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**AN EXPLORATION OF THE BEHAVIORAL
CHARACTERISTICS AND PERSONALITY
TRAITS OF A SMALL GROUP OF
MUSICALLY GIFTED CHILDREN**

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1994**

An Exploration of the Behavioral Characteristics
and Personality Traits of a Small Group of
Musically Gifted Children

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Abstract

This thesis explored aspects of musically gifted children who were successfully learning an instrument. A brief look at available literature outlined the arguments on perceptions and explanations of musical talent, as well as genetic and environmental factors. Information on prodigies, the gifted and musically successful adults and adolescents was examined for material that would relate to the development of, or indicate the presence of, musical talent.

The musical development, personality traits, and behavioral characteristics of twenty musically gifted children between the ages of five and eight were investigated. Data was retrieved from the children themselves, their parents, and their private music teachers through self-administered questionnaires and recorded interviews. It was found that the children's musical development appeared to be different from normal musical development. Characteristics and some personality traits were found to be in common with those of the gifted, prodigies and successful musicians. Certain characteristics and personality traits appeared to be unique to the musically gifted. More research in New Zealand is recommended to see if these findings are valid for all musically gifted children.

A brief look at the New Zealand music education system followed emphasizing its possible impact on all children, especially the musically gifted. It was noted that a consistent music programme needs to be established in the primary school system. As primary teachers are each responsible for music education in their classroom, these teachers need to be sufficiently trained to be able to identify, support and challenge the musically gifted child. If the teaching and content of the music programme is of poor quality, then musical aptitude may be damaged resulting in the obstruction or cessation of musical talent development.

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