting up the band was once a parent in the school and many of the band members also learned music privately after-school with a private teacher or small group lessons in the CCÉ after-school club that took place in the school building. Irish traditional singing featured as part of the many of the classroom generalist music provision also. In School C, children engaged in Irish traditional music activities as part of the school curriculum and they also had the opportunity to partake in after-school lessons in a variety of instruments. Children appeared interested in Irish traditional music for diverse reasons but most especially as it gave them the opportunity to learn to play different instruments and play together in an ensemble.

In after-school Club A, Cormac (age 11) and John (age 12) are members of the Grúpai Cheoil. They both talk about the social benefits of participating and also how one of the main reasons they enjoy partaking is linked to the desire to perform as part of the group.

| | |
|---|---|
| Michelle: | Okay. So the Grúpaí Cheoil. Tell me a bit about that. |
| Cormac: | You get to enter competitions and you get to perform in front of lots of people. And you can get through to All-Irelands and you can win medals and all sorts. That's what everyone loves about it really. |
| Michelle: | Okay. So is that kind of the part that you like most about it? |

Cormac: Yeah. And you get to meet new people and you make new friends a lot of the time. And lots of new people join so you're never really short of friends when you're there.

Michelle: Yeah. And would you be friends with people just from school there or from different places?

Cormac: Different places as well, like. They don't all go to the school. It's just like a group so they let in anyone who just plays.

John: I'm in the Under 15s céilí band. I only started this year. I was doing kind of private lessons then I joined Comhaltas.

Michelle: Was that good to go to Comhaltas?

John: Yeah…I just went into a class in September there. I was starting doing the céilí bands. So it really helped because I was kind of at the same level as the other people in my class.

Michelle: Okay. Is it nice to get to play in a group?

John: Yeah, it is really nice.

Michelle: In terms of music does it help you?

John: Yeah, it definitely helps improve…We have Feis Maitiú coming up, we have the Fleadh Ceoil in Derry, and we have to do all the Munster… the County and all that…

(School B, Interview 1, October 2012).

Children also enjoy the opportunities they have to perform at various different festivals, events and competitions. Competitions are spoken about in a positive sense as in most cases, the children are participating in group ensembles.

In conversation with children on their engagement with instrumental ensembles, they often made reference to the differences between participating in Irish traditional music ensembles and the genre of classical music. Fiachra (age 12) highlights how the repertoire is generally chosen by the teacher in Classical music and how this is generally led by the grade system and exams he has to complete as part of his classical musical training. Unlike the traditional music repertoire that he feels he can choose. He states,

> In classical music we don't often get to play together and a lot of the focus is on learning pieces for exams and as part of the books that the teachers have to use. In traditional music, we can play in groups a lot more and the teacher might suggest some tunes and we can choose. Sometimes we can bring in our own ideas, if we have heard a tune

> played by someone else somewhere or something like that. It's very different than classical. You have to stick with the chosen pieces (School B, Interview 5, November 2012).

Throughout my observations of children in both in-school and out-of-school locations, it was evident that participating in music activities was closely linked to the important connection that exists between music and performance. In all settings, there were instances where children were involved in rehearsing for a performance or focusing on elements that were linked to enhancing elements of performing music. I observed school choirs that were rehearsing material for performances in school and often as part of local community events; instrumental groups that were developing sets of melodies that would be used as part of performances and often individuals who were working on developing their performance skills for a specific event. I had the opportunity to attend a wide variety of performances in various school and community settings. These included: a retirement function in a school hall, performances for visitors to the schools such as the Lord Mayor or members of the County Hurling team; an outdoor Christmas candle lighting ceremony in the community; a choir performance in Cork City Hall; a choir performance in the local university music department. In my conversations with children, the topic of performance emerged often. Children were keen to talk about the various performances that they were planning on taking part in throughout the year. The importance of performance also informed their reasons for participating, practicing and enjoying musical activities. Ensembles and group music making classes that take place in schools provide multiple opportunities for strengthening connections between the music that children learn and experience inside and outside of school contexts. The opportunities that whole school groups have to engage in performances is also valued by students.

### 5.7.4 Spontaneous Observations

> *Well, sometimes the girls just start like randomly singing. It's funny!* (School B, Interview 4, Ben (age 8).

In this section, I explore the role of creativity and composition in children's musical cultures. The chapter combines data gathered from sets of observations with children, reflections of these observations and conversations held with children. Alongside the observations of music activities that were organised in schools and after-school settings by teachers or adults, a significant number of 'child-led' spontaneous musical activities were also observed during this study. These child-led spontaneous improvisations were generally observed during periods of 'down times' or unstructured 'free play' during the school day. The musical activities observed were sometimes linked to repertoire that had been part of other music events, ones that children had been involved in either that day or in a previous observation. Other observations did not appear to be directly connected to any other material observed or listened to in the school music activities.

During these observations I heard and saw children 'humming', 'rhythmicking'*, singing and playing instruments in various non-structured music spaces. These included children 'musicking' en route to class, during lunchtime, while waiting in the hall, before or after a music rehearsal, waiting in the school yard and during after-school group lessons. The school yard features as a central space where some of these activities were observed. Observations of children playing in the yard revealed a significant number of children engaging in games and creative improvised play. There were also some instances of where singing and in particular dancing featured as part of the free play in the yard. Similar to Campbell (1998 /2010), Lum (2009) reveals that children's spontaneous and natural music behaviours were most notable during periods of 'down time' and when children were free from adult instruction. He similarly observed this in the following instances: children en route to classes, in between break-times, in between classes, play time, lunch time and in the school yard and after-school clubs**.**

The nature of the musical material heard during these child-led observations varied significantly. In this next section, I highlight a select number of these spontaneous observations that I witnessed as part of this study and I reveal a number of notable

trends including how children engage in song-writing, improvisations, compositional dance and music pieces during child-led unstructured parts to their day.

This first observation is located in a school yard in School A. During my field research, I witnessed many spontaneous musicking activities in the school yards of all three schools. This example below highlights how children were often heard singing and practicing parts of their formal music lessons in the school yard. In almost all of my school yard observations, I heard children singing, humming and dancing. They generally were doing this in small friendship groups of twos and threes. It was slightly more prevalent in single sex girl groupings and the younger age group of six to ten years of age, although there were some examples of mixed groups engaging in spontaneous musicking activities and with the older cohort. I observed only a small handful of boys engaging in this activity. Although some of these examples appeared to be spontaneous singing or rhymes, a significant number of theme were connected to other parts of formal learning or popular music repertoire that they heard at home. This following example highlights how Sophie and Lisa are using the break time to help Kitty learn her Suzuki rhythms for the next music class.

**School A, The School Yard**

> *Kitty (age 7), Sophie (age 7) and Lisa (age 8) were in the back section of the school yard, close to the fence which divided the junior and senior classes. As I approached them, I could see that they were clapping, jumping and laughing. I moved closer and I could tell that they were practicing their rhythms from the Suzuki class that I had observed earlier in the week. Kitty, aged seven had recently moved to third class and it was her first week to attend the Suzuki group lessons on violin. Ciara, the Suzuki teacher was aware that Kitty would now be joining the group and she welcomed her and asked her to sit close to the group and encouraged her to listen and watch throughout the lesson. Ciara explained that she would help her catch up by coming early the following week and she also encouraged her class members to help Kitty learn the rhythms during the week. I observed the girls practicing versions of their rhythms from the Suzuki class and Kitty was part of that group. The girls knew I was watching but they kept working on their rhythms.*

All: (Singing) hippopotamus (In loud melodic voices)
Sophie: (Calls the words of the rhythm) Fatter than a caterpillar, now try that Kitty, go!
All: (Singing)Fatter than a caterpillar
Lisa: (Sings)Ice-cream 1 go, 2 go 3 go 4 go 5 go) rest here
All: Clap it
Sophie: Everybody down up (1 go etc)
All: (Sing)
Lisa: Am. Beautiful daffodils
Girl: Ok Go
Sophie: Four and twenty blackbirds ()
All:
(School A, Interview 5, November 2012).

**School B, The School Yard**

This next ethnographic observation from School B highlights another pattern of spontaneous musicking that I observed frequently in school yards. It shares some of the spontaneous melodies and songs that I collected from Louise and Isabel in School B and reveals how children actively engage in creating their own melodies and rhythms during free play time in the school yard. It also reveals how children are influenced by other songs that they learn in school or hear through various media sources such as television, radios, internet and phones and these influences often feature in their creative compositions.

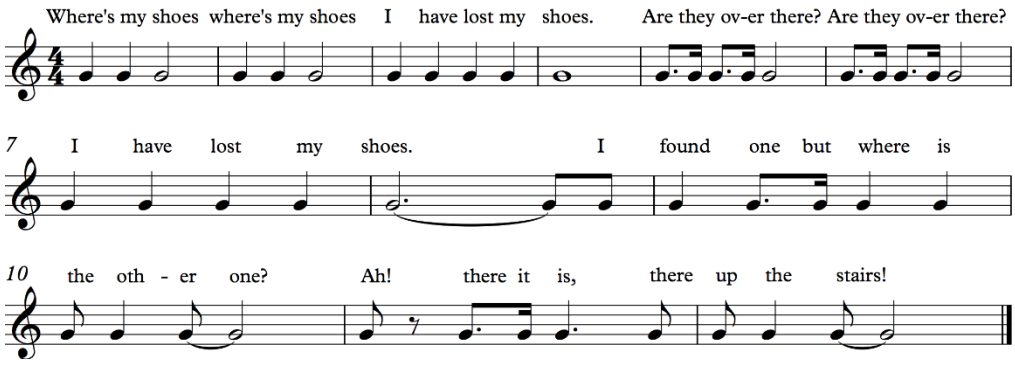
*Louise (age 9) and Isabel (age 9) were good friends and they sat beside each other in the classroom and during break times they spent most of their time walking and skipping around the yard together. They enjoyed singing a lot and were constantly humming and singing melodies on the way to the classroom and outside while playing in the yard. On many occasions, they were keen to share songs with me while I was visiting the yard.*

Louise: (On the way back to class after small break) can you listen to some of our songs now at big break today?
Michelle: Why yes, I'd love to
Louise: OK. OK. We have some ones we want to tell you about, ones of our own
Isabel: Yeah and we have some together also.

Michelle: That's great. I will be in the yard again later so.

*Later, that day, I returned to the yard at break time. Louise and Isabel were in their usual location, close to the fence. They waved at me as I walked towards them. They immediately asked if they could start and if I had my recorder with me. I gave them the recorder to put on and hold and they started to explain how they make up their own songs before they shared some melodies with me.*

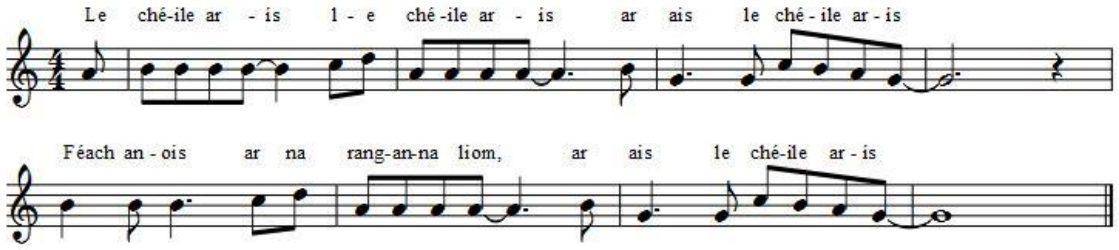
Louise: I have an iPad and a DS and an MP3 player.
Isabel: And when she goes to our house ….we do songs
Michelle: Do you ever sing songs together?
Louise: Yeah.
Michelle: What kind of songs?
Isabel: We make up new songs like high five songs.
Michelle: Really, I'd love to hear one of those.
Louise: In English or Irish?
Michelle: I don't mind. (the girls continue…)
♬ Girls: ♬ Where's my shoes, where's my shoes I lost my shoes are they over there are they over here I have lost my shoes I found one but where's my other one Ah there it is up the stairs hay ♬




Michelle: Well done that's excellent have you any other ones?
Isabel: Mmm we have an animal one.
Louise: Le Cheile Arís. [76]-
Girls: (Singing)
Le cheile arís, le cheile arís, le cheile arís, ar ais le cheile arís, bhíodh anois I mo rang go léir ar ais le cheile arís, is

[76] Le Cheile Arís translates as 'Together Again' in the Irish language.

aoibhinn liom ar ais tá glíondár ar mo chroi tá mo chara liom tá mo mhuinteoir liom.[77]




Michelle: Ah go hiontach[78] and where did you learn that song?
Girls: (continue singing) Le cheile arís arais le cheile arís, is b'fheach anois I mo rang go léir arais le cheile arís.
Louise: We learned that in school and we have a zoo one.
Michelle: And did you make the other one up the first one up yourselves?
Isabel: Yeah.
Michelle: So you learned that one in school, and is there any other one that you made up yourselves?
Louise: Yeah, we learnt the zoo one.
Isabel: Ok look there's a rabbit oh look there's a tiger oh look ♬ and yeah ..
Lousie: We have another one.
Girls: (Singing)
Oh look there's a rabbit oh look there's a rabbit oh look there's a tiger oh look there's a giraffe oh look there's a monkey oh look there's a elephant oh look there's a duck oh look there's a tiger oh look there's a kangaroo/lion oh look there's a kangaroo oh look there's a that's all of…
(School B, Interview 10, November 2012).

Louise and Isabel were very enthusiastic about singing together in the yard and throughout all my visits, I could hear them humming and singing songs together as part of their games and free play activities in the yard. They were very keen to share those

[77] This song translates as follows: Together again, together again, together again, back together again, we are back now in our class now, back again, back together again. I've very happy to be back. My heart is excited. My friend is with me; my teacher is with me…
[78] Go hiontach translates as 'wonderful' in the Irish language.

melodies with me and always willingly to share them with me, without any formal invitation or prompts. It is interesting that for the most part, they spoke to me in English and even when I spoke Irish first to them, they generally responded in English. The songs and melodies that they shared with me were in both Irish and English language. There are a few instances where I felt that Louise and Isabela were improvising and creating the songs as they were chatting to me. One of the examples above of the Zoo song, felt very improvised and although they mentioned it was connected to a school song they had learnt, I really felt that Louise and Isabel both were improvising while sharing the song.

**School A, School Hall**

I witnessed a small number of observations of children during periods of 'down time' when they were on their way to the school yard or to another class or at the beginning or end of a sports or music class in the 'halla'. Although instances of these observations weren't as frequent as those I observed in the school yard, it is clear that children are often spontaneously singing during other parts of their school day and they draw on melodies that they have learnt in formal classroom activities. These findings resonate with international studies of children's musical cultures during free play. Marsh (2009) notes how formal classroom activities can be another source of textual, melodic, and movement material for children's play' and she suggests that 'by appropriating these adult-generated songs for game use, children claim them as their own, shifting ownership and control of adult material into their own domain' (2009:188). Examples of such material include nursery rhymes and Christmas songs. This following observation of Sophie (age 8) singing is an example of this pattern of activity. Sophie draws on melodic material that she had been singing as part of her school choir to improvise.

> *One afternoon, after rehearsals were finished, all the children had collected their bags and belongings and went home. After the rehearsal all of the chairs need to be re-organised so I helped the choir teacher along with two children from 6th class who help out each week. As we were doing this, one of the students from the choir group, Sophie (age 8), returned to the hall. 'I forgot my bags teacher', she said while smiling at the teacher and glancing at me. 'That's no problem Sophie' said the*

*teacher, 'I'm glad you remembered them now'. As Sophie collected her bags, I continued to put back the chairs with the teacher. I heard Sophie humming and singing one of melodies to a song they had been singing in the rehearsal previously. Sophie used the melody from the song entitled 'My Aunt Came Back' and some of the similar words but adapted it to her own story as outlined below:*

(Sophie singing in a loud voice, as she was collecting her belongings:)
*Oh my aunt came back*
*From Thailand*
*And she brought with her… a tiger cup*
*What I like tigers* (Spoken while looking at the two girls who were tidying away the chairs)
*Oh my aunty rose or Jolie*
*Came back from Thailand*
*A tiger cup*
*Or a ….*
(School A, Choir, Rehearsal, October 2011).

**After-School Club C**

I observed a few instances of children engaging in spontaneous improvisations during classroom based group work and after-school group instrumental classes. Improvisations such as playing original short melodies on their fiddle or flute were common most especially in the Irish traditional music group classes. The following ethnographic description highlights a frequently observed pattern of creativity taking place during small group instrumental classes. As the teacher split the group into smaller groups to cope with the diversity of levels, it created some unstructured time for the children to create some musical ideas of their own.

***November 26th Monday 6pm-6.30pm***

*The after-school music club takes place in the Gaelscoil primary school building. It is located in a new building that was open in 2006. It is a single story school building with over twelve classrooms and a hall which is located right inside the school entrance. The 'halla' is a big space with adjoining corridors located on three corners of the room. These corridors lead to classrooms. On one of my visits, I observed John teaching a small group of guitar students. There were six students in the classroom. John was a middle aged man and appeared quite*

*informal in his demeanour but yet very keen interested and enthusiastic in his personality that he displayed with the children. The group had gathered in an informal semi-circle around the teacher, John towards the centre of the classroom, (teacher) facing the classroom door. I sat at a small classroom table behind the group and took out my notebook and recorder. The lesson started with a tuning of all guitars, while tuning one of the guitars, John explained that they are all beginners and most have just started since September.*

John: (Speaking to the group)
Can we all try our strings together?

(The six, sitting in circle, all randomly played the strings at different times).

John: (looking at me)
The tuning is a big problem in a class like this, every man for themselves, it's good to know how to learn to tune yourself very quickly.

*The class continued with the playing of the Chord G and strumming all of the strings. Tom encouraged the students to play slowly and to ensure that one can hear all the strings clearly. Very quickly after introducing this and hearing them trying to play, the chord changes from G to C to D, tom asked them to play individually and he then split them up into groups. Two of the girls, Aoife and Caoimhe moved their chairs to the bottom part of the classroom, the three other girls, Elizabeth, Áine and Meadhbh stayed where they were and John asked Eoin to move forward closer to the teachers' seat so they could work together. I focused in on the group of three girls as they were sitting closest to me. Áine suggested that they would all take turns first with each chord, then start to play together. Meadhbh agreed, yeah, we'll make it like a tune, a piece. OK so, Elizabeth said – the three of them collectively counted in 1,2,3 and started holding the chord G-G-G then taking turns, G, G, G – C, C,C then all of them GDC GDC GDC. They were playing the chord transition and humming '1-2-3-----a-b-c' they seemed very excited about creating this and working on the chord changes. They glanced back at me with a twinkle in their eyes, I could clearly see that they were excited about me being there. John returned to the group of three girls.*

John: Girls I heard you trying some stuff – that was interesting was not it?

Áine: Yeah we decided to just make up a small piece while we were practicing and teaching each other the chords
John: Well that's just great girls, shur ye don't need me at all?
(The three girls started giggling)
(After-school Club A, November 2011).

**5.8 Commentary**

The ethnographic fieldwork reveals that child-led spontaneous improvisations are an important part of children's musical expression in middle childhood. Children naturally engage in creating their own rhythms, melodies and songs; they enjoy improvising on their instruments in various in-school and after-school contexts. In the above example in School A, Sophie (age 8) is actively improvising and combining new lyrics with material she has recently being singing in school. This highlights how children's musical worlds are intertwined and that during periods of unstructured time in school, they engage in spontaneous improvisations. Many children were also keen to talk about their own creative musical ideas. It was apparent that alongside natural child-led spontaneous compositions, children in middle childhood were often very aware of their compositional moments. In the account above, Louise (age 9) and Isabel (age 9) shared details of their musical compositions and songs of interest during playtime at school. They also make reference to spending time singing together in their homes. In their conversation, they reveal how they make up their own songs and also combine this with other songs they have learnt in school or from various other mediums at home. Louis and Isabel were keen to share with me ideas of their songs. Later in the conversation, they spoke a little more about the process of writing songs. There was much overlap between songs learned from school and new original songs.

Michelle: So can you tell me who made up the song?
Isabel: We started last year.
Michelle: Where do ye make them up?
Louise: Mmm we mostly make them anywhere.
Michelle: Anywhere, in school or at home?
Isabel: Yeah.

Louise: Out in the clós[79] usually.

Michelle: In the clos. Where in the clós?

Isabel: Because we don't usually have time because Erin's on that bus and Ciara's on that bus so we really don't …

Michelle: On the bus is it?

Louise: No we don't go on the bus.

Michelle: So you get to make them up in the yard.

Girls: Yeah.

Isabel: That's the only place really in school.

Michelle: Is that the only place?

Louise: We have mmm and we are going to a friend's house today and they have a piano so we might think of song there.

Michelle: Oh that's excellent.

Louise: And once …

Isabel: I made a song.

Girls: Everybody quiet.

(Singing)

When I was One when I ate a bun the day I went to sea I hopped aboard a pirate ship and the captain said to me we're going this way that way forwards backwards over the Irish sea a bottle of rum to settle my tum and that's the life for me. When I was two I buckled my shoe the day I went to sea I hopped aboard a pirate ship and the captain said to me we're going this way that way forwards backwards over the Irish sea a bottle of rum to settle my tum and that's the life for me. When I was four no when I was three I hurt my knee the day I went to sea I hopped aboard on a pirate ship and the captain said to me we're going this way that way forwards and backwards over the Irish se… {interruption from teacher}…When I was four I knocked the door the day I went to sea I hopped aboard a pirate ship and the captain said to me we're going this way that way forwards backwards over the Irish sea

Michelle: Okay, where did you …

Girls: (continue singing) a bottle of rum to settle my tum and that's the life for me.

(School A, Interview 9, October 2011).

[79] Clós is a reference to the school yard or playground.

The above example is interesting as it highlights how the song material that they learn in school influences their singing and creation of new songs together outside of school. The use of rhyme and song together is clearly something enjoyed by the children and is an important tool used in learning of music and songs. Louise and Isabel live relatively close to each other and they often visit each other's homes in the evening times. They also spoke about how they make up songs within other friendship groups.

In my conversations with Áine (age 11) and Joseph (age 10), they make reference to how the school yard is known as a space where dance and singing competitions take place. They discuss how talent shows are predominantly something that the girls engage with during their activities.

| | |
|---|---|
| Michelle: | What about the dancing and singing in the yard? |
| Áine: | Sort of with the girls. Sometimes we'd be messing and we'd start singing songs and just messing really. |
| Michelle: | Yeah. And what kind of stuff would you sing? |
| Áine: | Er… |
| Daithí: | It's all like girls. Some of them in class they pretend they're dancing, making up songs. One of them would sing and then the other two or three would dance. |
| Áine: | Oh, that's for the talent show. I'm in a dance group and we're doing a song to match up and we've been practicing, but not really… |
| Michelle: | Okay. And where's the talent show? In the yard? |
| Áine: | No, it's on in Douglas GAA because they have a big hall and they have a stage up there. |
| Michelle: | Okay. Is that on soon? |
| Joseph: | End of the year. |
| Áine: | We're not exactly sure when it will be on. |
| Michelle: | So you kind of use the yard as a stage to practice for that. What kind of dancing is it? |
| Joseph: | Anything you want really. You can play an instrument or you can… |
| Áine: | It's a mat. You can do whatever you want on it, but I don't think we're going to do plays this year because last year was not that good, because people weren't speaking out loud and it was just… you could not hear |

anything. But you can do dancing or anything you want. You could do Irish dancing or singing or…

(School B, Interview 2, November 2012).

My observations of more girls engaging in spontaneous musical activities than boys are notable and not unique to the Irish context. Similarly, my observation of boys engaging in their musical play in the yard in smaller groups and more privately than girls is comparative to observations by Marsh (2007) and Marsh and Young (2006). Marsh and Young (2006:463) state that although there is a 'perception that collaborative musical play becomes predominately the province of girls once children enter formal schooling', their observations of musical play in international locations reveal that 'many boys continue to participate in musical playground games well into the school years, particularly in genres of musical play that incorporate counting out or elimination through chance or skill…'(ibid). The conversations above also highlight children's awareness of these gender differences.

During the course of this field research, there were very few examples of children engaging in spontaneous creative practice within the formal classroom contexts. I observed some instances of classroom and visiting teachers supporting creative practice in a semi-structured manner. In School A, I observed the music specialist teacher facilitating the group of fifth class children in creating their own song. In conversation with the children, they spoke about how they were engaging in the process and they shared some elements of how they had made some decisions surrounding the lyrics. The following conversation with Ava (age 11) highlights how the process began at home and then continued in the classroom context.

Michelle: Yeah. So you've been doing so much singing. I heard you made up your own song here in class.

Ava: Yeah.

Michelle: What's it called? Do you have a name on it yet?

Ava: Well, we put this really stupid name on it because it's called Walking. It's easy but… it's kind of what the song is about so.

Michelle: Is it? Yeah, it looks really cool and I look forward to hearing it. And how did ye come up with the idea of coming up with the song?

Ava: My two friends came to my house and they helped me to write a bit of it and then we took it into school and we showed Sarah, our music teacher, and she decided to make it a class song. And now we're writing like… girls go home and write a few lines and then she'll like mix them up and try and put them into verses and stuff.

Michelle: Fantastic. That's brilliant. And how did you come up with the idea of writing a song?

Ava: We wanted to make like a proper song but it was like really hard and stuff.

Michelle: Yeah.

Ava: So we were like looking out the window and we just saw people walking and it was just so simple, so…

Michelle: Brilliant. And do you make up songs with other friends or…?

Ava: No. That was like the first proper song.

Michelle: Was it? And do you make up other sounds or music or would you have other things you kind of...?

Ava: Yeah. Sometimes, yeah.

Michelle: Would that be in school or at home or…?

Ava: At home mostly…I do like music in our school though, because most schools don't have the opportunity to like learn violins and stuff and in this school like… after-school girls go to violin and all that and you just learn so much about it.

Michelle: Yeah. And do you think it's good to be able to know how to learn music and to be able to play it?

Ava: Yeah. Because you like… you never know… Like some people say what they want to be. Some people might just want to be musicians and like… so they'll know how to play and instrument or…

(School A, Interview 14, October 2012).

The above conversation with Ava highlights how connections can easily be supported between the musical creativity that children engage in within the home context and the music that is facilitated in the school setting. Although it was never originally planned to facilitate the fifth class to engage in creating a new song, the visiting music specialist created a space to support this after the children had mentioned they were trying to do

this at home. Facilitating children to engage in group song-writing activities is a popular musical activity often used by community musicians working in a variety of contexts (Higgins, 2006). Ava's comments reveal how significant this was to her and her classmates and it became an important project that they were able to connect their musical ideas with from home and integrate into their classroom setting.

In my conversations with children in all settings, I specifically asked about singing and their views on its presence in the school yard. There was a mixed response to this with children highlighting that they used the yard and break times to host dance and song competitions, to practice for talent shows and to 'make up' songs. In my conversation with Áine, Daithí and Joseph, the discussion focused on the school yard. Áine spoke about how she often sings and dances with her friends. She first spoke about this as 'messing' and when Daithí comments on what he often observes, Áine reveals that they often practice for a local 'talent show' in the yard.

| | |
|---|---|
| Michelle: | Can you tell me a little about what happens in the school yard at break times? I noticed that you and some other children often do some singing and dancing. |
| Áine: | Ya I do. Sort of with the girls. Sometimes we'd be messing and we'd start singing songs and just messing really. |
| Michelle: | Yeah. And what kind of stuff would you sing? |
| Áine: | Er… |
| Daithí: | It's all like girls. Some of them in class they pretend they're dancing, making up songs. One of them would sing and then the other two or three would dance. |
| Áine: | Oh, that's for the talent show. I'm in a dance group and we're doing a song to match up and we've been practicing, but not really… |
| Michelle: | Okay. And where's the talent show you are practicing for? |
| Áine: | It's on in Douglas GAA because they have a big hall and they have a stage up there. |
| Michelle: | Okay. Is that on soon? |
| Joseph: | End of the year. |
| Áine: | We're not exactly sure when it will be on. |

Michelle: So you practice for that at break times. What kind of dancing is it? Is there a name for it?
Joseph: Anything you want really. You can play an instrument or you can…
Áine: It's a mat. You can do whatever you want on it……you can do dancing or anything you want. You could do Irish dancing or singing or…
(School B, Interview 2, November 2012).

Alongside the 'making up of new songs' in the yard, many children spoke about how they sing 'cover songs', songs from current 'popular' music repertoire. They often spoke about how they specifically focus on non-school repertoire in the yard and they prefer to sing hip-hop songs and One Direction songs.

Many children were keen to share more about the role of music in their lives at home. There were a number of instances where children started to talk about the music that they 'made up', 'composed' and 'created' at home. They often shared specifics of the process and reasons that motivated them to write their own songs.

In my conversation with Sadhbh (age 7), Jane (age 8), and Elizabeth (age 10) at the after-school club A, they were also keen to share a range of new compositional pieces that they often engage in. Jane and Elizabeth are sisters and this revealed some extra details on music at home. Sadhbh also makes reference to a band she had been in with her friend Simon. Again, the use of borrowed material from other in-school and out-of-school contexts as part of their improvisations ad creations during periods of free play were common themes emerging in this discussion.

Michelle: And do you sing as well?
All: Yes.
Jane: I love it. Elizabeth sings from the shower.
Elizabeth: You sing in the toilet.
Jane: After we heard you, we were going like that, up against the toilet door and we heard you sing Rihanna.
Elizabeth: It was not, that was two years ago.
Michelle: What kind of songs do you sing?
Jane: Any. Sometimes we make up our own songs?
Michelle: Can you tell me more about them?

Sadhbh: Sometimes, me and Simon use to have a band in the yard.

Sadhbh: I was the rapper.

Jane: I could do the beat box and I was signing and there was some more friends from our class and we were singing too.

Michelle: And do you still do that?

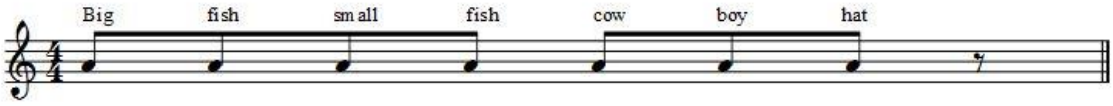
Sadhbh: Sometimes we do it.

Michelle: And is that as Gaeilge?

Sadhbh: Sometimes we sing Irish songs.

Michelle: Sometimes you sing Irish songs, can you remember any of the ones that you made up in your band, could you sing a little bit of it or anything?

Jane: Well that was… and I was too young for it. This is one from my other friend, 'Big fish, small fish, cowboy…' they are moves….fishing…




(After-School Club A, Interview 1, November 2011).

In my group conversation with Courtney (age 7), Andrea (age 8) and Elisa (age 7), they all share very different experiences of how they write their own songs. In this first example, Courtney talks about how she engages in musical activities when she feeling lonely at home.

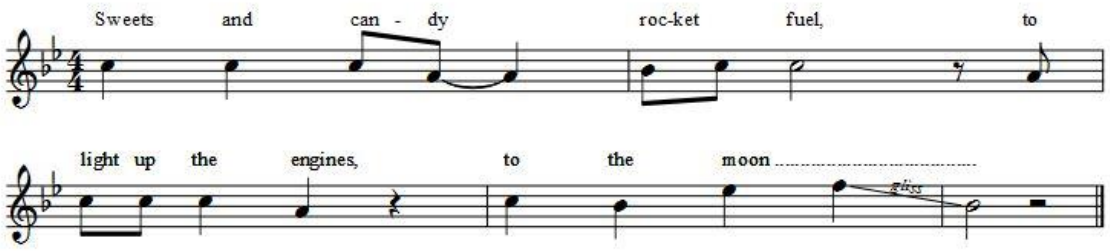
> Well, I was at home and sometimes I was getting bored and bored and bored and I like write songs. Because I have a piano at home up in the spare room. It's a real piano and I always go up there and like play and stuff…. The muse comes first, then I start liking it writing it down on the sheet… Like I look around and… objects in the house and then I just like… 'Oh, I can write about that' (Courtney, School A, Interview 5, October 2012).

In the same conversation, Elisa talks about the creation of songs at home. During our conversation, it was clear that she did not want to go into too much detail but she makes reference to it as a frequent normal part of her time spent at home.

> I write songs and sometimes I make up songs when I'm sitting in the bedroom watching telly…Or sometimes I make them up when I'm on my trampoline outside. They're kind of about my life and any time I'm in the front room or in the attic or… objects once again (School A, Interview 2, October 2012).

Most of the details surrounding song writing with children suggests that the lyrics are the most intentional and considered part of the song writing process. However, in conversation with Andrea, she was most keen to talk about the process of writing and how she used her instruments first to create the new melody.

| | |
|---|---|
| Michelle: | Okay. And how about you, Andrea? |
| Andrea: | I'd start with the music first. I've a toy piano and I kind of make-up notes for it. But then I know how to play the violin as well. So I'd put the violin in with it. |
| Michelle: | Okay. |
| Andrea: | And my piano sort of has this recording button and you can record the sounds. But it's kind of hard to do both at one time. |
| Michelle: | And does anyone else help and make up tunes at home with you? |
| Andrea: | Sometimes my sister gives me inspirations. |
| Michelle: | Okay. And can you sing as well then with the instruments? |
| Andrea: | Yeah. |
| Michelle: | Are they kind of songs or are they music? |
| Andrea: | They're songs…well, subjects like… sometimes it sweets. |
| Michelle: | Sweets, yeah? |
| Andrea: | And sometimes I do things about school and… |
| Michelle: | Can you remember the name of any one you made up or how it goes even? |
| Andrea: | One about sweets and candy. |
| Michelle: | Sweets and candy? |
| Andrea: | Yeah. |
| Michelle: | How does that go? |
| Andrea: | I can only remember the chorus. |
| Michelle: | Yeah. Give me the chorus. |
| Andrea: | (Sings) *Sweets and candy, rocket fuel…as rocket fuel to a lot of engines… to the moon…* |




(After- School Club A, Interview 3, November 2012).

Later in the conversation, the girls start to share their experiences with each other. It further highlights the subtle differences in how children engage in song writing in diverse ways at home.

| | |
|---|---|
| Elisa: | Well, I remember a lyric from my song. |
| Elisa: | And I usually like… do you know like ordinary songs that other people made up… well other people made? |
| Michelle: | Yes. |
| Courtney: | I usually like… like I sing them sort of … like I mix up… do you know all the reds in the song and put them like all together and I make my own tune. |
| Michelle: | Make your own tune out of it? Can you give me an example of one? A couple of lines from one? Can you remember any? |
| Courtney: | Well, I do remember one. |
| Michelle: | How does it go? |
| Courtney: | I can't actually remember all of it but I remember some of it. |
| Michelle: | Just give me a little bit of it. Even a line or two. |
| Courtney: | It was like this… Do you know like…? Like I mixed up… I mixed that all… Do you know on the One Direction songs? Like some of that into it. |
| Michelle: | Okay. |
| Courtney: | And started playing it. |
| Michelle: | Okay. |
| Courtney: | And then I was playing it on the… |
| Andrea: | I only get the chance to write mine about like once a week because the time to put the notes together… |
| Courtney: | Oh yeah. And I forget to tell you something. |
| Michelle: | Okay. |
| Courtney | Any songs… like random songs that come up on my iPhone… then I listen to them and then I know how the |

tune goes. Then I turn it off and then I can play it without singing it on the piano.

Michelle: Oh, that's brilliant. So you learn it off by heart. So tell me Elisa, do you want to say something?

Elisa: Yeah. At the moment I play violin and I play with the flute. I play a violin with Andrea and me.

Andrea: I do private lessons as well.

Michelle: You do private lessons as well.

Elisa: Yeah, we just play… just we do it during school Wednesday and Fridays.

Michelle: Yeah.

(School A, Interview 5, October 2012).

Song-writing is an important part of children's lives and the above conversations highlight some of the ways that children engage in creating their own songs and it also highlights how they are influenced by music they listen to on their various technological devices alongside the music they experience in school and after-school contexts.

### 5.9 Chapter Summary

This ethnographic chapter provides a summary of the profile of music in the fieldwork settings for this research study. It highlights the uniqueness of each individual school and after-school setting and considers how music activities are organised and provided for in the various community contexts. It also reveals how schools provide different opportunities for children to engage in music activities. Themes that emerged from the analysis of the ethnographic data gathered for this study highlight how children experience music as part of classroom curriculum, whole school ensembles and after-school groups. Findings suggest that the teaching of music within classroom contexts is confined to its use as a cross-curricular subject area, and, particularly as a cross-curricular medium to develop Religious education and English and Irish language programmes. There was little evidence to suggest that the revised primary music curriculum played any significant role within classroom contexts.

Children's musical cultures within school contexts are influenced and often designed to focus primarily on performances at religious ceremonies, local festivals and national competitions. After-school music activities that facilitate children with the opportunity to perform and to travel on fun outings provide motivation for children to engage in music. To some extent children enjoy the music that they engage with during classroom and whole school events. They also have much to share regarding the specifics of the nature of repertoire used and its lack of connection with the music they experience outside of school. Children appeared to enjoy engaging with music in school but they often felt it was disconnected and not relevant to their musical lives outside. Writing about the disconnection between musical learning in the classroom and music experienced in the playground, Susan Harrop Allin proposes 'a methodology of recruiting children's musical games as resources for teaching can address the dislocation between in-and outside-school knowledge' (Allin, 2011:165). Similarly, Marsh (2009) emphasises the importance of teachers observing children during fee play periods so that 'they can provide a guide to possible classroom techniques that will improve rather than hinder their compositional progress' (2009:314). Marsh argues for the integration of collaborative compositional activities within classrooms as well as in playgrounds and suggests that teachers increase the 'complexity and diversity of materials and techniques available for classroom compositional and improvisation' that 'compositional outcomes will improve and that children will be able to demonstrate their potential to the full' (ibid).

Spontaneous improvisations are an important part of children's musical expressions and instances of natural musicking are influenced by what the children are exposed to in school through media, and through extra-curricular activities. The school yard is an important place where children engage in musical creativity with their peers. The home, school yard and classroom spaces are important contexts for facilitating children's desire to create and compose their own musical ideas. Periods of 'down-time' and unstructured free play are important elements of our education system. They allow children the

opportunity to be creative and facilitate improvisations individually but most noticeably in a collective manner. The school classroom can also be a place where children can be supported to engage in creative compositional work.

# Chapter 6: Ethnography Part 2 – children's perspectives on their musical lives

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of children's views and perspectives on music and its role and meaning in their lives. In contrast to Chapter Five, it focuses exclusively on themes that emerged naturally from conversations with children. The conversations were not based primarily upon observations but on topics that emerged spontaneously during my conversations with children. The interviews began by asking the children general questions about music: 'Do you like music?'; 'What do you like about music?'; 'Can you tell me more about your interest in music and the types of things you do or listen to?' (See Chapter Four on page 114 for a full list of questions). In response to these general questions, children's replies were interpreted using Green's (2006) theory on categories of musical meaning where she argues that musical meaning can be considered as 'inherent' or 'delineated'. 'Inherent' meaning' is described by Green as the 'sounds and silences' that are inherent in music and the 'inter-and intra-musical meanings' that emerge from the 'human capacity to pattern sounds in relation to each other' (2006:102). 'Delineated' meaning refers to 'the extra-musical concepts or connotations that music carries, that is, its social, cultural, religious, political or other such associations' (ibid). Green argues that inherent musical meaning is influenced by our exposure to both in-school and out-of-school music activities and that all musical experiences, have elements of both the inherent and the delineated that emerge as a 'unified whole' (ibid:113).

In this following section, I reveal some of the themes that emerged in conversation with children. Children spoke about music in terms of emotional benefits, physical benefits and social benefits. They alluded to the concept of musicality and the significance of possible careers in music. The primary themes that were common in many of the interviews were as follows: the value of music; the emotional, physical and social benefits of music; the significance of music for fun and enjoyment; the connection between music and sport; the concepts of musicality and talent; the connection between music and movement and, the consideration of a career in music. I will now discuss each of these themes in turn.

### 6.2 Children's Perceptions Regarding the Value of Music

Children were keen to talk about the value of music. Many spoke about how it was important to 'enjoy it (music)'. A significant majority of students spoke about the importance of learning to play an instrument; generally, this was in the context of an extra-curricular after-school context. For example, many students emphasised the importance of practicing and to 'learn it properly', and how 'It would be a really boring world if there was not music…'.

Many children spoke about the intra-musical value of music and how they enjoy music for leisure purposes. Some indicated that they enjoyed the 'sound' of music, 'the beat' or the 'rhythm of it'. These responses suggest an intra-musical understanding of their experiences (Green, 2006). Others elaborated a little further, emphasising the particular sounds that they enjoyed. Mary (age 6) stated that she enjoys when people play music and it sounds 'soft and neat'. Lucy (age 6) emphasised that the 'fast and energetic sounds of music' were what she liked best. Many children mentioned that they like music because of all the different types of instruments. Kate (age 7) stated, 'I kind of like music and especially the instruments. I really love getting to play them'. Other children shared that they enjoy music as a 'pastime' and they participate in music because of its 'variety'. For example, Lara (age 7) stated that she liked that 'music is always different' and James (age 7) shared that he liked that music 'is different and changing all the time'.

Many children indicated that they love music as it is enjoyable and fun. Ciara (age 7) for instance said that, 'music, it's fun…It's just a hobby. I think it's fun to dance to and just fun to do'. Ciara's classmate Katie (age 8) agreed with her and spoke about how she also likes music as 'it's a hobby and I like to dance….It's like creative and stuff like that'.

Almost all children referred to how they like music because it offers something to do when they have free time, are bored and in particular when they are on their own at home. Many stated that they enjoy music as it helps them feel happy at times that they might be becoming lonely. The majority of these children spoke about loneliness in the context of their home lives but the majority of the children appeared to be referring to

this because of the absence of their friends at home. On this topic, Tara (age 8) stated 'Well I like songs because they are kind of nice to listen to when you are…like if you are bored in a car, you can just turn up the radio and listen to your favourite song'. Fergal (age 11) was keen to emphasise the significance of music in his life, stated: 'It would be a really boring world if there was not music' (Fergal, age 11).

Children had much to say about the significance of music in their lives, and the above statements reflect how aware children are of the value of music. This was evident across all ages I interviewed. In the following section, I continue by discussing the emotional benefits of music cited by children in this study.

### 6.3 Emotional benefits

Music is considered an important medium to increase emotional sensitivity. Writing about the power of music and its impact on the intellectual, social and personal development of children and young people, Hallam (2010) states that 'Music has been linked to the capacity to increase emotional sensitivity. The recognition of emotions in music is related to emotional intelligence' (2010:3). Hallam also suggests that 'Increasing the amount of classroom music within the curriculum can increase social cohesion within class, greater self-reliance, better social adjustment and more positive attitudes, particularly in low ability, disaffected pupils' (ibid).

A significant number of students in this study spoke about the emotional benefits of music. Children's responses indicated a high level of awareness of their emotions. Abbey (age 8) stated, 'If you feel sad some songs may cheer you up'. Similarly, Claire (age 8) stated: 'Music, it makes me happy'. Maura (age 11) talks about the how the act of playing her instruments help her overcome certain emotions.

> I like that you can amuse yourself with music…sometimes I'll be angry or upset or something. Then I go and play the piano or the violin. I kind of like lose it and I have fun then' (School B, Interview 3, October 2012).

In my conversation with Rose (age 11), a connection emerged between engaging in music and how it evokes memories and contributes to well-being emerged.

> When I hear a certain tune or song, it sometimes makes me think of happy times. I love Birthdays and I love how when I sing or hear the song being sung at someone's birthdays, that I think of my own ones and sometimes I even imagine what my first birthday was like (School C, Interview 2, January 2013).

Children also made direct references to the social benefits of music. A small number of children spoke about how music helped them to overcome boredom or isolation when they were on their own at home. Many spoke about how it helped them relax and 'wind down' for bedtime. Mark (age 8), for example, stated: 'Sometimes before I go to bed I'd listen to music because it's relaxing before I go to sleep'. Laoise (age 7) likes singing and playing music as 'you get rhythm with people…you can be happy and not have to talk and you'd be bored without it'. In a more detailed discussion, Courtney (age 7) shares how she listens to music in the evenings before bedtime.

> Courtney: Well, I *kind* of like music.
> Michelle: Yeah?
> Courtney: Because sometimes I just want to play with my friends and go out. Because then when I'm bored I just go into the living room or kitchen and sometimes I sing.
> Michelle: Okay. So you like to listen to it when you're bored?
> Courtney: Yeah. So, like, when I'm playing, like, I get fed up with it. So when people call for me I just forget about it, turn it off and go out and play. But then like when I come in from home, like, I just turn… Because, see, I've a lamp and you can turn it on and off – it's like a ribbon – and there's this music thing where you can stick it in and you can listen to it. I always listen to it before I go to bed.
> (School A, Interview 5, October 2012).

Courtney's conversation reveals how emotions can fluctuate quite significantly, in a short space of time. Her views also highlight how often music can be difficult. Children often spoke about how music can positively change their feelings and especially help them when they are feeling lonely or sad. In further conversation with Courtney (age 7), she shared she used it to make her feel happy when her father is not around.

Courtney: But anyway, sometimes when I get really sad that really gives me time to write songs. Like sometimes my Dad goes away for rugby so I go to the mirror and I just look at myself and I start singing.
Michelle: Oh. How does that make you feel?
Courtney: It makes me feel a bit happier.
Michelle: Does it?
Courtney: Yeah. There's lots of stories I like and I enjoy singing (School A, Interview 5, October 2012).

The above conversations represent just a number of ways that children spoke about the social and emotional benefits of music in their lives. Across all age-groups, children shared how music impacted them positively in their lives. Many of these conversations touched on how children listen to music, play musical instruments or create their own music to help improve their mood especially at times when they feel sad, lonely, isolated or unhappy. In her study of children's musical cultures in America, Campbell also notes that '…music contributes in positive ways to children's lives, and many recognize – even in their youth and inexperience-that they could not live without it' (Campbell, 2010:227). Likewise, in my study, children were very aware of their use of music for emotional expression and their desire to engage in music for enjoyment. Similar to findings by Campbell (2010), Marsh (2008), and Pieridiou (2006), many of the conversations I had with children based on the emotional benefits of music were focused on musical engagement in out-of-school contexts and during free play, child-led, unstructured parts of their everyday lives.

### 6.4 Physical benefits

The physical benefits of engaging in music include rhythmic skills and fine motor skills. Research with adult singers examines how singing can have many positive physical developments for the immune system including breathing and posture (Welch 2005, 2014; McPherson et al 2006). The perceived physical benefits of engaging in musical activities emerged in some conversations with children in this study. Unlike the majority of themes discussed throughout the interviews, there was an obvious gender difference in the discussions that emerged on this topic. For instance, a significant number of girls

spoke about the physical benefits of music in relation to their participation in music and dance related activities. Leanne (age 7) stated: 'I like music, because I like dancing to it… (I like) crazy dancing'. In my group conversation with Eva (age 7), Shauna (age 6), Maggie (age 6) and Megan (age 7), similar responses emerged where they indicated that they liked music very much because of the fact they can 'dance to it', 'sing and dance to it', 'you can dance around to it' and that 'it is entertaining'.

Many of the boys interviewed made reference to the connection between music and sport. The following are two examples of conversations on this topic. The first is where Joseph (age 11), Daithí (age 12) and Áine (age 12) talk about how playing can help your fingers get stronger.

| | |
|---|---|
| Joseph: | It might sound a bit weird but when I play the piano my fingers get stronger. It kind of helps in sport actually… |
| Daithí: | Yeah, it does. Yeah. They get stronger. |
| Michelle: | Stronger, yeah? |
| Daithí: | And catch the ball. |
| Áine: | Well, mine do but they aren't going to get any stronger. I only started in second class. |
| Michelle: | Okay. Interesting. |
| Joseph: | I started in fifth class. |
| Daithí: | You get faster with your fingers, like. You can write faster |

(School B, Interview 2, November 2012).

The second example is a conversation between Ben (age 11) and John (age 11) where Ben talks about how music can benefit his swimming performance:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ben: | Oh yeah. Like I see people when they're like jogging around with earphones. |
| John: | I always go swimming under the pool so when we were on holidays it was like the pool… and my sister said, 'You have to try to swim under the water for the whole thing.' |
| Michelle: | Right. |
| John: | So she was saying that if you think of music… if you think of some chords or something… |
| Michelle: | Yeah? |
| Ben: | You can hold a bit longer. |

John: And if you like go under the water then you don't think about your breathing and stuff like that.

Michelle: Oh. That's a good benefit of music

(School C, Interview 6, January 2013).

Alongside the physical benefits, the area of music and sport emerged as a central theme in many of the discussions with the children. Again, it was most prevalent in discussions with males and especially interviews that had a higher ratio of boys to girls. Gearóid (age 12) and Mark (age 12) are in sixth class at School B and although they don't play any instruments currently, they have a keen interest in listening to various types of music. They are both involved in sport and as part of their rugby training are required to train intensively each week. Gearóid and Mark spoke about how they use music as part of this training, in particular to listen to various 'rap' and 'pop' musics on their iPods when they are running. They emphasised how music plays a significant role in helping them increase their stamina while running.

Michelle: Yeah. And can you tell me more about that and how you feel sport and music are similar or…?

Mark: Yeah, kind of. Because if you listen to fast music it gets you like energetic or something.

Michelle: Yeah.

Mark: I don't know how you can explain it. It just keeps you motivated or something.

Michelle: Yeah. Motivation for your training? *

Mark: Eminem, when you listen to him, he raps with aggression so it gives you the extra boost to go the extra mile or two.

Michelle: Okay. That's interesting.

Mark: And then it's easier.

Michelle: That's interesting. I'm interested in that idea of how music and sport relate. Can you tell me more about where you run and would you always have music playing?

Mark: Yeah. I would and I cycle and run….almost every night.

Michelle: Every night?

Mark: Yeah.

Mark: Well, not every night. I'd cycle nearly every day but I would not go for like cycles around the park. I'd do cycling up ramps sort of things.

(School C, Interview 6, January 2013).

The above conversations highlight how children enjoy participating in music as a physical activity and how they feel listening to and playing music contributes to their physical development.

### 6.5 Social Benefits

The social benefits that emerge from engaging in music activities include increasing self-esteem, promotion of self-expression, the development of social skills and an increased sense of belonging and identity (McPherson et al, 2006). Hallam focuses on the range of social benefits that emerge while playing an instrument and participating in musical groups. She writes:

> Playing an instrument can lead to a sense of achievement; an increase in self-esteem; increased confidence; persistence in overcoming frustrations when learning is difficult; self-discipline; and provide a means of self-expression…Participating in musical groups promotes friendships with like-minded people; self-confidence; social skills; social networking; a sense of belonging; team work; self-discipline; a sense of accomplishment; co-operation; responsibility; commitment; mutual support; bonding to meet group goals; increased concentration and provides an outlet for relaxation (Hallam, 2010:1).

In this study, children spoke about how their participation in musical activities in after-school settings supported them to meet new people and to make new friends. Talking about the reasons for participating in the after-school CCÉ group, Mark (age 12) emphasises a number of benefits, including: competing in various competitions with his peers; the enjoyment of performing to large groups; and the ability to meet new people and make new friends, especially from other places or schools. In my conversation with Emma (age 11) and her friends, Emma shared her experiences of visiting her grandmother's house and how music plays a central role in those visits for social reasons. She highlights how singing can provide an opportunity for communication exchanges between family members and friends.

Emma: I like it because sometimes when I go to my Nan's [Grandmother's] house on a Sunday my mum and all my aunts sing songs.
Michelle: Oh, that's really nice.
Emma: And if we go to anybody's house for a party they always sing songs.
Michelle: And what kind of songs do they sing?
Emma: Like old songs. Like the ones that… Sometimes like there's kind of a mixture there.
Michelle: Can you tell me a little more about that? Where do you all sing?
Emma: Depends, like. Sometimes it might be in the kitchen after their dinner and sometimes it might be in the front room.
Michelle: And does everyone sing together or do some people takes turns?
Emma: Sometimes take turns and sometimes they all sing together.
Michelle: And do you like that?
Emma: Yeah.
(School A, Interview 9, November 2012).

The above conversation with Emma reinforces the importance of music and how many children enjoy how music acts as a social medium and as a way to engage and interact with others. Music can provide connections between members of families and local communities is also evident. Emma's conversation also highlights how music can be part of social gathering that create traditions with others.

In many instances, children made reference to how music helps them overcome feelings of sadness, loneliness and unhappiness. Most of the children who spoke about this, they were referring to two main types of music activities. The first involved listening to music on their own personal media devices, such as CD player, IPod or phone. The second was the making up of songs or tunes. In most cases, the children listened to popular music at home, in the private space of a living room or bedroom. Sometimes children spoke about doing this with other friends present. Making up songs was also an activity that occurred in isolation or in collaboration with friends. Many spoke about how they engaged in this

activity at home and a few spoke about how they did this with other friends when they were on their school lunch break in the yard.

While discussing the long term importance and benefits of music, Sophie (age 8) once again emphasises the value of music for a number of reasons:

> It's kind of important because it gives you… when you grow up, you might like not…you might be bored and you might be like, oh I'm so bored, I have nothing to do, but if you join music, then you might go, oh I learnt music so I can sing to that and dance to it (School A, Interview 10, October 2011).

The children interviewed for this study were conscious of the social benefits of participating in music and have a high level of self-awareness of the benefits of music. They shared how prevalent this is in their everyday lives in diverse ways.

**6.6 Musicality**

The concepts of 'musicality' and/or 'musical talent' frequently arise in academic discourse on the role of music in children's lives. Our understandings of musicality influence how as parents and educators we provide music activities for children to engage with. Writing about differences in how people view musicality, Campbell states:

> At one end of a spectrum, some societies expect people who make music to be specialists, born into the role or endowed with a special capacity. At the other end of that spectrum in some societies it is assumed that all people will express themselves musically as a normal part of life (2004 b, 1-2).

Cognitive psychologist, Howard Gardner (1983) has identified musical intelligence as one of eight intelligences common to all cultures. He argues that everyone has some capabilities in each intelligence, with some having more ability in certain areas than others. Blacking (1973) argued against an exclusionary view of musicality and suggests that musical ability is inherent within all people. John O'Flynn (2005) suggests that although the ability to be musical is shared by virtually all members of the human race, this does not mean that we are equally musical stating that:

> Differences in how musical or not we are can also arise from cultural experiences: the more music is valued and practised in the family community school and wider society, the more likely it is that our individual musical sides will develop and flourish (O'Flynn, 2005:191).

This study highlights how children's concepts of musicality and perception of their own musical ability also influences their attitudes to music and their engagement in musical activities. The concept of musicality emerged spontaneously in many of my conversations with the older cohort of children. Children made frequent reference to the notion of 'musical talent' and often spoken about how their musical ability determined their interest in learning music. In my conversation with John (age 11), Ben (age 12) and Clíodhna (age 12), John first spoke about how music is 'different' and 'different for different people'. John continued to explain, stating that 'You can sing or you can't sing. But then if you can't sing you're probably good at something else'. Drawing on her popular television culture interests, Clíodhna, in an ironic tone, added that 'According to Simon Cowell nobody can sing. Like, three people'. Ben also shared his views of musicality 'Yeah, like I know I can sing and I am kinda good at it, so I'm not afraid to join the groups in school and I also like to learn music after-school' (School B, Interview 4, November 2012).

In my conversation with Fiachra (age 12), he also spoke about musicality emphasising that he felt almost anyone could be good at music especially if they start learning music at a young age.

> Some people can be like completely hopeless but you don't really need much if you just… You can start learning it… Well, you should start learning it young because if you start learning it when you're like, I don't know, an adult, it's not as easy (School B, Interview 5, November 2012).

In a separate conversation, Finn (age 12), a classmate and good friend of Fiachra, disagreed with this; his reference to musicality was more direct. He stated: 'If you have a good voice, sing. If you don't, don't sing. My parents know that most of us can't sing so they don't really mind if we don't want to do choir or learn an instrument' (School B, Interview 6, November 2012). When asked to tell a little more about what he meant,

Finn stated that 'My parents say that…people won't like you if you think you can sing and annoy them' (ibid).

The above views highlight how children already have their own perceptions and views of musicality and how this is often informed and influenced by family, peers, school and media. There was a consistency to these perceptions of musicality in the older cohort of children in all schools. There was a notable difference to the views in my discussions with many of the younger cohort (ages six and seven). Many of the six and seven year olds seemed to covey the notion, that the more you engage with singing and learning to play a musical instrument, the better your musical talent will be. Sophie (age 8) for example shared how singing gives you a 'nice voice' and as you get better the 'talent' increases and as a result there are immediate benefits such as meeting other students from different places. She stated:

> I like music because it's a good, and it's kind of….it kind of gives you a nice voice' …. Because you kind of get more talent in your mouth and you kind of learn new songs and that and then you get to meet new schools (School A, Interview 10, October 2011).

Similarly Abbey (age 8) suggests that talent stems from engagement in musical activities and as a result there are long term benefits from this engagement and the development of a musical 'talent'. She stated:

> Because you have talent, that means…you are going to be someone when you grow up (School A, Interview 10, October 2011).

Tara (age 8) also made reference to this same idea, that although you might be only able to play one instrument or sing, that this is still considered as talent. The end of her response alluded to the significance of performing and to be able to 'perform' or how she describes as to be able to 'show' people.

> Kind of makes you kind of get…like, when you are older, you might want to play something and you might not know how to play the piano, the guitar or sing and you could play the violin and then you'll have talent then….And also it's nice to sing because it's a good talent to have and it's nice to show it to people (School A, Interview 10, October 2011).

There were a few instances where older children also shared this particular open view of musicality. For example, Daithí (age 12) and Áine (age 12) spoke about the similarities between music and sport activities outlining the level of practice that you need in both areas. In this discussion, Daithí and Áine raise contrasting views on notions of musicality and talent.

> Michelle: Daithí, you think music and sport are a like in ways? Can you tell me a little more about that?
> Daithí: A lot of preparation. You can't be automatically good at sports. You can't, like. Same with music. You can't be automatically good at them.
> Michelle: Okay.
> Daithí: Yeah.
> Áine: Sometimes you're good at it – you have a gift – but there's someone who could have a talent at it but then there's someone who would not be as talented but who would practice a lot and then the other person would not practice. That one would be better
> (School B, Interview 2, November 2012).

In relation to the concept of musicality and ideas surrounding the potential for children to be musical or not the above examples from children reveal a range of views on these areas. It is interesting that within their views that they indirectly allude to the parallel views of musicality as outlined by Campbell (1998). Influences that emerges from their schools, families and communities are significant to shaping their relationship with and engagement in music activities.

### 6.7 A Career in Music

The subject of 'a career in music' emerged in my conversations with children. Many children made reference to their interest in having a career in music and also linked their perception of their musical ability and if they were talented or not, to the possibility of a career in music. Recent research reports on students' expectations and realities surrounding careers highlight that it is an important topic for discussion (Bennett and Bridgstocklist, 2015; Beeching, 2010). The *Growing Up in Ireland National Longitudinal*

*Study of Children Child Cohort - The Findings of the Qualitative Study* also reports instances were children shared details of their interest in a future career in music (2011:109).

A majority of the younger age group interviewed (ages 6-8) made reference to the fact that they wanted to be singers when they grew up. For example, Ciara (age 7) stated 'I'd like to be a singer, sing and mmm yeah singing'. Lauren (age 8) said that 'I'd like to be in a band and be the main singer'. Sophie (age 8) also indicated that she would like to play in a band. She said 'When I grow up I want to be a pop star'. There was a remarkable difference in the responses from the older group of children interviewed (ages 9-12). For example, many of these children interviewed seemed to value music less as a career and more as an important hobby, pastime and a benefit to your life as you get older. When Fiachra was discussing the possibility of a career in music he drew on some of the popular ideas surrounding musical ability and teaching:

> It depends, like. You can get loads of money by just teaching and you don't have to be that good. Well, I suppose you have to be good enough, like, but…My sister teaches for a bit and she got… I don't know, it was like twenty euro each a lesson, like. So I don't know. I'd be playing it but I would not do it as a career or anything (School B, Interview 5, November 2012).

Although in the minority, there were still some children in the older age-group that did plan on a future career in music. The most popular musical career cited by this sub-group was to be a singer. For example, Ava (age 11) told me that she'd like to be a singer after she finishes her studies. In second class, Ava became a member of the school choir. The following statement from her below highlights how she was initially reluctant to audition for the choir because of her perceived lack of ability. However, she then outlines the benefits to her future ambitions after she decided to audition and become a member.

> I'd like to be a singer…. I wanted to be like a singer when I was younger and then when I came to the school in second class there was a choir but I would not go for it. And then in the middle of second class I went for an audition and now I've been in the choir for like a long time and I

> think it'll really help me to become a singer (School A, Interview 14, October 2012).

Almost all of the children I spoke with during this study, had something to say about the possibility of a career in music. It is evident that the subject is something very prevalent in their thoughts on music and its value and role in their lives. Children's views of musicality also impact their ideas surrounding their ability to consider music as a future career pathway or not. It is also noteworthy that children's desire to be musical or have a career in music or not is influenced to varying degrees by their parents, teachers, peers and through various media initiatives.

### 6.8 Challenges of Music

Alongside the positive responses to the role of music in their lives, children also shared some details on difficulties that they were encountering with music. In almost all my conversations with the older cohort of children (ages 8-12 years), they generally shared one or two of their views of the challenges on music in their lives. In most cases, this occurred towards the end of my conversations with them. There were few references to any challenges in the younger cohort (ages 6 and 7). There were some common themes amongst the children in each individual school setting regarding the nature of the difficulties. For example, in school B and C, due to the number of activities that the children were involved in after-school each day, a significant number of children spoke about the challenges of not being able to practice their music as often as they wanted, while others spoke about the need to practice so frequently as a negative aspect. In School A, it was evident that a challenge was to be able to afford lesson after-school and to buy instruments that they would like to learn.

In School B, Daithí (age 12) spoke about how practicing is very important. He also made reference to the challenge of trying to fit in the time to practice:

> It would be, yeah…great to do a bit more music…but seeing as I'm playing the sport, it takes a while to play, like and practice. You might have to be rushing it maybe and I cut mine like five or ten minutes short some days because I have to rush down to the 'Nemo'… Sure, it's quite

> expensive actually so you need to put in the effort, I suppose, yeah….just to have the time actually, to be honest with you (School B, Interview 2, November 2012).

One of the students shared a little more detail on the musical challenges. Cathy (age 12) was learning the violin and piano and is currently undertaking exams on both instruments. While discussing music she made reference to the huge pressure there is to have to practice every day. I don't like practicing. I have to practice every day (School B, Interview 5, November 2012). She does not indicate the reasons why she continues the music even though there is a lot of pressure but she does emphasise repeatedly that practicing music is something that she finds challenging and stressful at times. One of her classmates, Michael (age 11) in the interview responded to the conversation stating: 'There's no point doing it if your parents want you to do it (School B, Interview 5, November 2012)'. Cathy agreed with him reluctantly but then continued to talk about how she would not mind the idea of a career in music. On this note, she once again indicates that the practicing and playing of the violin every day would be a negative part to it:

> You've to get money. I would not mind that part. But it's just the fact of having to play the violin every day. I do practice every day (School B, Interview 5, November 2012).

There were instances, such as the above example of my conversation with Cathy that it was difficult to decipher the exact meaning of what the children were saying. Again, for these more challenging moments, classmates often stepped in to support, back-up or try and express more directly what the other student was trying to say.

It is noteworthy that many students when asked if there was anything that they did not like about music, made reference to things that their parents or other adults did not like. Many students focused on how many of the songs they listened to had some bad language and how adults did not like this. The following conversation with Sarah (age 10), is based upon this idea and the respondents shared their ideas on musical tastes and the reasons why people like and dislike particular types of music.

Sarah: Some people would like some types of music.
Luke: Some people don't like it.
Síofra: Most people won't like bad language music.
Sarah: Only people that like it really a lot of people don't actually like music at all.
Luke: I don't like musical instruments, I don't like playing but I like listening to music.
Michelle: Fergal, do you think that it's important to listen?
Luke: Yeah.
Michelle: Like why do you like listening to it?
Luke: Because it's good. I don't really know.
Michelle: Would ye spend a lot of time listening to music?
Luke: No because I don't really ...
Student: I spend like a day.
Luke: I won't be working on ... I won't be listening to music a lot like because I don't have any songs to download or anything like that.
Michelle: Okay and ..
Sarah: My sisters are really into music actually.
(School C, Interview 6, January 2013).

The above conversation with Sarah raises some of the challenges encountered with regard to musical tastes and preferences and how this can vary to the musical tastes of parents and older adults. Similar to Pieridious' observations of children in Greek Cypriot culture, many of the children I spoke with shared their preference for listening to their 'own music', especially while driving in the car (2006:173). They often used their own music sources and headphones to listen to different music that their parents were playing on the car CD player. The musical preferences of children in this study is discussed in further detail below as it also emerged in the context of children's conversations about music at home.

### 6.9 Visiting music teachers and learning instruments in school

Many primary schools in Ireland employ visiting music teachers, often called 'music specialists' to support the teaching of instrumental music in both classroom and whole school contexts. Although this is a practice which features strongly in schools throughout Ireland, it is not part of a formal system or recognised area of practice within education. Music specialists provide a valuable support to the provision of music

education for children. The absence of formal provision or recognition of this role creates many challenges and lack of continuity for children's engagement with music. It is clear that many children engage in the activity of learning to play an instrument at school or in after-school contexts. Many children also shared that they were learning to play an instrument in the home context. The following discussion reveals their thoughts and views on learning to play musical instruments.

In my conversations with children, it was evident that they appreciate any opportunity to learn instruments in school and most especially the opportunity that some have had to experience and learn from a visiting musician within the school context. Although it was evident that most children had the opportunity to learn to play the tin whistle at some point to-date in their schooling, there was very little references to this instrument during our conversations. Children who had the opportunity to learn other instruments in school were very keen to talk about these experiences. For example, School A had two visiting music specialist teachers to assist in the teaching of Suzuki group violin and Kodály method Suzuki. Children who participated in these group classes spoke about how they enjoyed these activities and were very excited about learning to play as a group.

In my conversation with Pia (age 9) and Leanne (age 7), they spoke about how they had been learning to play a variety of instruments at home. They both made reference to the fact that they were learning to play the violin at school. Often they would try and teach themselves to play the tunes on other instruments at home.

| | |
|---|---|
| Michelle: | You play an instrument Leanne? |
| Pia: | I play three… I have a guitar, a piano and drums. |
| Michelle: | Tara you play the three of them and where do you learn how to play them Pia? |
| Pia: | Well I don't really learn how to play them… you see I just figured out myself on my guitar and my piano. |
| Leanne: | I know how to play two instruments. |
| Michelle: | What do you play Leanne? |
| Leanne: | The keyboard and the violin. |
| Michelle: | Brilliant and do you learn it somewhere? |

Leanne: In school I learn the notes and at home I just make up my own tunes.
Pia: All of us play the violin in school.
Michelle: Do you all play the violin in school with… Ciara is it?
All: Yes.
Kayla: Because she kind of brings in a monkey and….
Pia: There is a song to go with it.
Kayla: Yes and she has a monkey and it would be like, we sing…
All: (Singing) '…Climbing very high to pick a blue banana….and then we go climbing…climbing down a ladder, climbing down a ladder, climbing very low to eat my blue banana'. And we play it on our violins as well.
Michelle: So do you like…you like learning the violin.
All: Yes.
(School A, Interview 8, November 2012).

Rachel (age 7), Treasa (age 8) and Yvonne (age 7) all participate in Suzuki group violin in the school. They are enthusiastic about the experience and in the following conversation willingly share details of how they learn each week.

Michelle: Can you tell me a little about the music you do in school?
Rachel: Yeah. We do much with Sadhbh.
Treasa: Yeah. There's kind of like of lots of songs that we would know and ones that we would not know very well.
Michelle: Okay. In school you learn different songs that you would know.
Yvonne: Yeah. Every Thursday and… every Friday and Wednesday we go to violin.
Michelle: Oh, brilliant. Is that with Ciara?
Rachel: Yeah.
Treasa: And we play all different songs like Four and Twenty Blackbirds...
Yvonne: And Beautiful daffodils and ice cream…
Rachel: (Sings) I'm a little monkey climbing down a ladder. Climbing very low to eat my blue banana.
Michelle: That was great, Rachel
Treasa: And our violin teacher actually brought in a monkey with a blue banana.
Michelle: Did she? Did Ciara bring in a monkey with a blue banana?
Yvonne: Yeah. But it was not real. It was just a teddy.
Michelle: Was that good, Yvonne?
Treasa: Yeah, it is good.

Rachel : Yeah, it was just a teddy.
Michelle: And do you like being able to play the instrument, the violin, so?
All: Yeah.
(School A, Interview 11, October 2012).

The above conversations highlight how children enjoy the opportunity to learn a musical instrument. They are interested in a range of instruments and many are learning to play a few. There were remarkable differences to how children had the opportunity to learn musical instruments. In School A, the school was the main provider as generally children were unable to afford to learn outside of school, the financial difficulties to continue to fund music programmes both during and after-school time was evident. The inability to access instruments was also a problem. The schools' recent participation in the Music Generation Cork City programme has strengthened some of the opportunities for children and it is hoped that in the future that the programme will support more children who wish to learn to play instruments. For the most part, in Schools B and C, it was evident that children were in a position to afford musical tuition outside of school. The unevenness of access to learning an instrument combined with children's desire to learn is an area of much concern for children's musical cultures in Ireland and will feature as part of the discussion in the final chapter.

**6.10 Conversations with Children: Out of School Music Encounters**

In my conversations, children naturally started to discuss the music activities that were part of their lives outside of school. Children's homes emerged as an important place where children spoke extensively about the role of music in their lives. As well as the listening and creating music in their homes, children also spoke about the learning of music from parents, siblings and peers. Learning of instruments from private teachers and local music schools were also popular themes that emerged in discussions of activities that children engaged in outside of school contexts. In the following section of this chapter I discuss some of the conversations that focused on children's thoughts on their musical lives outside of the school context. I begin with conversations based around musicking at home and I continue with a discussion of the transmission of music.

### 6.11 Music and Home

The presence of music in the home of children and the influence of parents, siblings and family members on the musical beginnings of children has been widely discussed in research studies in music education (McCarthy, 1999; Young 2009). Although this study did not focus on carrying out fieldwork directly in the home settings of children, the home emerged as an important place where children engage in musical activities. In conversation with children, they spoke at length about how they listen to music at home and how it forms part of their daily routine. Children varied in their responses to the manner in which they listened to music. For example some spoke about music activities as a shared experience in a communal part of the house while others spoke about the experience as being more private where they listened to music in their bedrooms or on their headphones. Similar to findings by Campbell (2010) children cited a range of technological devices that they listened to music on including: Phones, IPods, TVs, Computer Games, Cd players and IPADs.

A significant number of children spoke about the role of their parents in influencing their musical interests and many spoke about how the music their parents listened to or performed increased their exposure to different musics. In her discussion of the relationship between parents and children's musical tastes, Green notes that it is more common for children and young people to 'enjoy not only "their own" music, but also the music of their parents' generation' (Green, 2011:3). Unlike the early part of the twentieth century where popular music was a major symbol of 'youth rebellion against the older generation in many parts of the world' by the end of the twentieth century…the "generation gap" was receding (2011:3). I continue this section sharing some of the discussions I had with children in relation to the connection between their musical lives at home.

In conversation with David (age 10), he spoke about his father and his father's big passion for Irish traditional music. He talks about how this influenced David's own musical interests and encouraged his interest in learning this genre of music.

David: My Dad. He's unbelievable at the tin whistle.
Michelle: Is he?
David: Yeah. He can just listen to five minutes of a song… give him about three minutes to learn it and he'll just play it on the tin whistle.
Michelle: Okay. Fantastic.
David: And at home he showed me traditional Irish songs…
Michelle: Yeah.
David: That he'd learn when he was young. And I prefer doing that kind of music on instruments because they're fuller and they go from really slow to really fast all of a sudden.
David: Yeah.
Michelle: Okay.
David: Yeah. Those songs are good.
` (School B, Interview 1, November 2012).

Similarly, Liam (age 11) also spoke about how he has been influenced by the music that his parents used to listen to when they were younger.

> My Mum and Dad put on the music that they listened to when they were kids and I'd like some of them, like the Beatles, but others I just… I like Queen as well. And AC/DC. AC/DC are good. They play them a lot as it reminds them of when they were young. It's funny how I prefer this music even to some of the music that they listen to from now
> (School B, Interview 1, November 2012).

Alongside the influence of listening material, many children shared details of how they learnt to play instruments from their parents. Quite a large number of boys stated that they learnt to play guitar from their fathers. Trevor (age 12) for example talks about how he learnt to play the guitar from his Dad and gets lessons for bass guitar outside of school.

Trevor: I play a bit of guitar.
Michelle: Oh, right.
Trevor: I don't get lessons for guitar but my Dad played guitar all the time. And then I played bass and I get lessons for that.
Michelle: Ah, right. So tell me a little bit about that? Is that private lessons you get?

Trevor: Yeah.
Michelle: What kind of stuff do you do in the classes or lessons?
Trevor: Not like popular music. Nothing… Not traditional.
Michelle: Okay. Is it kind of like classical music or pieces or rock, or is it…?
Trevor: *Express Yourself.* We did that.
Michelle: Okay.
Trevor: Do you know that one?
Michelle: Yeah.
Trevor: And we did… Do you know who the White Stripes are?
Michelle: Yes, I've heard of them.
Trevor: We did *Seven Nation Army* and stuff like that.
Michelle: Okay. And how long have you been learning the bass, so?
Trevor: Well, I did it with my Dad because he just knew loads of riffs and stuff like that so he just taught me loads of them. So it was like a good bit… maybe two years. And then maybe just after the summer of lessons… nearly six months of lessons.

(School B, Interview 4, November 2012).

The above descriptions reveal how children often learn to play music from their parents. Some are highly influenced by their parents and are confident and excited about the opportunity to learn at home. Alongside the learning of a musical instrument, many children spoke about how they create their own music at home. They spoke about how they wrote new songs and new tunes. Children appeared to engage in the creative process at home in various ways. In this first conversation, Sionadh (age 10) shares how she enjoys creating new lyrics to melodies of songs she already knows. She talks about one particular example of when she was younger and one of her first times she experimented with making up her own song at home.

Sionadh: When I was smaller… I was just messing around one day. I just write nice lyrics and then it was like a song but did not sing them words. I put like different words in.
Michelle: Okay.
Sionadh: Yeah, it's like my favourite song when I was smaller. And then I changed the words to my own words.

(School B, Interview 5, November 2012).

In that same conversation, Sionadh's friend Cait (age 10) talks about how she also writes her own songs at home while using her computer to write up the words. In the following conversation I had with her she discusses how she creates her own songs and how the melody is easy but creating the words are more challenging for her.

Cait: I write songs on the computer… in my home.
Michelle: Do you? Tell me about that? How does that work?
Cait: It's kind of hard to think up words because most songs they don't usually go together. They're all like random stuff. So that's kind of hard to make up sometimes. But the melody is easy to do.
Cait: I just write it into the computer. You know where you're able to write stuff in…?
Fiachra: Is it the words that you write in?
Cathy: Yes. In the Word place.
Michelle: Okay. Tell me a little bit more, Cathy. So you come up with the lyrics, is it? Or do you have the tune, the melody, in your head as well or…?
Cathy: I have the melody in my head already and I just think up words.
Michelle: Okay. Where does the melody come from, do you think?
Cathy: It just pops into my head…Random stuff. Not really about anything. It's like brand new stuff, like pop songs and stuff.
Michelle: Okay. And where would you be when you write them
Cathy: I do it at home…Only at home really as I, as I can think there and I also can run to the computer in case I forget the words.
(School B, Interview 5, November 2012).

Almost one third of the students that I interviewed for this study made some reference to song writing in their homes. It is noteworthy that this practice is more prevalent with girls than boys and with girls older than eight. Those that spoke in more detail about the process of song writing spoke about the process of coming up with the melody first and then trying to add the words to the melody. The subject matters were diverse. Many were focused on subjects such as feelings, everyday activities or special events that were happening during the time.

While discussing music at home, children also spoke about how they listen to music every day. Those that were interested in song writing often spoke about how the music they listen to impacted on their compositions. It was often difficult to separate music they were listening to and a new idea they were creating. A significant majority spoke about this as being a private listening experience in their bedrooms. In conversations with the children on music that they listened to at home, there was much reference to musical genre. Although popular music was the most commonly referenced style of music that children enjoyed listening to, the genres of classical and Irish traditional music featured widely in their discussions. The interaction between peers in their friendship groups at home was another common theme most especially amongst the girls that I interviewed. In this next example, Sophie (age 10) talks about how she often plays music in her bedroom with her friend Abbey. 'Sometimes I just play in my room and once Abbey came over to my house and we played songs on my piano and my guitar' (Sophie, School A, Interview 10, October 2012).

Karaoke was another popular activity that children in this study engaged with in their friendship groups at home. In two of the schools I visited, the children also spoke about the presence of music on the television and how they enjoyed watching TV music shows and singing along with the programmes. The types of programmes children made reference to varied and were for the most part influenced by age, and whether the respondent had older or younger siblings. In this following example, the conversation highlights how children interact and use technology and recorded music in their everyday lives.

| | |
|---|---|
| Michelle: | What kind of music do you listen to at home? |
| Laura: | Sometimes kind of like pop music on the ads. It's only on the ads and on some shows, you listen to this one and you say? |
| Michelle: | Do you have a favourite show that you watch that has music on it? |
| Laura: | Yes. Lab Rats Challenge. |

Karen: Well I like pop music and I watch it all the time on TV. Shake it Up is my favourite.
Laura: That as well, I love that show as well and the music is so cool.
Lynne: Yeah me too. I have a DSS game of Victorious and I can play the game and I can get to do songs on the guitar.
Michelle: Oh Really? So do you play guitar as well? Or?
Lynne: No I just play it on the DSS.
Michelle: That's great.
(School A, Interview 17, October 2012).

Music technology features strongly in children's experience of music in their lives at home. The children I spoke to actively choose to listen to, interact with and create music through various media forms. All children spoke about the use of technology in a positive way.

Similar to Young's study of children in Norway (2009), children in Ireland use music technology from a young age in their home lives. Reflecting on these findings, Young raises our awareness of the value of music technology for offering 'the possibility of freeing up some of the limitations of making music with acoustic instruments' and she emphasises how technology can support children to be 'more creative, independent and open-ended ways of making music' (2009:40). It is clear from my conversations with children that their exposure to recorded music from a young age influences children's connection with music and informs their musical perceptions, tastes and attitudes.

### 6.12 Pedagogical Approaches to Learning Music Outside of School

Many of the children who participated in the research study engaged in after-school activities that were organised by various community music and education organisations. A significant number of children participated in learning Irish traditional music in after-school clubs and local CCÉ branches; some were learning to play an instrument from a private local music teacher and others attended the local conservatoire in Cork city where they engaged in instrumental tuition in a variety of instruments. As well as learning Irish traditional music, many children were also learning to play classical piano. In the following examples, the various pedagogical approaches to learning to play

instruments are highlighted and some of the children's perceptions of the experiences are revealed. Discourse that alludes to issues of bi-musicality also emerge and are considered in the context of pedagogical approaches to learning.

Daithí (age 11) talks about his experience of learning to play the piano in the classical tradition. Daithí plays a range of music and he talks about how the focus is predominately on classical music that he has been learning at the local conservatoire.

Daithí: I like music a lot. I play the piano and I do lots of piano inside the School of Music.
Michelle: You start quite young, don't you?
Daithí: I did, yeah…I like it a lot, yeah.
Michelle: Yeah. And do you practice?
Daithí: I practice maybe like forty-five minutes every day.
Michelle: Everyday?
Daithí: Yeah. Quite a lot.
Michelle: What type of music do you learn on the piano?
Daithí: Classical. Yeah. My brother has been playing from when he was… He's two years older than me. He started around the same time. So we decided… We'd a piano so it would be easier if we all played the same kind of instrument…
Michelle: Tell me about the grades that you mentioned earlier.
Daithí: Yeah, I'm Grade four…I have to practice loads. Quite a lot, yeah. Sure, it's quite expensive actually so you need to put in the effort, I suppose, yeah.
Michelle: What do you like most about playing?
Daithí: Just to have the time actually, to be honest with you. Just to have the time.
There's no point doing it if your parents want you to do it. It's like I was saying: I like making the sound myself.
(School B, Interview 2, November 2012).

Fintan (age 11) has been playing the violin for many years. He is part of the after-school traditional music group and also goes to private classical music lessons in the School of Music in the city. During his conversation he makes reference to the differences in the aural and written traditions and he also reveals his thoughts on popular contemporary music.

Fintan: I play the violin.
Michelle: You do? Yeah, I saw you playing.
Fintan: Yeah, and I go to the School of Music.
Michelle: You go to the School of Music as well?
Fintan: Yeah.
Michelle: Do you like going to the group?
Fintan: Yeah.
Michelle: What's the best part of that?
Fintan: It's a bit different from the lessons because the lessons most of it you don't have to learn off by heart. And with the group most of it's learned by ear.
Michelle: And do you like that? Do you find that different or…?
Fintan: I think it's nice to have a change.
Michelle: Nice to have a change.
Fintan: Yeah.
Michelle: Yeah. And do you learn the violin in the School of Music or…?
Fintan: Yeah. And I do orchestra.
Michelle: You do orchestra as well.
Fintan: I like music but I have to admit most of the songs these days, even on the Now albums, should probably be edited before they're actually put on disc, because you would not believe the kind of stuff they have on it.
Michelle: Really?
Fintan: Like even stuff that's not graded.
Michelle: Really?
Fintan: I don't really go onto iTunes or that. It says Radiohead, but you listen to the first thirty seconds of it and they're all as bad…
(School B, Interview 3, November 2012).

Fintan's views on recorded music and in particular popular contemporary recorded music are unique and not consistent with other children's views in this study. Most children were interested in popular contemporary music and although they often suggested it was different than the music they encountered in school and after-school contexts, they still considered it part of their musical lives. It's possible that Fintan's views are influenced from the musical styles and ideology that he is exposed to during his time learning in the conservatory. John (age 11) also attends the local conservatory. He also has been learning to play Irish traditional music from a private tutor and this year

he became a member of the local CCÉ branch where he now plays with the U15 ceilí band. John also plays in the grupaí cheoil school club. He talks about learning music in two different ways and how this influences his performance ability and confidence.

Michelle: How do you learn your traditional music then?
John: I just learn it by ear. Sometimes we get music, sometimes we just…
Michelle: Yeah. And in terms of classical music then, do you also do that?
John: No. I usually just get the music and once I get to know the piece I just stop using the music.
Michelle: Okay. And which do you prefer – getting the music or not getting the music?
John: I don't know. I find that having the music in front of you… Like if you're going up on stage and if you really get nervous that kind of works. But if you're confident with normal music then it does help.
(School B, Interview 4, November 2012).

Siún (age 12) and Fiachra (age 12) both play classical and traditional music. Siún plays the violin and is classical trained and learn to play this outside of school. She also plays Irish traditional fiddle and whistle and takes part in the CCÉ after-school club. Fiachra also plays traditional fiddle and learns classical music on the piano. In my conversation with Siún and Fiachra, they talk about the differences in the methods of learning the two different styles of music. They make reference to the differences between learning aurally in Irish traditional music and the use of notation in classical music.

Michelle: Okay. So tell me a little bit about… You guys, tell me a bit about learning different music; why that's good and what are the challenges with it. Is it hard learning two different types of music?
Fiachra: No, it's easy enough, but the classical is probably harder. It depends what teacher you have really but in trad usually they're not as hard on like posture and… Like in classical you have to learn it note-by-note by the piece, but in trad you can keep doing different variations.
Michelle: Yeah.
Fiachra: I don't even remember how I play songs. I usually play them differently every time because there's cuts and

rolls and you can do them at different places. So they're not really… They're a bit lax in trad on…

Michelle: Yeah.

Fiachra: Well, usually they're lax on like posture and playing, but in classical you're all sort of perfection and stuff.

Michelle: Do you think it's good to learn both, Fiachra?

Fiachra: I suppose, like. I like it anyway because I know it's fun.

Michelle: Yeah. Sionadh, how about you? You're doing both as well. Do you like that?

Siún: I think classical is harder. In traditional it's just kind of fun.

Michelle: Okay.

Siún: You still enter competitions and stuff but it isn't as strict.

Fiachra: Learning off by heart is harder than in classical than… My friend's sister, she's the best fiddle player and classical person of her age. I went to one of her competitions. I don't know was it a week ago… - less. And she went for forty-five minutes without any notes, like. Like imagine playing for forty-five minutes, no notes. So it'd be so hard to learn that off, but she's really good and she started when she was like three or something.

(School B, Interview 11, November 2012).

In his research with eight young Irish traditional musicians (ages seventeen to twenty-five), O'Flynn (2011) reveals that half of the musicians that he interviewed demonstrated 'multi-instrumental capabilities' (2011:257). Although the musicians identify themselves first and foremost as Irish traditional musicians many also play classical music. Similar to some of the children I spoke with, some of the respondents from O'Flynn's study shared the value of playing both types of music and how both styles can complement each other when performing music (2011:258).

Fiachra and Siún's conversation focuses on sharing their thoughts on the differences between classical and traditional playing. While Siún suggests that Irish traditional music is music easier to learn than classical music, Fiachra emphasises the aural process can also be challenging. The conversation moves into a discussion on the role of performance in traditional and classical music and in particular the pressures surrounding the classical music grading system that they engage in as part of the local conservatoire in the nearby City.

Michelle: Do you think that performance is important?
Síun: It is in classical but not in traditional.
Fiachra: Yeah. It depends, like.
Siún: In classical they don't really…
Fiachra: Oh yeah. Yeah, it's good, but it makes you kind of more confident to play it outside. But the first time performing you're not really that confident. And exams are like… especially with… there are no exams in trad, like. I suppose auditions, but apart from that there's nothing. But in classical you have to… like in school music if you don't get the exam you either repeat the grade or you can't do it again. You have to get above seventy.
Siún: It's like you don't pass, you fail. You've to do it again or else you just don't do it.
Fiachra: Yeah.
Siún: Or if you get a pass it's good but it isn't half as good as getting a merit or a distinction.
Fiachra: Yeah. I know if you get sixty-nine per cent you've to do the grade again.
Michelle: Okay.
Fiachra: And also in the School of Music if you get over ninety you don't have to pay. So it's a scholarship. So I'm always trying to get that, but…
Michelle: Is it very difficult to get over ninety per cent?
Fiachra: And there's also like other stuff. There's theory, which you've to learn a lot. It helps though with, say, if you're doing music in secondary school. You'd be able to… Like my sister's doing music and she's going to fly through that. It's just an easy subject for her.
(School B, Interview 11, November 2012).

It's evident from this conversation that there are both positive and negative elements expressed by both Síún and Fiachra surrounding her process of learning in a local conservatoire. Fiachra's final comment on the contribution of learning music in this manner is interesting and suggests a maturity.

Informal learning is a process that is widely valued to support the transmission and creation of music for people of all ages (Green 2002, 2008 and Folkestad 2006). The process of learning informally emerged naturally in many conversations with children and in most cases this was by children already participating in music lessons outside of

school. It was not uncommon for children to share that they learned music informally from siblings or other family members. Mia (age 6) talks about how she learns from her older sister:

> Mia: I mostly learn with my sister, she learnt if from teachers and entertaining.
> Michelle: Oh and what age is your sister?
> Mia: She's 17 this year.
> Michelle: Older than you she's older than you so.
> Mia: Yeah.
> Michelle: So do you learn music from her at home?
> Mia: Mmm yeah…sometimes traditional sometimes pop.
> (School C, Interview 12, January 2013).

The following conversation highlights the influence of learning aurally in the after-school club and how this impacts their musicality at home and their interest and ability at trying to learn music aurally themselves.

> Annie: Mmm it's just easy you just play it for like two minutes and then you stop it and you know the tune and you try to find the notes on whatever you have, tin whistle, piano, guitar, concertina.
> Michelle: Okay.
> Annie: I remember before I got my concertina I was just playing with it cause I had a caravan down in Ardmore and I was just playing it really quietly cause it was at night time and everybody was asleep and I was really quietly and I was like hmm and that morning I was just playing it normally and I don't know why cause I just heard it the Field's of Athenry at the Munster matches and I just started playing on the thing. I did not know.
> Michelle: Okay so you were just learning it without the notes and stuff?
> Annie: Yeah.
> (After-School Club B, Interview 2, February 2013).

Many children in this study engage with multiple forms of music and are exposed to a variety of pedagogical approaches including a focus on aural transmission, staff notation

and other notation formats. Over half of the children learn to play an Irish traditional music instrument and also learn classical music on the piano or flute or violin. The above conversations suggest that children are aware of the different learning processes that accompany the musical genres and they often express a preference for a particular pedagogical approach that is used in a specific genre of music.

### 6.13 Preferences and Changes: Parallel Musical Worlds

This research study reveals that children may inhabit diverse musical worlds. Although children shared their own specific narratives of their musical worlds, there were a number of obvious overarching themes that were drawn up during the fieldwork phase of the study. These themes were particularly revealed throughout the analysis of the data. One of the most pertinent of these was how children negotiate their parallel 'musical worlds'. Manns (2009), theoretical study outlines that children's musical worlds have different 'customs of musical practice' that are influenced by a range of different factors. In this present study, I observed how children have different musical traditions at home and at school that are often individual customs or collective customs. These differences create parallel musical worlds for children and this has huge implications for children's musical cultures.

This study reveals that the music that children engage in, listen to and learn outside of their home is very different to the music that they choose to listen to, create and watch generally in the space of their own homes or the extension of home spaces such as the car, the garden. Fiachra (age 12) for example spoke about how he prefers to do music at home than in school stating that he feels that much of the music he has done this year in school has been part of the preparation for religious ceremonies. He states

> I definitely prefer the music I did at home instead of music I am doing in school…It's a lot of hymns and confirmation tunes and all that. There's no variation – this year anyway. We did other stuff last year. We did The Script, the National Anthem, Adele. Last year was pretty good.
> (School B, Interview 11, November 2012).

Similarly, Ríona (age 8) also talks about how music is different for her in school and at home. She states:

> I love listening to music so much and I really only get to do that at home or in my car on the way to school. We listen to music sometimes in school but I never hear any of the songs that are at home. I like some of the ones in school but they are very different and it takes a while to know what the tunes are.
> (School C, Interview 1, January 2013).

Fiachra and Ríona's comments highlight a common theme that emerged throughout my research. Children shared their views on the differences between the music that they enjoy and engage with at home and the music they experience in school.

It is noteworthy that although over half of the children that spoke about the music they enjoy and listen to at home were referring to contemporary popular music, the other half of children's musical tastes and preferences including other musical genres such as Irish traditional music, Jazz music and Classical music. The discussions in Chapter Five on page 159 reveals instances of where children incorporate their own musical interests into their free play, unstructured time in schools.

In terms of the music that children experience in after-school settings, it was difficult to gauge if there was a desire to incorporate other musical genres into their experiences. It may be that children already have a part to play in deciding to attend the after-school and the music and repertoire that they experience there is already connected to the music they enjoy and listen to at home. There were a few instances where I did observe the music teachers in the after-school settings allowing students to choose the repertoire and arrangements of pieces and also there were some examples of where contemporary popular repertoire was incorporated into the performances groups.

### 6.14 Summary of Chapter

This chapter provides insight into the conversations that I had with children on the role of music in their everyday lives. It highlights how music is central to their lives both at home and at school. Children have much to say regarding the significance of music. They

have a high level of self-awareness of the significance and benefits of music in their lives. They engage in music for a diverse range of reasons, including for leisure or as a pastime, and for its benefits emotionally, socially and physically. Their perception of the concepts of 'talent' and 'musicality' influence their participation and engagement with music. Children's musical cultures are influenced by their parents, family, teachers and peers and media. Their everyday encounters with people around them influence their musical interests and tastes but they also have their own views and opinions on the music that they listen to, interact with and create.

In the next and final chapter of the dissertation, I summarise the main findings in this research study and explore the role and meaning of music in children's lives. I consider the nature of children's musical worlds as shared by them in this study and I examine how this is related to the music that they experience in both in-school and out-of-school settings.

# Chapter 7: Conclusions

## 7.1 Introduction

Music weaves in and out of children's lives and is in constant flux. Music is important to children and they experience and engage with music in diverse ways. Children in middle childhood are capable of actively expressing and sharing their views on their musical lives with themselves and with adults. It is evident that even when it appears that some children are not actively involved in musical learning, music still plays a pivotal role in their everyday lives.

My observations of children's musical activities and my discussions with children on their musical perspectives highlights the role music plays in children's lives. Many of the themes that have emerged in this study resonate with other international studies of children's musical cultures, while others offer new insights into children and their musical worlds in the Irish context. In this final chapter, I present the principal findings from this study and consider how they inform the development of future policy and practice for music in this area in Ireland.

## 7.2 Summary of Main Findings

Children experience music as part of their everyday lives. They listen, create and play music in their homes, at school and in various after-school contexts. In primary schools, children experience music within their classroom and as part of whole-school ensembles. They also engage in musicking in the playground and other spaces where they enjoy free unstructured playtime. Singing is a core element of the provision of music at classroom level in the junior and senior cycles. In this context children sing as part of English and Irish language curricular areas and as part of the subject of Religion. Children in middle and senior cycles also experience music as part of their classroom learning. Music features strongly in the cross curricular teaching of the subjects of religion and Irish. There is little evidence of the teaching of music as an independent subject within classroom contexts. Children in middle and senior cycles often have opportunities to engage in whole-school vocal and instrumental ensembles. The focus in these groups is

primarily on preparing repertoire for performances such as religious ceremonies, local festivals and national music competitions and events.

Although limited opportunities exist for all children to learn to play an instrument as part of their compulsory education in primary schools, against this, children learn to play in after-school settings, from private teachers and as part of private music schools in their local area. Children enjoy the opportunity to learn to play an instrument primarily because it allows them to perform as part of an ensemble. Children also value the opportunities such activities offer, including travelling to competitions, festivals and various events.

Children are conscious of the differences between the music they learn as part of formal in-school and out-of-school music lessons and the music that they listen to and create outside of school. While there are some examples of the desire by children to include popular music repertoire in their school music education, it was not limited to this area. Respondents reveal interest in multiple musical genres and activities. Children were often keen to experience and learn more about a genre of music that they did not frequently encounter.

My fieldwork reveals how children engage with music for social, emotional and physical benefits. They are actively conscious of the value of engaging in music and willing to talk about how listening to music and playing a musical instrument or singing impacts positively on their lives. This study highlights the significance of the musical activities and materials that children engage with during their formal musical activities in school. Similar to Marsh's observations of children's musical play in school playgrounds internationally (2009), this study also reveals that children 'utilize known formula from other sources, both traditional and related to other aspects of their auditory environment' (2009:200). Other sources include influences from music they listen to at home, songs they learn in school and melodies they engage with during instrumental lessons.

In terms of the development of music at primary level education, findings from this study suggest that incorporating elements of children's spontaneous musicking and the music they listen to outside of school would support a more relevant and interesting experience for children. There is also a greater need to acknowledge that teachers and music facilitators also have their own musical interests and tastes outside the classroom context.

### 7.3 Research Questions

This study set out to explore the role of music in children's lives. It focused on examining the role of children's voices in their musical lives and to listen to children on their thoughts and views on how they engage with music and their perspectives on the significance of music in their lives. The study explored the relationship between the music that children engage with both inside and outside of primary school contexts.

Following on from explorations of music in children's lives, I then focused on examining how this research into existing children's musical cultures could inform strategies for the development of children's access to and engagement with music in Ireland**.** The above research question that guided the research are re-presented and addressed individually below based upon an analysis of findings from this study.

#### 7.3.1 The Voice of the Child – Listening to Children's Views on their Musical Lives

This study argues for an approach to research with children that considers their own perspectives and views on their musical lives. Ethnomusicological studies have sought to raise awareness of children's music as an independent culture and as an area which requires further research and understanding. Engaging in observations of children's musical cultures in both in-school and out-of-school settings and carrying out conversations with children on the role of music in their lives has elevated our understanding of the role of music in children's lives.

Findings from this study highlight that many of the decisions on the provision of music education for children are made by adults in both in-school and out-of-school settings. There are some examples of where teachers are mindful of children's musical cultures

in their home lives and have adopted ways to incorporate them into their classroom contexts. Examples include children bringing in their own recordings of the music they listen to and songs they have created.

The formal primary curriculum in music is adapted at school and classroom levels with the whole-school planning system. This is an important and valuable structure as it allows for the national curricula to be adapted with due consideration of the local contexts. The inclusion of children's voices as part of whole school and classroom level planning would support a child-led approach. Listening to children and including their views and perspectives in the development of a music education programme would facilitate a holistic approach to children's education in music, and allow a child-centred ideology to be supported and children's engagement with music to be informed by their perspectives.

### 7.3.2 In-School and Out-of-School Musical Engagement

The primary school education system remains a central part of children's lives in Ireland. It is a significant place where we need to consider children and the role of music in their lives. Equally, the connections between music at school and the music that children engage with in out-of-school contexts needs more consideration by educators involved in the provision of music education activities for children in schools. Glover and Young (1999) argue that 'If a school can establish a musical ethos which is alive in its response to the range of music children encounter beyond school in the wider community, the quality of children's musical experience and learning is very much enhanced (Glover and Young, 1999:5). This study argues that an understanding of genre from the perspective of the child is crucial in understanding how a child listens to, perceives and creates music. Similarly, Glover and Young (1999) discuss the important role that the classroom teacher plays in ensuring that children's 'musical experiences in school do connect with, and make reference to, the musical worlds beyond' (1999:5). School music needs to recognise the range of popular, jazz, folk/traditional and classical/art musics which are heard live and across the media, as well as acknowledging the range of contexts in which

music is found -for entertainment in religious practice, among different social groups, and linked to dance, work or recreation' (1999:5).

My observations of music in classrooms revealed that music is often integrated as part of cross curricular learning with other subject areas such as Religion and Irish. Integrative learning of this kind is an important focus in a diverse range of education contexts. Integrative learning helps students to make connections between their learning across disciplines, contexts and spaces (Finnerty, 2014). However, the desire for the inclusion of music as an individual subject worthy of study in its own right is also prevalent at primary level. Findings from this study suggest that there is little evidence of the use of music as an individual subject within the classroom contexts. Writing about the focus of music as a cross curricular subject, Philpott and Spruce (2012) state that 'the danger is that school music may be cast forever in this subservient and submissive role' (2012:140). The development of music as a discipline must be both respected and facilitated for children to advance their appreciation for and abilities in music.

Although, the primary education system in Ireland focuses on a classroom based model of education, this study highlights that a significant level of children's engagement with music activities in primary schools occurs outside of the immediate classroom environment, in other school spaces, such as the school hall or music room. My findings not only highlight the need for music to be included as an individual subject at classroom level but also the need to consider the role of group music activities that take place outside of the classroom contexts in all schools. Findings from this study reveal that children value the opportunity and freedom to choose to participate in group vocal and instrumental ensembles in their schools. It also reveals that children's opportunity to engage in instrumental ensembles is often dependent on their access to after-school tuition. Access to after-school tuition may, itself, be determined by socio-economic factors, including the income of the family, as well as access to and availability of teachers and instruments.

In addition to the classroom and other formal school areas, less structured, more informal school spaces serve as dynamic sites of children's musical cultures. In the schoolyard, for example, unstructured free play periods provide children with the opportunity to engage in improvised musicking and other spontaneous creative practices.

Similarly, as children engage in creative musicking in their homes, this impacts on their social and emotional development. Findings suggest that the musical lives of children at home is significant and requires further investigation. Concepts of musicality and talent appear to influence how music is provided for in schools. In schools where music is integrated as part of everyday activities, children tended did not make reference to unique concept of being musical or not. In schools that relied on children's engagement in music as an extra-curricular activity, children had more restricted views on the notion of musicality and often alluded to the idea of being musical or not. Factors that also influence children's access to music activities include geographical location, socio-economic circumstances, resources and abilities of teachers and local community members.

### 7.3.3 How can understanding children's musical worlds inform strategies for policy?

A primary aim of this research was to consider how an understanding of children's musical cultures could contribute to the development of policy and strategies for the future. Since the introduction of the UNESCO Convention of the Rights of the Children (1989) and Ireland's ratification of this in 1990, it is evident that children's rights have become an important consideration across diverse areas of policy. The development of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the publication of the National Children's Strategy (2000) are important considerations in the development of the context for this study. Chapter Three focused on revealing how this dissertation incorporates one of the primary goals of the National Children's Strategy by giving children a voice in relation to the provision of music and how it aims to address one of

the primary aims whereby children have access to cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood.

In terms of the connection between policy and provision, Chapter Three focuses in detail on the various government policies that relate to children, music and culture in Ireland. It highlights the most significant recent developments and reveals their relevance and impact on the overall context of children's music in Ireland. Chapters Five and Six provide insight into the musical cultures experience by children who participated in this study. They reveal that there are many agents involved in the provision of music activities for children both within school and out-of-school contexts in Ireland. These include primary classroom teachers, music teachers, community musicians. As well as formal, structured musical activities that are created for children, children's musical activities evolve naturally. These natural spontaneous activities are often influenced by the music that children experience in structured activities and by parents, teachers, music specialists and other community members. This study reveals that there is an unevenness in the access to and provision of music education opportunities for children in both in-school and out-of-school contexts. This is influenced by factors including geographic location, socio economic circumstances, the value placed on music by teachers, parents and members of local communities.

External agents involved in facilitating children's musical activities are part of various music education networks that are influenced by curricular developments, arts council funding mechanisms, genre specific traditions. In recent years, music education policy has begun to recognise these agents involved in the provision of music for children in Ireland, however our strategy needs to consider ways to formalise the support systems where the various agencies involved in children's musical activities can engage in continued professional development, networking and other support opportunities. A system that aims to acknowledge children's views on their musical lives and strives to provide all children with access to music activities as part of a cultural right, needs to

consolidate and connect the various in-school and out-of-school contexts and organisations where children can experience music.

### 7.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations arise from this research study:

- Music must be embedded into all future policies relating to children's lives and education.
- Appropriate research methods to include children's views and perspectives on music in their lives must be developed and expanded within the Irish context.
- The facilitation of free play periods during which children can engage in spontaneous music making and composition in all formal in-school and out-of-school contexts.
- A professional development programme for primary teachers be re-established where a discussion of the implementation of the music at primary level can be discussed and exposure to pedagogical approaches to creative music making can be created.
- The reinstatement of full contact hours must take place for pre-service music teachers undertaking their Bachelor of Education Degrees in the relevant colleges in Ireland. This will allow student teachers to fully engage with and consider the value of music as an important and significant area of study for all children attending primary level education in Ireland. This will also support teachers in the development of pedagogical approaches to the teaching of music at primary level.
- Within the primary level education system, the significance of creating an equitable music education structure where all children have access to engage in musical learning and activities regardless of geographical location and socio-economic circumstances be prioritised.

- The value of music as an independent subject and worthy of inclusion within all classrooms in the primary education system needs to be addressed by the Department of Education and Skills. The limited use of music as a subject in classroom contexts suggests that the role and value of music is undermined and at risk. Further research with classroom teachers and school principals needs to take place to bring forward the challenges of the role of music within the primary level classrooms in Ireland.

- The value of music as an extra-curricular musical activity in schools be considered at whole school planning level to enhance the development of music for children at primary level education in Ireland.

- The connections between children's musical worlds outside of school contexts be acknowledged at whole school planning level and the integration of children's views and their customs of musical practice within the school context is significant.

**7.5 Concluding Thoughts**

Children's engagement with music should be meaningful, enjoyable and creative. This study has highlighted the potential for exploring the role and meaning of music in children's lives. The recommendations listed above are informed by the children's perspectives in this study. They underline the potential for including children in the planning and development of music education programmes. Policy makers, music educators and researchers should strive towards acknowledging children's voices in all areas of music education planning in Ireland. The incorporation of these recommendations into music education planning at all levels will lead to a more child centred and relevant engagement of music for children in various in-school and out-of-school contexts.

Music must be embedded into all future polices relation to children's lives and education. Children's voices and perspectives need to be included in all areas of music

education policy and provision. The process of listening to children in diverse ways allows us to hear new things. Primary school teachers and music educators in after-school settings can explore children's daily lives and interactions with music and to imagine what creative spaces can be created for them in Primary schools and after school settings. Further exploration of the pedagogical approaches of people who already work creatively with children and young people will inform how children's own perspectives and views in their musical lives can be facilitated in diverse contexts. This research can inform a shift in practice, a shift in perspectives, and, this in turn can shape policy and enhance the connections between children's musical worlds both inside and outside of school contexts.

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# Appendices

**Appendix A: Sample Letters to Parents and Guardians**

Michelle Finnerty
School of Music and Theatre
University College Cork
Cork
Ireland
Email: m.finnerty@ucc.ie

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

I am writing to you in relation to research I am undertaking on the musical culture of children in Ireland. The research is part of a PhD I have commenced at University College Cork and St Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

The study will focus on understanding the ways in which children engage in musical activities in Ireland. I have been granted permission by the Principal of your child's school to contact you in relation to my research. I am writing to all the parents to seek their permission for their children to participate in the study.

For my research, I would like to visit the classrooms and spaces in which music happens within the school. I hope to learn about the ways in which music exists though this observation. I also wish to talk to children about their musical interests. I propose to do this in groups within the classroom where the classroom teacher will be present.

The results of the study will be disseminated to the general public in the form of a written dissertation which will be available in the University College Cork and St Patrick's College libraries as a public document.

There will be no risks to the participant, as the data collected will be confidential and anonymous. The potential benefit to the student is the opportunity to express their thoughts and interests in relation to their musical interests and experiences.

I have enclosed further details of the study for your information.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for further clarification.

Yours sincerely,

Michelle Finnerty

**Appendix B: Sample Letters to Principals and Teachers**

School of Music and Theatre
University College Cork
Cork
Ireland
Email: m.finnerty@ucc.ie

Dear Principal,

I am writing to you in relation to research I am undertaking on the musical culture of children in Ireland. The research is part of a PhD I have commenced at University College Cork and St Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

The study will focus on understanding the ways in which children engage in musical activities in Ireland. I am wondering if it may be possible to carry out my research in your school. I am also seeking permission from a number of other primary schools in the Cork city.

For my research, I would like to visit the classrooms and spaces in which music happens within the school. I hope to learn about the ways in which music exists though this observation. I also wish to talk to children about their musical interests. I propose to do this in groups within the classroom where the classroom teacher will be present.

The results of the study will be disseminated to the general public in the form of a written dissertation which will be available in the University College Cork and St Patrick's College libraries as a public document.

There will be no risks to the participant, as the data collected will be confidential and anonymous. The potential benefit to the student is the opportunity to express their thoughts and interests in relation to their musical interests and experiences.

It you think your school may be interesting in taking part in the research, I can meet with you at your convenience to discuss the appropriate next steps.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for further clarification.

Yours sincerely,

Michelle Finnerty

University College Cork
Cork
Ireland
15/09/2011

Niamh, a chara,

Michelle Finnerty is ainm dom. Tá me í mo dochtoireacha í Roinn and Cheoil í Ollscoil gCorcaigh agus tá mo chuid scoláireachta maoinithe ag Oifig an Aire leanaí agus Gnóthai Óige. Is é an teideal atá ar mo thógra ná Páistí agus Ceol in Éirinn agus ba mhaith liom go nglacfadh do scoil páirt i mo thógra.

The research study aims to increase the understanding of the musical culture of children in various in-school and out-of-school contexts in Ireland. It aims to raise the voices of children in relation to their musical experiences and interests. The methodology employed is a combination of observation and interviews with teachers and children. Observation will take place in the various places where children engage in music within the school and outside the school context. This may include the classroom, the school hall, the playground, local music clubs and sports events where informal music may take place. I also aim to carry out group interviews with children to ask them to talk about their musical interests.

I have been granted ethical approval for this research by the university committee. As part of this process, I am required to receive informed consent from parents/guardians for children to participate in the interviews. I am also required to carry out an interactive information session with the group of children in the classroom so they understand what the research is about and their role within it. The interviews are required to take place within the school context and to be supervised by teachers or parents. Similarly, my observations will always take place with the teacher present. Data collected will be confidential and anonymous.

I am hoping to carry out my research in three Cork Primary Schools and would like to include a Gael Scoileanna in the sample group of schools. As you may know, I am aware of the variety of music that is happening within your school and I would be delighted if it might be possible to carry out my research there. It would typically occur over a three-week period and I would focus primarily on first class and sixth class students.

I understand a primary concern for you for any visiting research is the question of language. I realise that Irish is the medium of the school. I am prepared to conduct as much as possible of my communication and all correspondence in Irish (with English translation for parents) but some of the research will have to be conducted solely in English as that is the language in which I need to write this project. I'm fully committed to observing the Irish immersion ethic of the school and I will endeavour to conduct some of my initial communications and introductions in the group settings with Gaeilge.

I'm approaching you because I strongly believe that gaelscoileanna and Irish immersion should be included and represented in this study. If you think your school may be interesting in taking part in the research, I can meet with you at your convenience to discuss the appropriate next steps.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for further clarification.

Yours Sincerely,

Michelle Finnerty

School of Music and Theatre
University College Cork
Cork
Ireland
Email: m.finnerty@ucc.ie
26/11/12

Dear Teacher,

I am writing to you regarding a research study on children and music in Ireland. The research is part of National Children's Strategy doctoral programme. It is based in University College Cork and St Patrick's College, Drumcondra and involves schools in the Cork area.

As you are probably aware, I have been given permission to undertake research relating to music in your school. I am hoping to write a profile of all the types of music that takes place within the school, including extra-curricular and after-school activities. The aim is to highlight the rich diversity of music-making that exists for children in the school and after-school context. If it is possible to talk to you or observe any of the musical activities that you are involved in within the school, I'd be delighted to arrange at a time that suits.

The study also aims to talk to the children about their musical interests, the music that they sing, play and like. I propose to do this in small groups within the classroom where the classroom teacher will be present.
The results of the study will be presented to the research Office for the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. They will also be disseminated to the general public in the form of a written dissertation which will be available in the University College Cork and St Patrick's College libraries as a public document. There will be no risks to the participant, as the data collected will be confidential and anonymous. The potential benefits to the teachers and students are the opportunity to express their thoughts and interests in relation to music education for children in Ireland.

I have enclosed further details of the study for your information. I would like to thank you in advance for your time and support and I look forward to the possibility of speaking to you regarding music education for children in Ireland.
Please do not hesitate to contact me for further clarification.

Yours sincerely,
Michelle Finnerty

**Appendix C: Information Pack for Research Participants**

Information Pack Details

School of Music and Theatre, University College Cork and St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS /GUARDIANS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

**Information Sheet**

**Purpose of the Study.**

This research focuses on the musical culture of children in Ireland. It hopes to reveal the various types of music-making practices that exist in various in-school and out-of-school contexts in Ireland. It is primarily focused on children ages 6-12. The research is part of a PhD which I am undertaking at University College Cork in association with St Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

**What will the study involve?**

- The study will involve sets of observations of children as they engage in musical activities at Primary Level Education in Ireland. It also aims to observe children as they engage in musical experiences in out-of-school spaces.
- Focus group interviews with children occur within the school and outside of the school context. This will normally happen towards the end of the observation period. These interviews will be activity based and will be facilitated in an appropriate method for the age-group concerned. These group interviews will be audio recorded.
- Interviews with teachers and facilitators of music will take place after observations. These will be semi-formal in structure and will be audio recorded.

**Why has your child's school been asked to take part?**

Your child's school has been asked to participate in this study because the school and the area in which the school is located have been identified as having a rich and diverse practice of music-making activities for children.

**Does your child have to take part?**

No – your child does not have to take part in this research. Participation is voluntary. If you wish for your child to participate, you must sign a consent form. After agreeing to participate, your child will still have the option of withdrawing before the research commences or discontinuing after data collection has started.

**Will your child's participation in the study be kept confidential?**

Yes. I will ensure that no clues to your child's identity appear in the thesis or any other publication emanating from the research. Any extracts from what your child says that are quoted will be entirely confidential.

**What will happen to the information which you give?**

It is proposed to record the interviews. All audio recorded data (and any transcripts obtained from these recordings) will be labeled/coded in such a way that it will not be possible to identify any individual research participants. The data will be kept confidential for the duration of the study. On completion of the thesis, they will be retained for a further six years in a locked cabinet in the School of Music and Theatre, University College Cork. After this period, they will be destroyed.

**What will happen to the results?**

The results will be presented in the thesis and at various conferences. They will be seen by my two research supervisors, a second marker and the external examiner. The thesis will be available to read by others in the university libraries. The study may be published in a research journal.

**What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?**

I don't envisage any negative consequences for your child in taking part.

**What if there is a problem?**

At the end of the interview, I will discuss with your child and the group of child how they found the experience and if they are satisfied with the research. If they subsequently feel distressed, you should contact the chair of the UCC Social Research Ethics Committee at the following details:

Dr. Sean Hammond (Chair), UCC Social Research Ethics Committee, Office for the Vice-President for Research, University College Cork, Cork. Tel: 021 4903506 Email: srec@ucc.ie.

**Who has reviewed this study?**

This study has been reviewed and approved by the ethical committees at University College Cork and St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin.

**Any further queries?** If you need any further information or if you subsequently have any outstanding issues please contact me or my two research supervisors at the following contact details:

Michelle Finnerty,
PhD Research Student

Dr Mel Mercier,
Research Supervisor,
School of Music and Theatre,
University College Cork.
Cork.

Dr John O'Flynn,
Research Supervisor,
Department of Music,
St. Patrick's College,
Drumcondra, Dublin.

**If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the following consent form:**

## Consent Form Parent/Guardian

I, the undersigned, declare that I am willing to allow my child to take part in research for the study on the musical culture of children in Ireland.

I declare that I have been fully briefed on the nature of this study and the role my child has in it and have been given the opportunity to ask questions before giving my permission.

The nature of my child's participation has been explained to me and I have full knowledge of how the information collected will be used.

I fully understand that there is no obligation on my child to participate in this study.

I fully understand that he/she is free to withdraw my participation at any time without having to explain or give a reason.

I understand that confidentiality will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my child's identity.

I understand that there will always be a teacher or adult supervisor known to the children present.

I understand that the research will be audio-recorded and the recording will be kept confidential to the researcher.

Signature of parent/guardian …….

Date …….

## STUDENT CONSENT FORM

**This will also be read out to students**

I have been given enough information about this project √ ◯ × ◯

It has been explained to me how the information I give will be used √ ◯ × ◯

I agree to talk to Michelle about the music I like and the music that I sing, play and listen to √ ◯ × ◯

I understand that I do not have to answer all the questions √ ◯ × ◯

I am happy for Michelle to write down and record what I say √ ◯ × ◯

I give permission for what I say to be used √ ◯ × ◯

I understand that my name won't be used. √ ◯ × ◯

Signed…… Date……

**Appendix D: Overview of Fieldwork Interviews in Dissertation**

| Location of Interview | Date | Number of Interview | Pseudonyms of Interviews | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| School A | October 2012 | 1 | Kerrie | 7 |
| School A | October 2012 | 1 | Kelly | 7 |
| School A | November 2012 | 1 | Eva | 7 |
| School A | November 2012 | 1 | Shauna | 6 |
| School A | November 2012 | 2 | Maggie | 6 |
| School A | October 2012 | 5 | Elisa | 7 |
| School A | November 2012 | 3 | Megan | 7 |
| School A | November 2012 | 3 | Katie | 7 |
| School A | November 2012 | 4 | Lily | 7 |
| School A | November 2012 | 4 | Clare | 8 |
| School A | November 2012 | 5 | Kate | 7 |
| School A | November 2012 | 5 | Hannagh | 8 |
| School A | October 2012 | 5 | Courtney | 7 |
| School A | October 2012 | 5 | Andrea | 8 |
| School A | November 2012 | 5 | Kittie | 7 |
| School A | November 2012 | 5 | Sophie | 8 |
| School A | November 2012 | 5 | Lisa | 8 |
| School A | November 2012 | 6 | Ciara | 8 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| School A | November 2012 | 6 | Clara | 7 |
| School A | November 2012 | 7 | Abbie | 9 |
| School A | November 2012 | 7 | Alice | 10 |
| School A | November 2012 | 8 | Leanne | 7 |
| School A | November 2012 | 8 | Kayla | 7 |
| School A | November 2012 | 8 | Pia | 9 |
| School A | November 2012 | 9 | Emma | 10 |
| School A | November 2012 | 9 | Courtney | 7 |
| School A | November 2012 | 9 | Andrea | 8 |
| School A | October 2011 | 9 | Lisa | 8 |
| School A | October 2011 | 9 | Ciara | 8 |
| School A | October 2011 | 10 | Tara | 8 |
| School A | October 2011 | 10 | Abbey | 8 |
| School A | October 2012 | 10 | Saoirse | 10 |
| School A | October 2012 | 11 | Treasa | 8 |
| School A | October 2012 | 11 | Yvonne | 7 |
| School A | November 2012 | 12 | Emma | 10 |
| School A | November 2012 | 12 | Ciara | 8 |
| School A | November 2012 | 13 | Lauren | 8 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| School A | November 2012 | 13 | Ciara | 7 |
| School A | October 2012 | 14 | Eabha | 11 |
| School A | October 2012 | 16 | Brianna | 9 |
| School A | October 2012 | 17 | Aoife | 9 |
| School A | October 2012 | 17 | Leah | 9 |
| School A | October 2012 | 17 | Laura | 8 |
| School A | October 2012 | 17 | Karen | 8 |
| School A | October 2012 | 17 | Lynn | 8 |
| After-School Club A | November 2011 | 1 | Sadhbh | 7 |
| After-School Club A | November 2011 | 1 | Jane | 8 |
| After-School Club A | November 2011 | 1 | Elizabeth | 10 |
| After-School Club A | October 2011 | 10 | Sophie | 8 |
| School B | October 2012 | 1 | Cait | 10 |
| School B | October 2012 | 1 | Mark | 12 |
| School B | October 2012 | 1 | Cian | 11 |
| School B | November 2012 | 1 | David | 10 |
| School B | November 2012 | 1 | Liam | 11 |
| School B | October 2012 | 1 | Cormac | 11 |
| School B | October 2012 | 1 | Jack | 12 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| School B | October 2012 | 2 | Ann | 12 |
| School B | October 2012 | 2 | Daithí | 12 |
| School B | October 2012 | 2 | Joseph | 11 |
| School B | November 2012 | 2 | Áine | 11 |
| School B | November 2012 | 2 | Joe | 10 |
| School B | October 2012 | 3 | Maura | 11 |
| School B | October 2012 | 3 | Alan | 12 |
| School B | November 2012 | 3 | Brian | 10 |
| School B | November 2012 | 3 | Fintan | 11 |
| School B | November 2012 | 4 | Alan | 10 |
| School B | November 2012 | 4 | Trevor | 12 |
| School B | November 2012 | 4 | Ben | 8 |
| School B | November 2012 | 5 | Kathy | 12 |
| School B | November 2012 | 5 | Michael | 11 |
| School B | November 2012 | 5 | Fiachra | 12 |
| School B | November 2012 | 5 | Colin | 12 |
| School B | November 2012 | 5 | Sionadh | 10 |
| School B | November 2012 | 11 | Siún | 12 |
| School B | November 2012 | 15 | Fergal | 11 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| School B | November 2012 | 16 | Claire | 8 |
| School B | November 2012 | 10 | Louise | 9 |
| School B | November 2012 | 10 | Beata | 8 |
| School B | October 2012 | 16 | Isabel | 9 |
| School B | October 2012 | 17 | Karen | 10 |
| After-School Club B | February 2013 | 2 | Annie | 12 |
| School C | January 2013 | 1 | Ríona | 8 |
| School C | January 2013 | 1 | Jonah | 8 |
| School C | January 2013 | 1 | Laoise | 8 |
| School C | January 2013 | 2 | Leanne | 7 |
| School C | January 2013 | 2 | Eva | 7 |
| School C | January 2013 | 2 | Rose | 11 |
| School C | January 2013 | 3 | Kelly | 6 |
| School C | January 2013 | 3 | Kerrie | 6 |
| School C | January 2013 | 3 | Megan | 7 |
| School C | January 2013 | 4 | Mary | 6 |
| School C | January 2013 | 4 | Lucy | 6 |
| School C | January 2013 | 4 | Kate | 7 |
| School C | January 2013 | 5 | Lara | 7 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| School C | January 2013 | 5 | James | 7 |
| School C | January 2013 | 5 | Ciara | 7 |
| School C | January 2013 | 6 | Brian | 11 |
| School C | January 2013 | 6 | John | 11 |
| School C | January 2013 | 6 | Gearóid | 12 |
| School C | January 2013 | 6 | Mark | 12 |
| School C | January 2013 | 6 | Sarah | 10 |
| School C | January 2013 | 6 | Luke | 9 |
| School C | January 2013 | 6 | Siofra | 9 |
| School C | January 2013 | 12 | Mia | 6 |
| School C | January 2013 | 7 | Catherine | 8 |
| School C | January 2013 | 7 | Lauren | 9 |
| School C | January 2013 | 7 | David | 10 |

**Appendix E: Sample transcription of Interview**

Michelle: Okay. Fiachra. Can you remind me what age you are again?

Fiachra: Twelve.

Michelle: Twelve.

Sionadh: I'm eleven.

Michelle: Eleven?

Sionadh: Yes. Nearly twelve.

Ciara: and I'm twelve

Cathy: I'm Twelve. Too.

Michelle: Twelve. Okay. So is everyone still Okay to participate in the interview? Just to remind you that you don't have to answer any questions and if you change your mind about chatting, just let me know.

All: Yes.

Michelle: We will start with this activity while we are chatting. It's about the music that you like and we can talk about this. You can write down the kind of music that you like listening to. It can be tunes that you like playing. It can be your favourite artists, or your favourite musicians or something like that. There's some markers there and that if you want to use them.

While you are doing that, I will ask you some different things about music. Do you like it? Why you like it, and what's good about music. Just to get your thoughts and ideas to put with everyone else's as well.

Sionadh: We just write there on the paper what music you like?

Michelle: Yeah.

Fiachra: One type of music for each box, yeah?

Michelle: It doesn't have to be. The two boxes are just… you can… just put the list into it, you know. Or if you have two different types of music, you know. So Cathy and Ciara, do you play instruments?

Ciara: I don't play any more.

Michelle: What do you play, Cathy?

Cathy: Piano.

Michelle: Piano? And do you learn it somewhere or..?

Cathy: Yeah.

Michelle: Where do you learn it?

Cathy: At home.

Michelle: At home?

Cathy: Yeah.

Michelle: And do you like playing it?

Cathy: Yeah.

Michelle: What kind of music do you like?

Cathy: Lady Gaga music. I like Lady Gaga music.

Michelle: Lady Gaga music.

Ciara: I like One Direction.

Michelle: One Direction?

Ciara: Yeah.

Michelle: What's good about One Direction? A lot of people have been telling me they like them. Why are they so good? Why do you think they're so popular?

Sionadh: They're good at singing.

Cathy: And they're pretty.

Sionadh: I was going to say that!

Michelle: Fiachra, are you getting on OK with that? What kind of music do you like listening to?

Fiachra: I like pop. I like sort of electric. And trad as well.

Michelle: Trad as well, yeah. So you're in the Grúpaí Cheoil. And you also are in the Douglas Comhaltas, is that right?

Fiachra: Yeah.

Sionadh: Me too.

Michelle: You are in the local Comhaltas as well? I saw you in the Banna Ceoil? Is that correct?

Sionadh: I was in the Banna Ceoil but I don't do it anymore. Yeah. And then I do classical as well.

Michelle: So where do you learn your classical music?

Sionadh: I do it privately with a teacher.

Michelle: Okay. So is it in the school or it is separate?

Sionadh: I used to do it in the school but then I'm doing exams so I go to…

Michelle: Okay. So what instrument do you play?

Sionadh: The violin. And then I play the violin and the tin whistle in Comhaltas.

Michelle: Oh, brilliant. So you kind of play both. So you are sort of learning classical music and traditional music.

Sionadh: Yeah.

Michelle: And Fiachra, do you just learn traditional?

Fiachra: I learn traditional on violin, and classical, and I learn classical on piano.

Michelle: Oh, right.

Fiachra: And I used to do banjo a little bit. Not anymore.

Michelle: Okay. So tell me a little bit about… You guys, tell me a bit about learning different music; why that's good and what are the challenges with it. Is it hard learning two different types of music?

Fiachra: No, it's easy enough, but the classical is probably harder. It depends what teacher you have really but in trad usually they're not as hard on like posture and… Like in classical you have to learn it note-by-note by the piece, but in trad you can keep doing different variations.

Michelle: Yeah.

Fiachra: I don't even remember how I play songs. I usually play them differently every time because there's cuts and rolls and you can do them at different places. So they're not really… They're a bit lax in trad on…

Michelle: Yeah.

Fiachra: Well, usually they're lax on like posture and playing, but in classical you're all sort of perfection and stuff.

Michelle: Do you think it's good to learn both, Fiachra?

Fiachra: I suppose, like. I like it anyway because I know it's fun.

Michelle: Yeah. Sionadh, how about you? You're doing both as well. Do you like that?

Sionadh: I think classical is harder. In traditional it's just kind of fun.

Michelle: Okay.

Sionadh: You still enter competitions and stuff but it isn't as strict.

Michelle: And why do you…? Like, say, usually the Banna Ceoil… Are you in the Grúpaí Cheoil as well?

Sionadh: Yeah.

Michelle: You're probably in a Grúpaí Cheoil…

Fiachra: The céilí band.

Michelle: The céilí band. Okay.

Fiachra: We came second in All-Ireland.

Michelle: You came second?

Fiachra: The Americans beat us.

Michelle: Oh, that's great. That's good. Second's good. An All-Ireland medal.

Fiachra: We went up to Cavan. That was fun. And sessions were really fun as well.

Michelle: Where do you get to play sessions?

Fiachra: Usually in the summer in like Clare… We were in the Bellbridge Hotel for Willie Clancy Week.

Michelle: Okay.

Fiachra: You'd be there until like two o'clock in the morning, whatever.

Michelle: That's really late, Fiachra, isn't it?

Fiachra: It's really fun though.

Michelle: Do other people in your family play?

Sionadh: My sister does.

Michelle: Yeah? Does she play traditional and classical as well?

Sionadh: Yeah.

Fiachra: My brother plays violin and piano. One of my sisters plays concertina. She used to play violin and piano. My other sister plays violin. She used to play the flute. She used to play the tin whistle. And she does saxophone as well.

Michelle: Okay. So there's lots of music going on.

Fiachra: And she can do piano as well.

Michelle: Okay. So you guys do a lot of music outside of school and you listen to a lot. Do you listen to popular music as well? Are you writing some popular music down?

Fiachra: Yeah.

Michelle: Did you write some popular music down? And Ciara and Cathy, you listen to a lot of popular music?

Ciara: Yeah.

Michelle: And in terms of music in school, do you do music in the classroom or what kind of stuff do you do? Are you part of the choir or…?

Fiachra: Most of our music is really like the…

Ciara: The confirmation.

Fiachra: For confirmation.

Ciara: And then we've a choir in the school.

Fiachra: We've a choir as well but we're not doing… We might be doing Cor Fheile with the choir. We only really do the choir on Christmas and for practicing for the Cor Fhile and a few mornings.

Michelle: Is the performance important to music in a competition? Do you think that's important?

Fiachra: Performance?

Cathy: It is in classical but not in traditional.

Fiachra: Yeah. It depends, like.

Cathy: In classical they don't really…

Fiachra: What do you mean by is performance…?

Michelle: Do you like performing? Do you think that's why people prefer music or…?

Fiachra: Oh yeah. Yeah, it's good, but it makes you kind of more confident to play it outside. But the first time performing you're not really that confident. And exams are like… especially with… there are no exams in trad, like. I suppose auditions, but apart from that there's nothing. But in classical

you have to… like in school music if you don't get the exam you either repeat the grade or you can't do it again. You have to get above seventy.

Michelle: That's all pressure, isn't it?

Cathy: It's like you don't pass, you fail. You've to do it again or else you just don't do it.

Fiachra: Yeah.

Cathy: Or if you get a pass it's good but it isn't half as good as getting a merit or a distinction.

Fiachra: Yeah. I know if you get sixty-nine per cent you've to do the grade again.

Michelle: Wow. Okay.

Fiachra: And also in school music if you get over ninety you don't have to pay. So it's a scholarship. So I'm always trying to get that, but…

Michelle: It's very difficult to get over ninety per cent.

Fiachra: And there's also like other stuff. There's theory, which you've to learn a lot. It helps though with, say, if you're doing music in secondary school. You'd be able to… Like my sister's doing music and she's going to fly through that. It's just an easy subject for her.

Michelle: Just getting back to the choir, did you enjoy…? Were you all in the choir or just some of you?

Ciara: Only us.

Cathy: Always we were able to be in it but some people don't want to.

Fiachra: Some people didn't… Only a few though.

Michelle: Choose to be in it, yeah. And I know the choir does certain material for Christmas and coming up to confirmation. Are there other things that you'd to do if you were in the choir? Do you like doing that stuff that you do or…?

Cathy: Through the Cor Fheile we do like an Irish song and an English song, and there may be a pop…

Fiachra: Didn't we do…? What was the one…?

Cathy: We did.

Fiachra: We did an Irish show so it wasn't as like… What was it called again?

Michelle: I heard you did The Script as Gaeilge last year, did ye?

Fiachra: Yeah.

Ciara: Yeah.

Cathy: Yeah.

Fiachra: In school with Mr. Creedon.

Ciara: We learned a lot of songs last year.

Fiachra: Yeah. One was like *Bubbly.*

Michelle: With your classroom teacher, is it?

Fiachra: That was with Mr. Creedon last year.

Michelle: And what kind of music do you do in the classroom this year?

Cathy: Confirmation songs.

Fiachra: Confirmation music mostly. Anything else we did? Something on tin whistle but that was to do with confirmation as well.

Ciara: We did like *Silent Night* and sang that.

Fiachra: But that still counts…

Michelle: So everything is linked to confirmation this year.

Fiachra: So far anyway.

Michelle: Okay. Do you like singing and do you sing at home or when you're listening to the music…?

Ciara: Yeah.

Cathy: Yeah.

Sionadh: Yeah.

Michelle: Does anyone ever make up songs or…? Tell me a bit about that. A lot of children have been telling me that they - or students, I should say – have been telling me that they make up a lot of songs or tunes or just things in their head. Do any of you do that?

Sionadh: When I was smaller I did. I was just messing around one day. I just write nice lyrics… and then it was like a song but didn't sing them words. I put like different words in.

Michelle: Okay. So which came first, the tune, is it, or the melody?

Sionadh: Yeah, it's like my favourite song when I was smaller. And then I changed the words to my own words.

Michelle: Okay.

Sionadh: But I never sang it anywhere or anything.

Michelle: Do you do that at home, is it? Cathy and Ciara, do you do that as well?

Ciara: Sometimes.

Cathy: I write songs on the computer.

Michelle: Do you? Tell me about that? How does that work?

Cathy: It's kind of hard to think up words because most songs they don't usually go together. They're all like random stuff. So that's kind of hard to make up sometimes. But the melody is easy to do.

Fiachra: What laptop were you doing it on – a Mac, was it? Were you using GarageBand, like?

Cathy: I just write it into the... You know where you're able to write stuff in…?

Fiachra: Oh, yeah.

Michelle: So you actually write in the words?

Fiachra: Oh, yeah. I thought you were using a sort of site where you…

Michelle: Some of the other guys were using GarageBand and stuff like that.

Fiachra: Yeah. I don't actually have GarageBand but I like the sort of techno… The one where you can just make it yourself is must easier than any lyrics or anything.

Michelle: Okay. Tell me a little bit more, Cathy. So you come up with the lyrics, is it? Or do you have the tune, the melody, in your head as well or…?

Cathy: I have the melody in my head already and I just think up words.

Michelle: Okay. Where does the melody come from, do you think?

Cathy: It just pops into my head.

Michelle: It just pops into your head. Do you do that much? Have you been doing that for long or..?

Cathy: Kind of.

Michelle: Do you have some songs built up?

Cathy: Yeah.

Michelle: How many songs roughly? You don't have to sing them, unless you want to? What are they about?

Cathy: Random stuff. Not really about anything. It's like brand new stuff, like pop songs and stuff.

Michelle: Okay. And do you write them at a particular…? Would you ever write them in school or in the yard or would some stuff come to you or..?

Cathy: I do it at home.

Michelle: At home.

Cathy: And with my friend Eve, because she writes songs as well.

Michelle: Okay.

Fiachra: Eve… like who's in our class?

Cathy: Yeah.

Michelle: I don't think I spoke to Eve.

Fiachra: She was in our class. She's in Brook Lodge.

Cathy: Brook Lodge, yeah.

Michelle: How about you, Ciara? What do you do with music at home? Do you listen to music all the time or…?

Ciara: Yeah. All the time. On my iPod.

Michelle: On your iPod. A lot of people have iPods, don't they?

Fiachra: Yeah.

Ciara: I got one for Christmas, an iPod Touch.

Michelle: Did you?

Fiachra: Which one?

Ciara: The fourth generation.

Cathy: I got the fourth one last year.

Fiachra: I got the fourth. I love them. They're so useful.

Michelle: Yeah. Tell me about why do you think music…? So you're all actively listening; very interested in music; some learn instruments; some writing their songs and using it... So why do you think music is so important, if you were to kind of respond to that? Why do you think it's important? What's really good about it? Any ideas?

Fiachra: I don't know. It's fun. It's interesting.

Michelle: Is it like sport? Do you do sport as well?

Fiachra: Yeah.

Ciara: No.

Michelle: Is it similar or different?

Ciara: Different. You're kind of relaxing when you're listening to music.

Fiachra: And you don't really have to practice a sport as much as music. Well, you do, like, but you practice it for fun. I'm normally practicing it…

Cathy: I don't like practicing. I have to practice every day.

Fiachra: It depends, like. Practicing trad is better.

Michelle: Would ye like to be musicians when you grow up?

Fiachra: It depends, like. You can get loads of money by just teaching and you don't have to be that good. Well, I suppose you have to be good enough, like, but…

Cathy: You've to get money. I wouldn't mind that part. But it's just the fact of having to play the violin every day. I do practice every day.

Michelle: Really?

Fiachra: My sister cheats for a bit and she got… I don't know, it was like twenty euro each a lesson, like. So I don't know. I'd be playing it but I wouldn't do it as a career or anything.

Michelle: Okay. The other thing I've been asking is you know the way there's this idea of talent or that… your musicality? Do you have any thoughts on that, like, whether someone's musical or not, everyone is musical..? Do you have any…? Anyone any ideas on that? No?

Fiachra: Some people can be like completely hopeless but you don't really need much if you just… You can start learning it… Well, you should start learning it young because if you start learning it when you're like, I don't know, an adult, it's not as easy.

Michelle: We were talking about making up tunes or songs. The girls were talking a little bit about it there. Do you ever make up tunes on your instruments?

Fiachra: Yeah.

Michelle: Do you have some tunes, Fiachra?

Fiachra: I don't know any of them anymore. I made three or four on my fiddle – like trad tunes.

Michelle: Did you?

Cathy: I haven't made them like completely. If I'm just playing a tune and I just like don't want to play it anymore I'll just play random notes and then it kind of goes together.

Michelle: Okay.

Fiachra: Accidentally compose a melody and then you just have to do a second half or third or whatever. Well, I might have recorded some of them sometime. I don't know, and I don't know what I recorded them on. The last time I made one was like a year ago or more.

Michelle: Do you like the idea of making up some of your own tunes or..?

Fiachra: Yeah.

Michelle: Yeah? Tell me then about… you're listening to all this music at home and some of you learn instruments and the music you're doing in school this year is kind of very much about confirmation but, you know… So which do you like best? Do you like music…? Just think of not just this year but all the different types of music you do in school or the music you do at home or listen to at home. Do you have a preference or…?

Fiachra: Yeah. I definitely prefer the music I did at home instead of music you're doing in school.

Michelle: So do you think music could be different in school for children?

Fiachra: Yeah. It's a lot of hymns and confirmation tunes and all that. There's no variation – this year anyway.

Sionadh: Last year we were learning the National Anthem.

Fiachra: We did The Script, the National Anthem…

Sionadh: Last year was pretty good because…

Michelle: Yeah. *Bubbly* and some other ones.

Michelle: Girls, what do you think? You listen to a lot of, say, popular music at home. You write your own songs. Do you think you'd like to be able to do some more of that in school or..?

Ciara: Yeah.

Michelle: Or do you like what you do in school as well?

Cathy: We don't really do good songs in school.

Ciara: We did last year though.

Cathy: Yeah. Last year but not any other year. By Friday we used to have lots of songs and then at the end we might just…

Fiachra: What did we do in fourth class? Like nothing?

Ciara: No, we didn't do any.

Fiachra: I think we did tin whistle once.

Ciara: Yeah.

Sionadh: It says on the list 'buy a tin whistle'.

Fiachra: We didn't use it.

Sionadh: We didn't use it. We never used it, only in fifth year… or then in second class.

Fiachra: No, last year as well.

Sionadh: We did, yeah, last year, but that was only…

Fiachra: You did once though.

Sionadh: That was like…

Fiachra: And Mr. Mark…. Remember third class? We did a lot of songs with him as well – I think. And *Edelweiss* was one of them we did.

Michelle: Do you think you'll be doing music in school? Will any of you… in secondary school?

Fiachra: Oh yeah.

Michelle: Yeah?

Fiachra: Well, actually I won't be doing it actually in secondary school; I'll be doing it out of it, because this school I'm going to don't have music as a subject.

Michelle: Okay. Alright.

Sionadh: I'm doing school… like what we get in school - music in school - but…

Fiachra: What secondary school are you going to?

Sionadh: Colaiste...

Fiachra: Do they do music?

Sionadh: Yeah. But I'm not doing music in school.

Fiachra: Oh, right.

Sionadh: I don't know because… I want to do… it'd be easy…

Fiachra: You should do it for your Leaving Cert or whatever because it's...

Sionadh: I know it'd be easy but it's just… it'd be too much music for me.

Michelle: Sounds like you'd be like you're doing a bit too much music, are you?

Sionadh: Well, I'm not saying too much. I like it but it's just the practice.

Fiachra: The practice, yeah. I don't like that. Like I never even knew you had to practice until I started and then I was…

Sionadh: It was okay until I got into the grades and the exams. It was like practice every day. You learn this off by heart, learn this off by heart, learn it off by heart. You'll still have the notes but learn it off by heart.

Fiachra: Learning off by heart is harder than in classical than… My friend's sister, she's the best fiddlist and classical person of her age. I went to one of her competitions. I don't know was it a week ago… - less. And she went for forty-five minutes without any notes, like. Like imagine playing for forty-five minutes, no notes. So it'd be so hard to learn that off, but she's *really* good and she started when she was like three or something.

Cathy: Is that..? What's her name?

Fiachra: Mairéad Hickey.

Cathy: Mairéad who?

Fiachra: Mairéad Hickey.

Michelle: In terms of the Banna Ceoil and the Grúpaí Cheoil and all that, do you think it's..? I observed the Grúpaí Cheoil in last year and sometimes you get some choices on… or voting or choosing your own tunes, like. Do you think that's important?

Fiachra: Yeah. Well, actually we do. It depends on the teacher. But in our case, Evan would be like... there's a change; you like it. And I don't think we've ever said no, because, I don't know… Under 15s… There's different ages in trad, like. Under 12s or Under 15s, Under 18s and above.

Michelle: And what are you practicing for at the moment in Under 12s or Under 15? What's coming up next?

Fiachra: We're practicing for… Are you doing the Feis Maitiu or Grúpaí Cheoil?

Sionadh: I don't know.

Fiachra: How many people are there – four?

Sionadh: There's one, two, three, four, five, six, seven…

Michelle: And you can leave these in here then, in two piles. Thanks.

Fiachra: Are you doing the Feis Maitiu?

Sionadh: Yeah. I don't really want to but next year I will.

Fiachra: At the moment our band is practicing for just the Feis Maitiu in town that's coming up.

Michelle: When is that on?

Fiachra: It depends. It's like there's loads of competitions going from around January to like April.

Michelle: Okay.

Fiachra: The class, circle and trad. That only started like two years ago. But usually the Banna Ceoil in this school we would enter, but this is the first year that it's gone into the middle of the holidays.

Michelle: Okay.

Fiachra: So it's too much of a hassle, and we're really bad.

Michelle: Okay.

Fiachra: So I don't think they were actually going to enter us anyway. I'm pretty sure last year was our only chance really of winning but we got disqualified.

Sionadh: We got disqualified because we had one person too much. We had twenty-six and the limit was…

Fiachra: The limit was twenty-four.

Sionadh: Twenty-four. And then a man… because he probably… he wasn't on our team. He goes, 'Oh look, there's twenty-six.' So we got disqualified.

Fiachra: Yeah, we got disqualified.

Sionadh: And we were like…

Fiachra: The reason was... I don't know. It was some people from junior infants who knew one tune.

Michelle: Okay. Yeah.

Sionadh: And of all the tunes they just were holding it and doing like A, A, E, E, A… And we were just… 'Don't come.'

Fiachra: And we had won four years in a row before, I think.

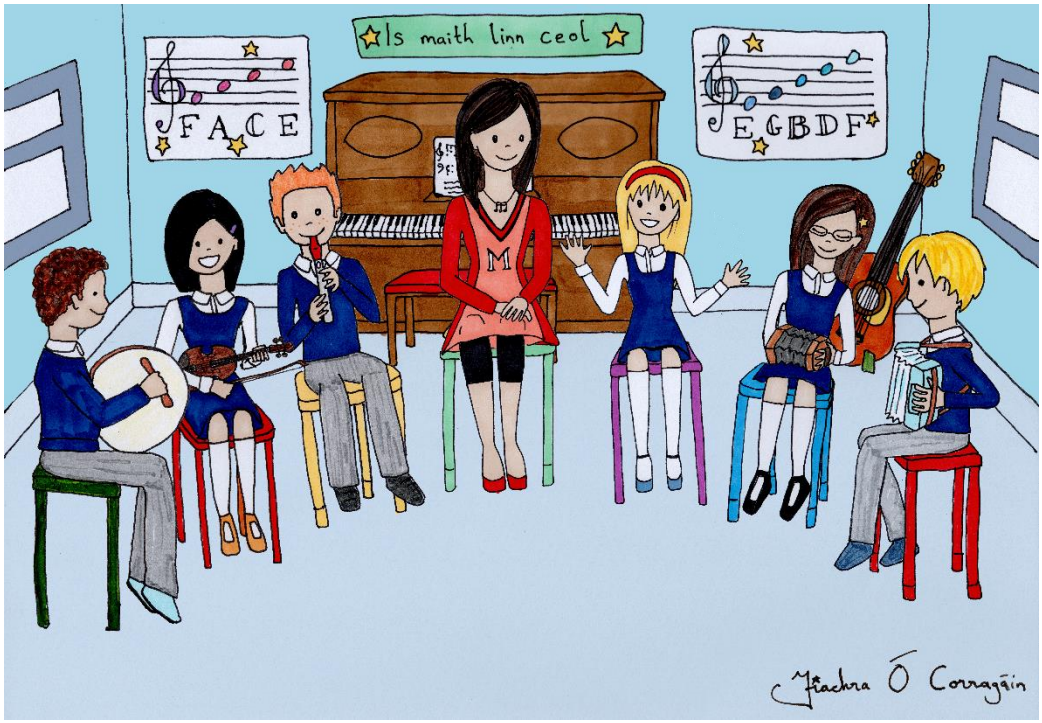
Michelle: Ye had won it, yeah. There's lots of stuff on there. That's great. We're going to go back now. There's a few more. But thanks a million and I'll be putting all the thoughts and ideas together and…

Fiachra: What date is it – the twenty-first?

Michelle: Yeah, I can date it for you as well. Is that alright?

**[End of audio - 23:45 mins]**

**Appendix F: Sample of Activity Sheets Used in Interview**

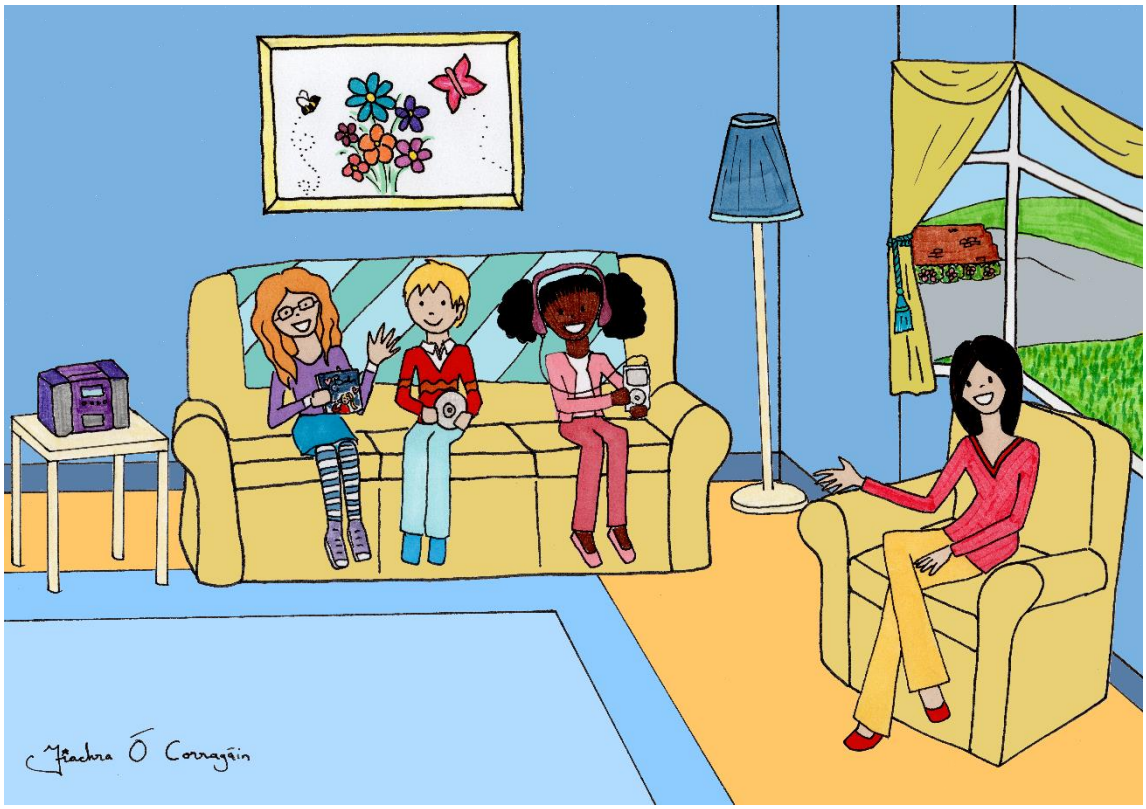


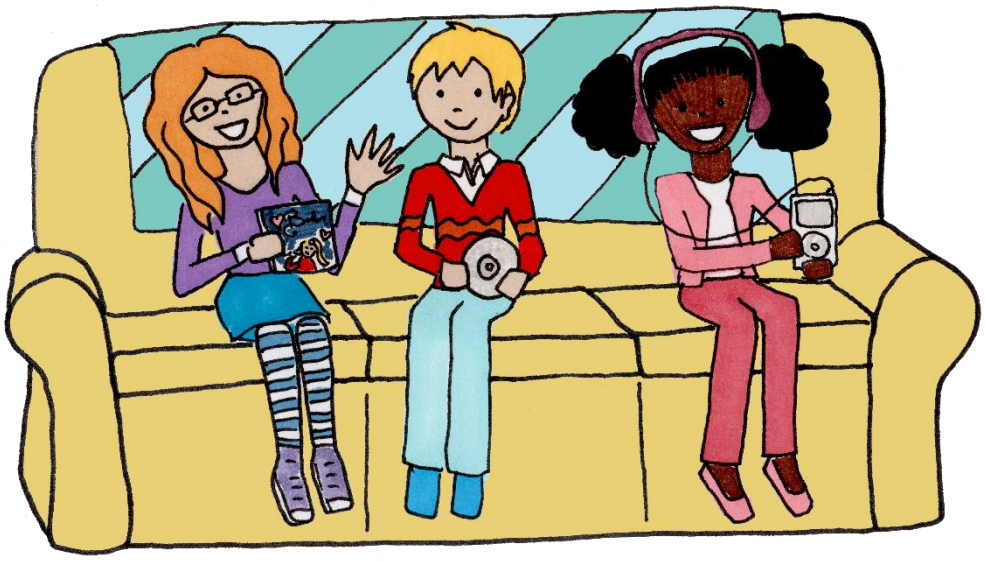


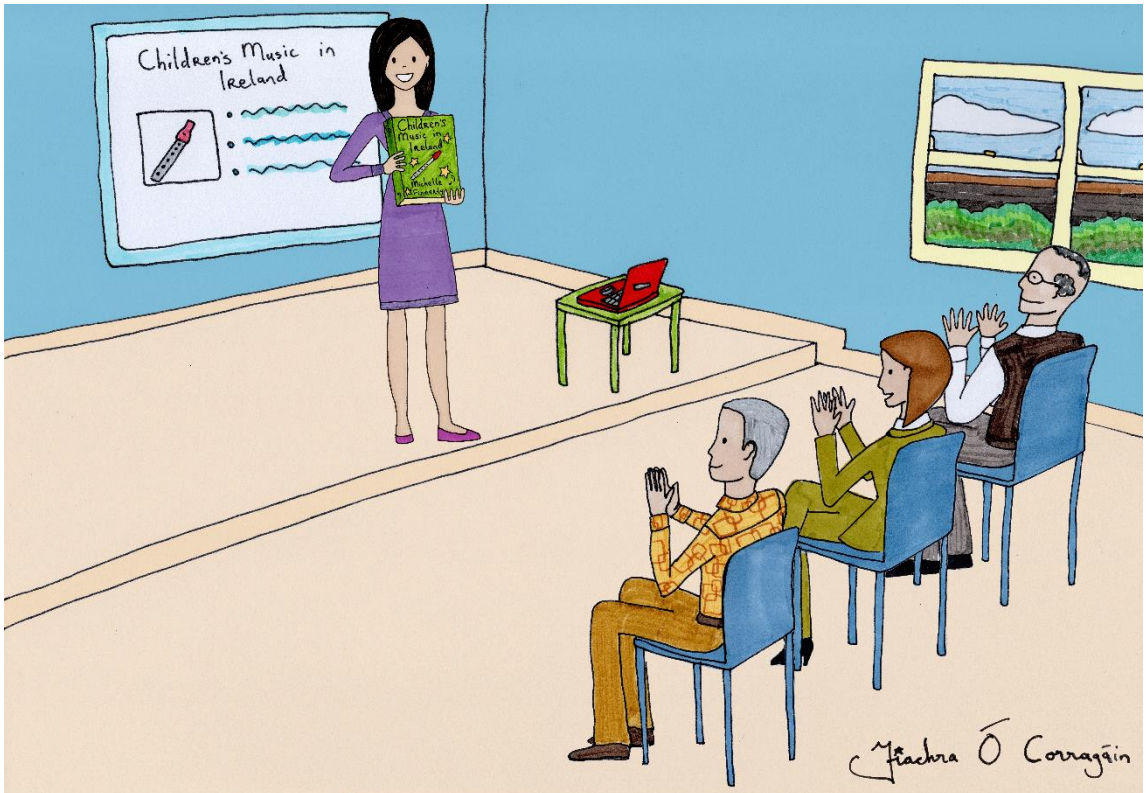


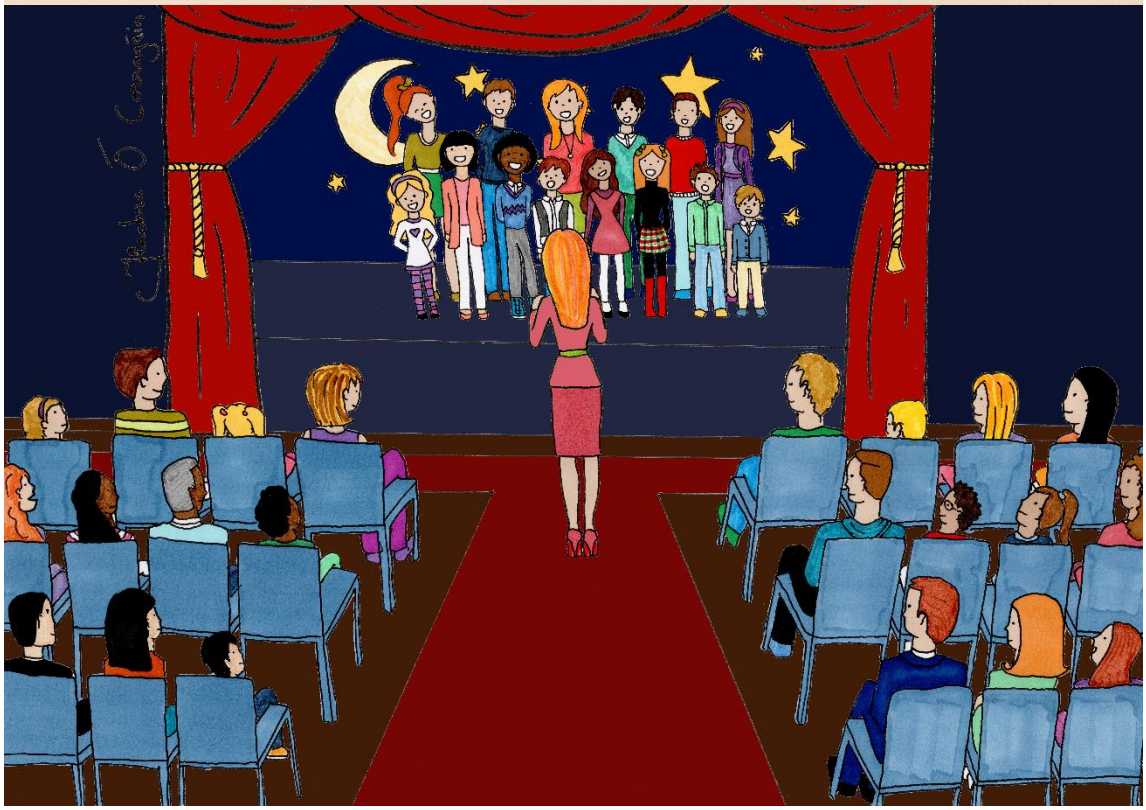
Mfachra Ó Corragáin


Mfachra Ó Corragáin


Méadhbh Ó Corragáin




Children's Music in Ireland
Children's Music in Ireland
Michelle Kinsella
Fiachra Ó Corragáin


Fiachra Ó Corragáin

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