



Jeremy Allen/ Edipresse

New learning centre in Geneva gets musical with kids

By Jeremy Allen

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Parents increasingly go to great pains to find either a crèche or a summer programme for their young children. In Geneva, a new private learning centre with a multicultural outlook has opened near some of the city's international agencies. The day centre's emphasis is on encouraging kids to learn through music and movement.

On arriving to pick up her two sons from Mubabil, Sally seemed happy that they were kept busy playing musical instruments and doing other activities from 8am until the early evening. " I was lucky to find this summer workshop, as many were booked out almost immediately" she explained. " I am considering pulling out the kids from the crèche (where they will begin in autumn) and bringing them here because they are stimulated much more here."

Mubabil, which opened in June, is an out-of-school learning centre in the Geneva's Paquis district for infants and for those aged up to ten. While the kids can also be involved in painting and drawing, its main focus is on music and movement. Its pre-school activities for kids include simple games like catching coloured balls, dressing up as animals, dancing, and playing instruments such as drums, piano, or whichever one takes their fancy. Each week caters for a different age group, with a daily theme. The older age groups are given more technical lessons on how to dance and play instruments such as African drums.

Nicolas Gisiger, who runs the school, decided to get more involved in teaching children about music just over four years ago when his son was born. " I realised it's a great tool to teach kids," he said. Gisiger, a tutor and a musician, initially started going to various locations around the city to give the classes. But he became tired of moving around and wanted to set up a fixed place for children to play and learn through music. " It's very important for the kids to have a place they feel comfortable in".

The school is currently in the throes of its summer courses, priced at 110 Swiss francs for the day, plus an optional lunch for 15 francs. From autumn, its hour-long courses will enable parents to leave their children aged up to 10 years old to play at the centre on Wednesdays, Thursday or Fridays. Mubabil requires the company of a carer for the youngest, up to three year-olds.

Gisiger likes parents to be involved as much as possible with the centre, which he regards as a meeting point for kids and their parents. He later plans to have childcare courses for the adults running alongside the children's playing groups.

The centre is geared towards the international flavour of Geneva, a city where many people speak a variety of languages. " We sing in different languages because some studies have shown that a variety of sounds stimulate different parts of the brain," said Gisiger, who is Swiss but also speaks English, Spanish and German. In Geneva, Gisiger sees children from all over the world. He said he has adjusted his programmes to suit that international environment.