

Is My Child a Gifted Musician?

As parents, we all want to believe that our children are geniuses or gifted musicians. While there is nothing wrong with this mindset - after all, children with natural, inborn abilities generally have an edge in our increasingly competitive world - it is important to recognize that having an interest in music and being a gifted musician are two different things.

At their core, the two are the same: in both cases, children have a deeper appreciation for music, may want to submerge themselves in all types of music, and often take a hands-on approach to learning music. However, there are also substantial differences.

Characteristics of Musically Gifted Children

One of the hallmark characteristics of a musically gifted child is a love of music that pays no attention to time or place. These children often hum or sing to themselves, not caring so much about having an audience as experimenting with sounds in their own way. This demonstrates a level of attachment to music that goes beyond appreciation, since it develops into an internal world of their own.

Additional characteristics of gifted musicians include:

- A sensitivity to sounds of all kinds: While music may be the focus of their attention, musically gifted children also distinguish sounds in nature and the environment. They may hear patterns in the way birds chirp or trains pass, and take the time to draw your attention to them.
- A large capacity for remembering songs: Musically gifted children may sing along to songs they have heard only once or twice in their lives. They pick up on beats, melodies, and harmonies.
- The ability to distinguish keys: This natural ability to tell when something is off-key or on-key is a strong indicator that your child has extensive musical skills. They may tell you when you sing out of tune or when you miss a note.

What "Gifted" Really Means

In truth, it can be quite difficult to determine if your child is musically gifted or merely musically inclined. While it may take experts years of education and constant supervision to determine for certain which category your child falls in, the more important question is: does it matter?

A child with a love of music may not have all the technical capacities of a gifted musician, but he or she may have more passion and drive. A gifted musician may be equally talented in other areas of interest and never focus on music, while an average child with a love of music may devote his or her life to learning more. Does this mean that either child is "smarter" or "better" than the other?

It all comes down to giving your child opportunities without forcing anything. If you feel your child is musically gifted, offer the opportunity to take piano lessons, take him or her to musical demonstrations, and follow his or her lead. If the child's love of music develops into something more, continue to provide the necessary support. If not, at least you'll know that you did your best to let your child explore such a vital area of interest.