

Hallo hallo hallo, ik ben Jessica Pitt



In Nederland heb je de Muziek op Schootopleiding gedaan. Ben je daarna Muziek op Schootlessen gaan geven in Nederland en in Engeland?

In the Netherlands you were a participant in the Teachertraining of Music on the Lap. Have you practiced Music on the Lap in the Netherlands and in England?

Firstly, I want to thank you so much for inviting me to contribute. We left The Netherlands in 1995 so my written Dutch (never very good) is now no more – I apologise for writing my answers in English. We came to NL from Kenya where we had met and made some very good Dutch friends. When we arrived in NL one of these friends kindly

sent me an application form for Muziek op Schoot docent training. I had been running a singing with babies music group for the ex-pat community in Nairobi so my friend thought immediately of me when she attended Muziek op Schoot with her child. The course proved to be a fantastic way, for me to not only learn Dutch, but also to start my extraordinary journey in music education with young children. I absolutely loved the course! Once I received my diploma I worked in Hoofddorp: Kunst en Cultuur Centrum, and I was one of the first MoS teachers to start working through the new initiative with SKON. I wrote an article for 'de Pyramide' and was just about to join the studie dag organising group when my husband had a change of job and we returned to UK. We left at the end of 1995 and by the following summer I began to start some small parent and child music groups in my local community. It was more difficult in UK as there was (and still is) no formal, recognised qualification to work with young children and music. I was new to the area and had no contacts and no networks to help me. Fortunately in my city there was an early years music teaching charity called PRESMA (Pre-School Music Association) set up by parents who wanted music education for their young children. Here I found a wonderful group of music teacher colleagues. I gave a workshop to these colleagues explaining the practice and principles of Muziek op Schoot that they found very interesting, gained understanding about haptonomie and learning from observation and reflection. These ideas were added to our training programme for new PRESMA teachers. I learned some new ideas to incorporate into my practice from them, more about that next.



Kun je iets vertellen over de verschillen?

Can you tell something about the difference? I learned many new imaginative ideas about the use of materials and props that I could add to my MoS practice. The new things I learned were to take a theme; for example transport, and to build the term's work around that theme; incorporating ideas such as stop and go, fast and slow, up and down, to work on this with the group for the entire 10 weeks. I learned to experiment with sounds, to leave more space within the session for silence which the children (and sometimes the parents) could fill with their musical suggestions. I was introduced to lycra (stretchy fabric) which can be used in many ways with groups of children and parents: to bounce toys on, to pull and stretch, to lift up and down. It is a very useful material in that it helps the group feel togetherness without physical connection. It is super to use with parent-baby groups; as you lift the fabric you can see one another from underneath and it creates a beautiful 'space' and sense of community. When working with children alone (in nursery for example) I started to improvise songs with simple chordal guitar accompaniment to narrate what the children were doing in their play, allowing them to guide the musical story and interaction through their play.

I learned so much from my colleagues adding many new songs, rhymes and activities from our 'sharing' sessions to my repertoire. Teachers would meet together perhaps twice in a 10 week period. Sometimes we would share ideas that had worked well with our groups and other times we would prepare for a children's Christmas or summer concert that we would offer to all the families that came to our groups. We would find or arrange music to suit the instruments that we all played and included lots of audience participation as well. I learned that sharing together as teachers is one of the most valuable and important ways to develop as a teacher. Ideas we may have are improved the moment they are shared with others who have similar knowledge and experience. I found my time as a PRESMA teacher creative, rewarding and enriching

Wat is het leukste dat je hebt meegemaakt in je lessen?

Can you tell us about a nice event that you can remember of your lessons?

I started a drop-in baby group in the late 1990's. Babies under one year of age and their parent/s could come to the session without booking. With young babies it isn't always possible to come every week at the same time to an activity no matter how much you both enjoy it. This group proved to be one of the most wonderful groups ever. Some weeks we had 50 plus parents and babies but the atmosphere was calm

and restful. I don't know why it worked so well. I think the room played a part. It was light and airy and there was plenty of space for everyone. I found it worked very well to encourage the parents to sing; this was possible with large numbers. We sang canons and songs in parts. I have met some of those parents who were part of that group again recently and they have said it was one of the most special experiences they had with their baby and the songs became part of their home life. Each one spoke about the wonderful experience they had singing together. I hear this from other parents I have taught whom I meet from time to time but with these 'drop-in group' parents the emotions are visible as they meet me –perhaps eighteen years later. Sometimes these magical things happen.

Op welke manier zijn de jonge kindspecialisten in Engeland georganiseerd?

In what way are in England specialists in Music for the Young Children organised? As I mentioned before there is no recognised qualification to teach music with very young children as there is in the Netherlands so we are a more disorganised bunch! At a MERYC conference in 2007 we formed a UK group of MERYC (Music Educators and Researchers of Young Children) for those teachers that have attended a MERYC conference. We arranged meetings together to support one another and discuss our practice. In 2012 we decided to start our own small seminar/conference day with a meeting at Roehampton University. We have tried to organise one such meeting every year. These days provide a networking point for teachers to meet and talk together as well as hearing from research and practice papers, and workshops. We open these events to anyone working in early years music. There is also very successful online Early Years Music group which now boasts over 1000 members. This provides a discussion forum and offers some level of support for those working in isolated circumstances. That is one of the main issues with our work, you are frequently working alone and in a self-employed capacity so attending training and interesting seminars is at your own cost and you may miss a day's work as well. This year the MERYC-UK group has managed to achieve charitable status. We are re-



named MERYC–England as there are different regulations, rules and policies in Scotland, Wales and N. Ireland and we cannot at this point attempt to represent all the nations in the UK. We have some plans for the future and feel excited about the possibilities.

**Kun je ons vanuit de Engelstalige literatuur iets aanraden dat alle Muziek op Schootdocenten gelezen zouden moeten hebben? Wat heeft jou geïnspireerd?
Can you recommend an article or a book of English literature to us, as Music on the**

Lap teachers? My absolute all–time favourite resource book is: ‘Playsongs’: Action Songs and Rhymes for Babies and Toddlers’ (1987) compiled by Sheena Roberts. (Playsongs Publications Limited) ISBN 0–9517112–1–0. It comes with a CD performed by Sandra Kerr and Leon Rosselson. There are lovely drawings throughout and helpful suggestions for musical things to make and do with young children. For example, there is the idea of creating a Sound Wall for children to investigate.

Susan Young’s ‘Music with the Under Fours’ (2003)(published by RoutledgeFalmer) ISBN 0–415–28706–5 is a useful, short book that gives an overview of two research projects of young children and spontaneous musical play. The book also outlines young children’s musical development and suggests ways that we can support, encourage and nurture this with the kinds of activities that we offer. Margre Van Gestel has contributed to the book and the MoS model is described.

Kun je iets vertellen over het onderwerp van je promotie en de resultaten van je onderzoek?

Please tell us about your study and about the results of your investigation. I completed my MoS diploma in 1993 and in 2014 I reached another milestone with my successful PhD thesis in which I continued to explore my fascination with all that happens or might be happening in a MoS class. The title of my thesis is: ‘An exploratory study of the role of music with participants in Children’s Centres’. I wanted to find out why parents bring their children to music groups but also what other professionals who work in Children’s Centres think is important about music groups as compared to other group activities that are offered in children’s centres and what indeed the children gain from the experience.

There were some interesting differences between the groups. Both parents and professionals were very positive about music; the professionals were more positive about the learning and developmental benefits for young children, where as the

parents perceived the emotional benefits of music the most important reason for attending with their child (The children were typically aged between 0–3years). The final study of the research compared an art group, an outdoor play–group and a music group for parents and their young children. The findings suggested that the music group allowed the parents to co–participate with their child through synchronised symbolic actions, which leads to symmetry in the group interaction, which in turn gives rise to a shared emotional experience that may help reinforce learning, self–assessment and contribute to positive feelings in participants. I propose a musical–social–learning model as a finding of the research to describe the social, cultural, emotional and cognitive learning environment that the parent–child music group affords. If you are interested in finding out more I have one article published in Music Education Research:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2016.1145644> and another in Press to be published soon in Research Studies in Music Education

Op welke manier ben je momenteel actief voor Muziek en het Jonge Kind?

In what way you are involved with the Young Children and Music on this moment? At

the moment I teach an MA Course in early years music together with my colleague and friend Alison Street. The course was devised and written by Susan Young and I feel honoured to be leading the course now. We have some exceptional students, many of whom are already very well established in the field of early years music education.

Other work includes an action research project with speech and language therapists and a team of early years music practitioners working together with children with communication difficulties and their parents. This started in September 2016; it is proving to be a very rich and deeply reflective experience for all of us. I am also involved as an evaluator for a project in London seeking to develop training in music for early years practitioners (nursery teachers) and training in early child development for early years music practitioners. It is a very large and strategic project with lots of interesting findings already.

I have just finished working for a nationwide project that looked at music education from 0–19 years. The project has developed an online web–portal with case studies of effective practice. It was a wonderful experience being part of the working group. Here is a link to one EY case study – there are more on the website:

<http://www.inspire–music.org/case–studies/29–sidebar–page>



Wie ga jij hierna interviewen en waarom?

Who is the next Music on the Lap teacher you like to interview and why? I am very pleased to say that Antonet van den Bomen has kindly agreed to be interviewed, we were MoS students together and I'd love to hear about her journey in early childhood music education since we were last together.

Thanks Jessica Pitt for this interview.

