



7. I Heard That: Auditory Development through Music

Hi! I'm Amy McConkey Robbins, speech-language pathologist and LSLS Cert AVT. I want to talk about Auditory Development through music. Music is primarily an auditory stimulus. It can be visual and tactile, too, but without sound, there would be no music. So that provides a compelling reason to use music to work on auditory development. Just as language and music development require a series of skill sets to be mastered before passing to the next milestone, audition also has a hierarchy which must be learned in order for sound to have meaning.

There's a developmental model of auditory levels outlined by Norman Erber, a speech language scientist. This model is used by many LSLs to guide practice.

First, the **Detection** level: can you hear a sound or not? Typically babies will turn their head, or look at the sound source when they can hear it.

Second, the **Discrimination** level: Can you tell one sound from another? Are they the same or different?

Third, the **Identification** level: Can you tell what the sound is even if you can't see the source?

Fourth, the **Comprehension** level: Can you make meaning out of the auditory stimulus?

Let's apply these terms to a real life musical situation:

I play a drum and you indicate that you hear it, that's **detection**.

I play a drum and then a cymbal and you tell me they are different sounds; Or I play a drum and the drum again, and you tell me they're the same sounds. That's **discrimination**.

I show you a picture of the drum, a cymbal, and a guitar. Then I play the drum. You point to the drum picture or say "I hear the drum." That's **identification**.

I play the drum and cymbal in a rhythmic way and you know it is music. Perhaps you begin rocking or clapping. That's **comprehension**.

My colleague, music therapist Chris Barton, devised a game to work on these levels. It's called the "No Peeking Game." Watch a clip of children demonstrating the different levels of auditory development that I've just described. *Do Music. REAL Music. Every day!*