

Comparison of Starting Pitch Preferences among Fourth Graders, Undergraduate Music Majors and Elementary Education Majors

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Abstract

The study compared the operant starting pitch of three known songs among 4th graders (n=30), undergraduate music majors (n=30), and non-music majors (n=30) to corroborate that singers distinguished among songs when choosing a starting pitch, and to investigate possible relationships between pitch choice and pitch accuracy. Subjects individually sang "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star," "Jingle Bells," and "Happy Birthday." Songs were selected based on familiarity and the fact that each started on a different scale degree. Results indicated that all subjects started relatively low in their singing range with chosen pitches clustering about B flat to middle C. Non-music majors selected significantly lower pitches than music majors or children on particular songs, significantly affecting results. Both children and adults appeared to discriminate among songs when choosing a starting pitch. Accurate singers selected significantly higher starting pitches than did less accurate singers. Results are discussed in terms of implications for both practitioners and researchers.

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