

## THE GOVERNOR'S GIFT

I don't know whether every Georgia mom with a newborn still gets a Mozart tape from the Governor's office, but I hope she does. A CD of Georgia's very own James Brown doing "Mother Popcorn" and many other danceable grooves would be more helpful. I hope the Governors of all 50 states will send a copy of Born to Groove to every dad and a functional drum (probably a spun-aluminum dumbek would be the best resonance and easiest maintenance for the buck) to every one year old on their first birthday. A \$600 endowment to every newborn invested equally in a closed end small-cap stock fund, an international bond fund, and a real estate investment trust might grow over 18 years into the funds needed for an art studio, a kiln, a fine musical instrument, a training program for a high paying job, an inventory for a small shop, some kind of start on a productive life. "Gifts to the newborn" could be an effective political slogan, and I'm glad a Governor in Georgia started this trend with a thought like "these babies need more Mozart."

But the only way the babies will actually get "more Mozart" is if their caretakers sing-and-dance with them hours each day, sing lots of lullabies to them at night as they rock them in rhythm toward and into sleep, dance them around in time to music as babes in arms each morning and much more of the time each day, burp them with rhythmic patterns instead of random pats, treat each baby move as part of a potential groove, see and hear each stimulus, gesture, babble, from the child as manifestation of an IMP (Intrinsic Motive Pulse)[a technical term borrowed from psychologist Trevarthen ] that calls for an AMP (Accumulating Motivating Processes) [not yet a technical term but an equivalent probably exists in cybernetics or systems theory] , a Call that needs a Response, a move that needs a groove. When in doubt take the mimesis route. The baby smiles you smile. The baby waves you wave back. The baby coos, you coo too. Interaction. Back and forth. A little 'you do, I do'. A little 'you say, I say' . . . .and then the little adjustment that makes the interaction stylized, in synch, flowing, a groove. I'm guessing that this is the way Mozart got to be Mozart. His mom and dad and older siblings did a lot of cooing, and nodding, and moving and grooving with him when he was a wee baby. And the household was chock full of live musicking, no tapes or TV; that couldn't have hurt either.

The Governor of Georgia can't be there to nurse each newborn into the genius groove, so he sends a tape of Mozart. In his case, it's the thought that counts. But it's our matching the action that creates the attraction and satisfaction which will amp the imp.

*Every IMP needs an AMP  
or simply  
amp the imp*

Pat Campbell:

Unprecedented, that a governor wanted Mozart to make a difference in the life of a child! Some folks have bristled, "Why Mozart?" "Why not Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Burmese *saung kauk*, or the music of the Ba-Benzele pygmies?" They complain, legitimately, that the 18<sup>th</sup> Century composer has received more than his fair share of

attention, and that other composers and cultural expressions in music should be made available to infants and toddlers. Other folks are steamed up over the loose interpretation by the media of the minimal data available to support “the Mozart effect”. Results of a limited-time study, published in Nature in 1993, indicated that listening to just 10 minutes of the Mozart Sonata for Two Pianos in D Major (K. 448) would enhance reasoning for the next 10-15 minutes. A second study published in Neurological Research in 1997 reported that preschool children with 6 months of piano keyboard training showed increased spatial-temporal reasoning (lasting several days). Some are calling for research replications with stricter standards on control groups of children, and are justifiably urging caution on the use of early experimental data lest we fly too far and too fast into the romantic belief that “Mozart makes you smarter”. Still, many were impressed with what the popular media made of this research, and the frenzy about music for babies has been refreshing. A head-of-state who believes that music is important, that every infant should be given the privilege of listening to inspiring music, is rare indeed; that alone is worth celebrating! Mozart’s music is frequently “sweet” of sound and babies are sweet little beings in development, and so the governor budgeted for a plan that has pleased many, to make babies sweeter yet through the music they take in. Let’s call it “positive spin from a politician” and try to work with this impulse.

- For an evaluation of these articles by a higher brain function expert, and some intuitions about music as a window into understanding how humans think, reason, and create, read Gordon L. Shaw’s Keeping Mozart in Mind (San Diego: Academic Press, 2000).
- Bruno Nettl has written about the popular interpretation of Mozart as “sweet”, all the way to noting cafes, restaurants, and desserts that have taken his name. Beethoven’s image is far less *dolce* and thus entirely unused in this fashion. See Nettl, Bruno, 1989. Mozart and the ethnomusicological study of western culture. Yearbook for Traditional Music 21: 1-16.