

## The use of Music in Pregnancy and Infancy: Research Project

### **Theoretical framework:**

Every human brain, senses musical–emotional meanings many months before it becomes a facilitator of linguistic–propositional signs. For a child, musical expression is as natural as moving itself. If anything in the higher human brain has a genetically preordained evolutionary history, it is the fundamental urge to communicate in the temporal cadences of emotional movements, with endlessly creative protomusical dynamics (Panksepp & Trevarthen, 2009).

The use of music in pregnancy and infancy provides the context for interaction and bonding between care – takers and babies. The term “Communicative Musicality” (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009) recognises that the mother and her baby are partners in a musical dialogue. Communicative musicality consists of the elements pulse, quality and narrative - those attributes of human communication, which are particularly exploited in music, that allow co-ordinated companionship to arise. In such interactive environment which takes place during infancy, a detailed and specific, unique ‘protoconversation’ with the mother is characterized by musical features such as rhythm, pitch and a dance-like use of gesture and facial expressiveness. The baby is active and indeed may take the lead in initiating, developing and terminating these protoconversational exchanges, which often provide extraordinary pleasure to both parties, and which evolve and modify with great subtlety, largely unconsciously, to keep in step with the baby’s development. (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009). Mothers use this special communicative mode which encompasses musical form, known as “motherese” or “baby talk”, and research has shown that it plays an important role in language learning, engaging infants’ emotions and highlighting the structure in language, to help babies decode the puzzle of syllables and sentences.

### **The project:**

Taking into consideration that music is an enjoyable and powerful aspect in life especially during infancy, the study will seek to deeply examine the experience and meaning of the use of music during daily routine needs (such as bath, sleep time, eating/breastfeeding, play etc.) by mothers. The research project will explore the ways in which music is used in everyday life and describe and analyze in depth the experiences of the mothers participate in the project. The group of mothers involved in the project will meet on-line, for an hour every week. Sessions will be divided into 2 parts. In the first part of the session mothers will participate in various musical activities for 30 minutes facilitated by the researchers and specifically designed for fetus and infants, and in the second part the participants will be

engaged in an open discussion in the form of a focus group discussion about the use of these activities in their everyday life.

Join us for a lived experience!

Malloch, S. & Trevarthen, C. (2009). *Communicative musicality: Exploring the basis of human companionship*. Oxford University Press.

Panksepp, J., & Trevarthen, C. (2009). The neuroscience of emotion in music. In S. Malloch & C. Trevarthen (Eds.), *Communicative musicality: Exploring the basis of human companionship* (p. 105–146). Oxford University Press