

A VERY SLOW START— A HAPPY ENDING



Yolanda Carrillo Vázquez, Vanessa León Carrillo and Leticia T. Varela Ruiz

On the road of life I am forever moving ahead of myself
and forever running after myself. I am a seeker till I die,
and beyond death I feel that I shall not be lost.

—Alfred Tomatis, *The Conscious Ear*

Yolanda Carrillo Vázquez

When Yolanda was a child, the most important piece of furniture in the family home was the bookcase. Her father, sometimes compromising the family budget, bought many books—and she was his accomplice. The love of books that her father instilled in her led her to study Hispanic letters and philosophy at the Universidad de Sonora. Her father also encouraged her to pursue the arts, and so she learned flamenco and folk dances, and later engaged in music, singing and cinema studies, giving her a remarkably rounded artistic background that celebrates the beauty that the human spirit is capable of expressing.

She has combined her exceptionally creative and joyous nature, and her profound respect for knowledge, in the educational materials she has created under the brand Viento Blanco™, which aim to aid the development of linguistic skills and reading comprehension.

The loving influence of children—the “little ones” in her life—has moved her to write stories for them, and she has compiled a volume of works, published in both Mexico and the US, called *When the Earth Was Still Soft*.

As a teacher, she brings a wealth of experience and academic strength to her daily work as a Tomatis® consultant, which allows her to guide and assist parents as they take their children through the listening process. Her love for children has helped her build a therapeutic atmosphere in Centro Tomatis® de Sonora that is invaluable to the process. Yolanda believes that there is no doubt she is on the right path in life—she feels completely at home as a Tomatis® consultant, and her work brings great joy to her life.

Vanessa León Carrillo

Vanessa grew up in an extended family, living with both her parents and her grandparents, and this close contact with them made her appreciate and cherish older people. When she grew up she wanted to learn how to help older people enjoy the best life experience possible, so she channeled her energy into obtaining a bachelor's degree in clinical psychology from the Universidad

de Sonora, followed by a postgraduate course in gerontology at the University of Manitoba in Canada. Vanessa also completed a variety of other courses in psychology and elderly health care in order to better understand and work with older people.

She believes that her educational background, combined with her musical and drama studies, have all been very important to her development as a person, and that her Tomatis® training has had a groundbreaking effect on her life and career.

In her work at Centro Tomatis® de Sonora, Vanessa takes particular pride in writing individual programs for her clients—being part of their recovery gives her great joy and has a deep, positive impact on her life, which she celebrates every day.

Leticia T. Varela Ruiz

Leticia has loved and studied music since childhood: she participated in her school choir, took piano lessons, and enjoyed listening to her father play the violin. After studying music at the University of Sonora, she was then offered a scholarship for a PhD in musicology at the University of Cologne in Germany. When she encountered the Tomatis® Method in her reading it had such a profound impact on her that she closed the music school she was then running and began studying the Tomatis® Method. She received her certification as a Tomatis® consultant in Paris, and has since devoted her time to helping people through Tomatis®. She has written and translated a variety of works, both on music and related subjects and on the Tomatis® Method particularly. When working with clients, Leticia makes a particular effort to assist them during their active session in order to help them improve their voices as much as possible—because, as Dr. Tomatis wrote in *Écouter l'Univers*, “It is God who speaks through the human being. And it is also God who listens when man is being his instrument.”

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CHAPTER 9

A very slow start— a happy ending

Ana Laura was three years old when she came to our center in Hermosillo for the first time. Ana Laura did not speak, but communicated through sign language, and if she was unable to get her message across, she would burst out in anger and cry. She frequently hit her head with her hands and she was also unable to demonstrate sphincter control.

However, Ana Laura's real story was much more dramatic than what her symptoms were telling us. Her mother suffered pre-eclampsia in the fifth and sixth months of pregnancy and was hospitalized twice. Consequently, Ana Laura was born shortly after six months gestation and was placed in an incubator. In her first month, Ana Laura—being a pre-term infant—suffered from cerebral hemorrhage, convulsions, respiratory arrest and severe pulmonary hemorrhage. The doctors did not expect her to live but they continued giving her medical care and intensive therapy for a month. She finally overcame her critical condition and was taken home, although she was still in need of nebulizers and special

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care due to her breathing problems. She was given early motor stimulation that enabled her to stand upright when she was between 13 and 15 months of age, and she walked before the age of 20 months.

Diagnosis

Ana Laura was evaluated during the enrollment process for nursery school, and was subsequently diagnosed with a language delay associated with a possible autistic spectrum disorder. This brought the family to our Tomatis® center. In addition to this, we observed that she kept her fists tightly clenched and was also exhibiting limitations in her use of language. Nevertheless, she put great effort into her attempts to communicate.

Ana Laura used her flexor muscular system as if it were a strong shield of protection against her environment. Due to the inner working of the tiny muscles of the middle ear, this tightness in her flexor system also kept her eardrums too tense, making it difficult for her to listen to low-pitched sounds, as well as the average frequencies of the linguistic area, which contributed to her difficulty with speech. We considered that Ana Laura had the potential to respond well to the Tomatis® Method and we also felt that she did not fit all the criteria of a child on the autistic spectrum.

Tomatis® intervention

At first we focused on muscular and emotional relaxation, using non-filtered music by Mozart, low passing bands, and Gregorian chant. We designed a slow but firm stimulation program, enabling the middle ear muscles to respond and adapt slowly and gently while also necessitating the strain to focus her listening towards the typical Spanish frequencies (low and medium-low frequencies).

Later in her program we stimulated her flow of rhythmic movement with Strauss waltzes, as well as her correct understanding of language through the use of filters and mid-frequency passing bands, nursery rhymes and stories. Her affective needs were treated with filtered music in the medium to high frequencies, together with listening to her mother's voice, which was also filtered. Ana Laura underwent a slow but quite solid program with a total of 150 hours of listening training, which was distributed over three 30-hour sessions and three 20-hour sessions, undertaken between 11 February 2008 and 26 January 2010.

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During the listening sessions Ana Laura participated in occupational therapy to develop her fine and gross motor skills, such as ball games, playing with Lego® (working first with larger pieces and gradually progressing to the smaller ones), wooden jigsaw puzzles with shapes and letters, wooden shapes with holes to insert strings, dominoes, and drawing and coloring, both on paper and on a magic board. She was encouraged to socialize with other children, which she did successfully. She slept on some occasions. Her speech was encouraged through repetition of onomatopoeia, words, phrases and songs. She managed to learn colors, numbers and vowels, as well as the gender and the different roles of the members of the family: dad, mom, brother, sister, grandfather and grandmother.

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words! During her last 20-hour session, Ana Laura was always happy and enthusiastic, and socialized with other children spontaneously, as well as with the therapists. She shared toys and their pieces, and chatted nicely with everybody, proving to be a tolerant and patient girl when necessary.

Results

Ana Laura is currently a lively and affectionate five-year-old girl, who controls her mobility perfectly well. She has already completed the two first grades of preschool and will join the third grade next term. She likes running, jumping, swimming, talking, singing and being the leader in her games with other children. She exhibits good, fluent speech, although the use of spontaneous and creative verbal language is still in an early stage.

The Tomatis® program reinforced the relationship between mother and daughter, with the embedding of the filtered maternal voice strengthening the effects of the programmed stimulation.

We think that the main ingredient in her amazing recovery was the outstanding relationship with her mother during her intrauterine life, which allowed her to keep her incredible communication desire alive, despite the dramatic circumstances in which her gestation process ended and her postnatal life started. The Tomatis® program reinforced the relationship between mother and daughter, with the embedding of the filtered maternal voice strengthening the effects of the programmed stimulation. This, together

with working on reinforcing the muscles of the middle ear and physically engaging her in therapeutic activities, certainly brought about the little miracle that is Ana Laura today.

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