



I. Introduction

There is an increasing number of Australians affected by Asperger Syndrome, one of the several neuro-biological profiles under the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It may be deemed to be at the mild end of the spectrum; however, it shares the same struggles such as poor social interaction skills, emotional and behavioural issues, sensory and coordination difficulties, and others.

Dr. Alfred Tomatis, a French ENT specialist, believed that people who can hear might not be able to listen properly because middle ear muscles are not working properly. This goes to show why individuals with Asperger Syndrome or any profile within the Autism Spectrum lack the ability to listen and understand personal and social norms.

Dr. Tomatis also constituted the idea that the ear provides energy to the brain. As a whole, the ear is also involved in the stimulation of the brain, emotions, focus and memory, speech and language, motor planning, and our ability to socialise with others.

After having initially worked with singers and workers in aeronautic arsenals, he established the principle that listening to modified music can exercise the muscles in the ear and can stimulate the brain so it enhances listening and communication.

In this way, he developed the Tomatis® Method, a neurosensory program specially designed to awaken and establish the desire to learn, communicate, and in this case story, pursue a life-long passion.

II. Case presentation

Maël is a young boy from New Caledonia. He was first diagnosed with Autism at the age of 20 months old and was later confirmed to be Asperger's by Dr. Tony Atwood, a clinical psychologist renowned for his studies on Asperger Syndrome.

His parents saw the disorder changed him from having few words early on that seemed to vanish at 18 months old. He also had *echolalia* or repetition of speech.



His symptoms started from avoiding eye contact even when his name was called out, kept hitting the ground with toys, screamed to the sound of a vacuum cleaner to the point he started to hurt and isolate himself. He also exhibited repetition in the way he played and moved. He used to throw tantrums when sensory-overwhelmed.

Going to school was worse, this meant six (6) months of not saying any word because he was very uncomfortable and frustrated. This led all of the family members to be progressively cut off from any social life since Maël was becoming quite a handful to manage.

Maël had developmental delays so initially, his parents brought him to the speech therapist. He also had horse-back riding once a week. Nevertheless, these interventions made no success in terms of relationship-building and developing communication skills.

III. Management and Outcome

Maël was 5 and a half when he started the Tomatis® Method in Sydney. We were able to complete 90 hours of the program of which so many changes have occurred in terms of communication, learning, and emotional balance.

A few months after his trip to Sydney, Maël was showing his new social skills when he gave a list of names of children he wanted to come to his birthday party to his parents' big surprise.

He developed a deep sense of calmness and had enough confidence to dive more than five feet underwater. He started to try new food and adapted more easily to new situations including flights from Noumea to Sydney back-and-forth, which used to be a nightmare for the Mum.

Maël's parents realised his communication had improved very much when he could have a conversation with them. His echolalia had totally disappeared. The young boy started to understand almost everything his mum was saying and was able to answer her.



Exploring the Violin Prodigy Within A Case Study on Asperger Syndrome and the Tomatis® Method

In primary school, Maël was performing as a top student and developed a strong love for mathematics.

When he entered high school six years after completing the Tomatis® program, he chose the violin when asked to play an instrument. In the next month, he began his lessons with a private music teacher and blossomed through performing his new music skills. His level of confidence never stopped growing as he attended auditions successfully.

At the age of 13, Maël entered the Conservatoire of Nouméa (CMDNC) of which one professor quickly realised his potential. At the end of the first year at the Conservatoire, he received the jury's best prize. And in only four (4) years of learning, Maël achieved the postgraduate level, which usually takes 8-10 years of practice.

Maël had expanded his abilities with solfeggio, musical composition, and even mathematical formulas. He is composing music, which makes him thrive and happy. He is consistently motivated by his music and is surrounded by his scores and CDs of classical music.

People who knew Maël at the time of his severe difficulties all commented that there was a “Maël before Tomatis” and a “Maël after Tomatis”. His mother is convinced that his love for classical music and the violin originated in his many hours of listening to Mozart during the Tomatis® listening program.

The Science Behind It!

The Tomatis® Method is an educational program with a neurosensory-integrative approach to Autism Spectrum Disorders such as Asperger Syndrome. The person listens to music (usually Mozart and Gregorian chants) through specific equipment which allows sound contrasts using ‘filters’ in high and low frequencies to surprise the brain.

Dr. Tomatis' ground-breaking idea was that the ear, as a multi-function organ, is accounted for 80% of the brain's energy to function properly like a dynamo or battery for the central nervous system. It is also involved in balance, coordination, posture, and muscle tone via the vestibule system which is part of the inner ear. The ear is also engaged in processing information, communication, and learning.



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The sound contrasts produced by the TalksUp® device (Tomatis® player) are transmitted via air and bone conduction. Bone conduction sends information through the skull directly to the inner ear then to the brain. It is very important for these sounds to successfully proceed through each part of the ear especially through its inner area where the vestibule and cochlea are located.

Specifically, the vestibular system is responsible for relaying the information from the ear to the brain, then to the rest of the body and back-and-forth. The vestibular system is the network that manages all the body movement and coordination, muscle tone, sense of direction, sense of space, balance, body-image, and has the most extensive connections in all parts of the brain and the body.

By actively and directly influencing on these important areas, the Tomatis® Method efficiently brings about significant effects and improvements on wide-ranging applications whether it be Asperger Syndrome or any profile under the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or communication and learning disorders.

With the help of the Tomatis® Method, Maël transformed from being a young boy with behavioural and social issues to bringing his violin prodigy within into the spotlight! He is one of over 200,000 people per year who is benefiting from the Tomatis® Method. For more information, visit www.tomatis.com.au!

Françoise Nicoloff is a registered psychologist and an International Tomatis® Consultant and Trainer. Françoise has worked for nearly four decades around the world with children and adults suffering from anxiety, depression, learning and communication difficulties. She is passionate about helping those people especially when their difficulties are linked to auditory processing which means that their brains do not hear what their ears are hearing. Françoise is often invited to speak at conferences. She has chosen to be based in Sydney and she travels within Australia and around the world. Recently, she has been asked to support families and professionals in China too. She can be contacted on 1800 677 010 or by email at info@tomatis.com.au.

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