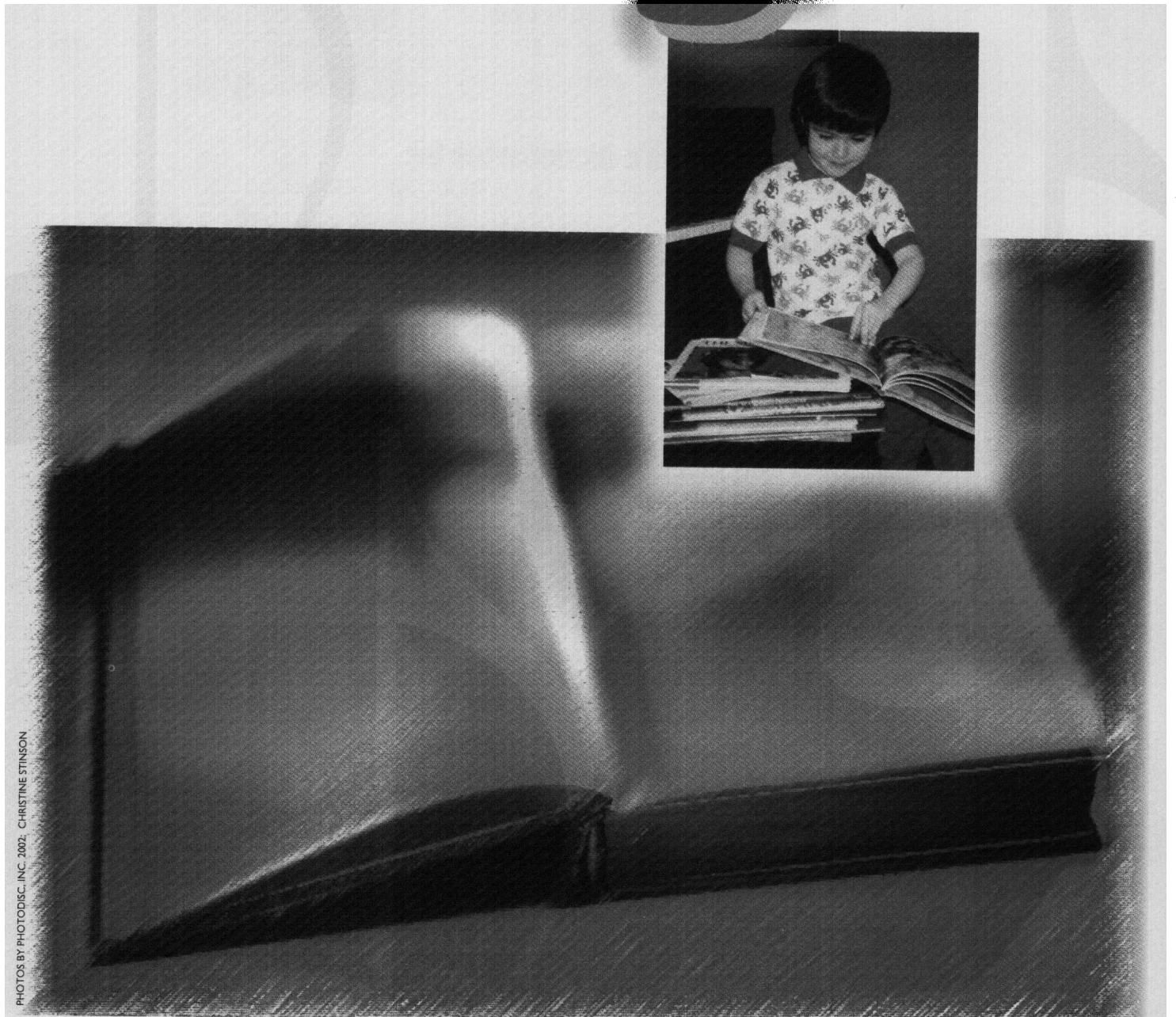


Sing a



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Story,

Read

a Rhyme

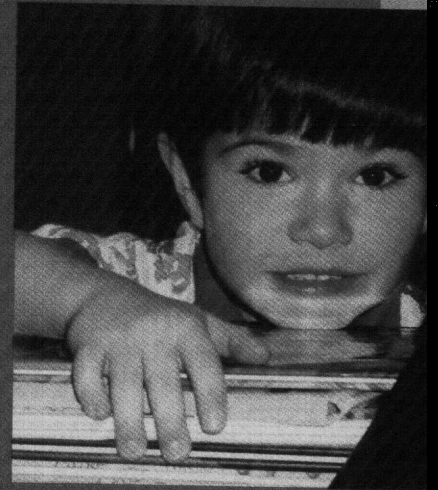
MUSIC

is an exciting learning tool that touches the heart, soul, and mind of the young child. It is enriching and engaging. According to early childhood music specialist John Feierabend of the Hart School of Music in Connecticut, musical behavior is basic to all cultures, both primitive and sophisticated. Music is a language understood by people of all ages. Children are drawn to musical activities through music's ability to "elicit an emotional response [inviting] the child's attention, participation, and expression," as Charmaine Cave concisely put it in a 1998 article in *Early Childhood Connections* (vol. 4, no. 3, p. 24).

Early childhood educators who work with young children base much of the curriculum on play activities. Circle time in the preschool through kindergarten environment offers the teacher and the children an opportunity for group dialogue, problem solving, sharing musical repertoire, and enjoying children's literature. As music educators, we can draw from the success of this tradition. The joy of music that shines through songs, rhymes, chants, and singing games is equal in pleasure only to reading a *musical book*. Acquiring a list of musical books can be as valuable as adding to your teaching repertoire of songs.

Books that Sing

- Adams, Pam. *There Were Ten in the Bed*. Singapore: Child's Play, 1975.
- Ahlbert, Allan. *Mockingbird*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 1998.
- Alexander, Martha, illus. *A You're Adorable*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 1994.
- Bryan, Ashley, illus. *What a Wonderful World*. New York: Atheneium Books, 1995.
- Carbrera, Jane. *Over in the Meadow*. New York: Holiday House, 1999.
- Eagle, Kim. *It's Raining, It's Pouring*. Boston: Whispering Coyote Press, 1994.
- Galdone, Paul. *The Three Little Kittens*. New York: Clarion Books, 1986.
- Gillman, Alec, illus. *Take Me Out to the Ballgame*. New York: Four Winds Press, 1993.
- Graefe, Renee, illus. *Rogers & Hammerstein's My Favorite Things*. New York: HarperCollins, 2002.
- Hamanaka, Sheila, illus. *The Hokey Pokey*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997.
- Hillenbrand, Will. *Down by the Station*. San Diego: Gulliver Books, 1999.
- Jackson, Alison. *I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Pie*. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1997.
- Paley, Jane, illus. *Little White Duck*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Co., 2000.
- Paxton, Tom. *Going to the Zoo*. New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1996.
- Paxton, Tom. *The Marvelous Toy*. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1996.
- Raffi. *Down by the Bay*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1987.
- Raffi. *Five Little Ducks*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1989.
- Raffi. *Rise and Shine*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1996.
- Raffi. *Spider on the Floor*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1993.
- Reynolds, Malvina, and Michael Leeman. *Morningtown Ride*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1996.
- Taback, Simms. *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly*. New York: Viking Press, 1997.
- Trapani, Iza, illus. *How Much Is That Doggie In the Window?* Boston, MA: Whispering Coyote Press, 1997.
- Trapani, Iza, illus. *I'm a Little Teapot*. Boston, MA: Whispering Coyote Press, 1996.
- Trapani, Iza, illus. *The Itsy Bitsy Spider*. New York: Whispering Coyote Press, 1993.
- Trapani, Iza, illus. *Oh Where, Oh Where Has My Little Dog Gone?* Boston, MA: Whispering Coyote Press, 1995.
- Trapani, Iza, illus. *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*. Danvers, MA: Whispering Coyote Press, 1994.
- Westcott, Nadine B. *I've Been Working on the Railroad*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 1996.



When planning for a musical moment with young children, the music educator looks to the interests of the children and the learning environment to find ways to encourage, enrich, and musically educate the class. What children learn from their musical experiences depends largely on the teacher's planning and choices. For the child, music is an ever-present and natural means of self-expression. Adding experiences with books written about a certain musical style or about a genre to traditional songs and finger plays can be a creative musical extension that magnifies the power of music, language, and the story in children's minds.

So What Works?

What musical goals are appropriate for young children? Children learn by doing, and they must be actively involved in music making. Singing, moving to music, and enjoying it are the basic activities necessary for helping children grow musically. Through these activities, according to Feierabend, children can learn to sing with a high level of pitch accuracy, move with ease and precision, and come to truly enjoy and respond sensitively to music.

What books should be used with young children? The best books for this job appeal to children's imagination, pique their curiosity, and involve them at a level at which they are capable and confident. If possible, the story should be enjoyable enough to read repeatedly. The story and the delivery should engage the senses and stimulate the intellect.

When browsing through children's books, it is easy to spot a musical book by looking for an attractive volume that sings a story, moves with a beat, or tells a story in a musical way. Check out the sidebars in this article for works in each of these three categories:

- **"Books that Sing"** include texts that are better sung than spoken. These books often have a "singing

page" or musical notation at the beginning or the end of the book. *Old MacDonald Had a Farm* and *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* are examples.

- **"Books with a Beat"** share the delight of rhythm and rhyme and beg to be read with an underlying beat. Collections of nursery rhymes and books like *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* require a rhythmic sense to be musically understood.

- **"Musical Stories"** might be informational or fictional. In either case, the message is musical. The story line features an aspect of music that becomes the focus of the plot. Books like *Abiyoyo* or *Song and Dance Man* highlight a musical work or style.

The following musical books have proven to be extremely successful with young children:

Books that Sing

Aylesworth, Jim. *Old Black Fly*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1992. This picture book filled with splashy, colorful illustrations takes the reader through the alphabet via rhyming verse. Alternate verses are completed by the refrain, "Shoo fly! Shoo fly! Shoo!" *Old Black Fly* becomes a musical book by attaching the melody of

the spiritual "Joshua Fit de Battle of Jericho" to the text.

Frazer, Marla. *Hush, Little Baby*. New York: Brown Deer Press, 1999. An Appalachian setting to this familiar lullaby becomes the context of this beautiful book. The author/illustrator researched the historical traditions of the region and presents an authentic look at the life and times of an Appalachian family with a crying baby who won't be soothed. The musical notation at the end of the book suggests singing the story. Papa and sister find the mockingbird, the diamond ring, the looking glass, billy goat, cart and bull, and dog named Rover. It is only after the "horse and cart fall down" and everyone is lying on the grass that the baby stops crying.

Gershwin, George and Ira et al. *Summertime from Porgy and Bess*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999. The lyrics from the opera *Porgy and Bess* inspired the illustrations in this work. The focus is an African American family in the deep South during a hot summer. Children fishing, Grandpa swinging on a hammock, and the family going to church all reveal the setting of this beautiful lullaby. The musical notation of the song "Summertime" completes the book, and

Books with a Beat

Agell, Charlotte. *Dancing Feet*. San Diego: Gulliver Books, 1994.

Andrews, Sylvia. *Rattlebone Rock*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995.

Axtell, David. *We're Going on a Lion Hunt*. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1999.

Fleming, Denise. *In the Small, Small Pond*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1993.

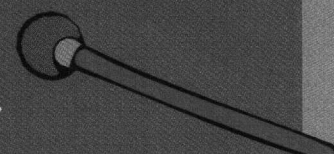
Fleming, Denise. *In the Tall, Tall Grass*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1991.

Jorgensen, Gail J. *Crocodile Beat*. New York: Bradbury Press, 1998.

Martin, Jr., Bill, and John Archambault. *Barn Dance*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1986.

Van Laan, Nancy. *Round and Round and Round Again*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 1994.

Van Laan, Nancy. *This Is the Hat*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1992.



Musical Stories

Carle, Eric. *I See a Song*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1973.

Hayes, Sarah. *The Cats of Tiffany Street*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 1992.

Kovalski, Maryann. *Take Me Out to the Ballgame*. New York: Scholastic, 1992.

Moss, Lloyd. *Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995.

Pinkney, Brian. *Max Found Two Sticks*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994.

Saul, Carol P. *Peter's Song*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992.

Seeger, Pete. *Abiyoyo*. Illus. by Michael Hays. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986.

Showers, Paul. *The Listening Walk*. New York: HarperCollins, 1991.

Turner, Barrie. *Carnival of the Animals by Saint-Saëns*. Illus. by Sue Williams. New York: Henry Holt, 1998.

illustrator Mike Wimmer's presentation makes it look like a piece of music from an operatic score.

Souhami, Jessica. *Old MacDonald*. New York: Orchard Books, 1996. This lift-a-flap version of the traditional children's song includes Old MacDonald with extended eyebrows, a bow tie, and a dapper-looking jacket. He is anything but the stereotypical farmer traditionally associated with this song. In this version, Old MacDonald's farm animals include a duck, a pig, a sheep, and a cow, each making its traditional sound. The addition of an alien (with a "beep-beep") takes Old MacDonald into the twenty-first century. Many variations of this song exist; none, however, is quite like this one, whose originality is a delight.

Books with a Beat

Baer, Gene. *Thump, Thump, Rat-a-tat-tat*. New York: Harper & Row, 1989. This picture book features a marching band, illustrator Lois Ehlert's bright colors, and a text that moves along in a rhythmic style using onomatopoeic sound. The band is at a distance at first, and so is the sound. The rhythmic patter of words is supported by a sense of underlying beat. Crescendo and decrescendo are suggested by the size of the printed word and the images of the marching figures. The closer they come, the larger their size and the louder their sound.

You can almost feel the vibration of the drums and the blaring of the brass. The book is an invitation to everyone to join the band!

Martin, Bill, Jr. and John Archambault. *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989. This lively book engages the reader in an enthusiastic rendition of the alphabet. The innovative narrative describes the life of each letter of the alphabet. There's "skinned-knee D, and patched-up F ... then comes G all out of breath." The scat-singing text jumps out with "skit skat skoodle doot, flip flop flee." As the chase of the letters toward the coconut tree comes to a close, the entire alphabet reappears in print, offering another opportunity to sing the familiar "ABC Song." From start to finish, this book cries out to be read with an especially enthusiastic style and a thumping underlying beat.

Sturges, Philemon. *Rainsong/Snowsong*. New York: North-South Books, 1995. Two seasons appear in simple rhyme and beautiful collage

illustrations in this book of two poems. The first sings of the joys of summer rain, the second, of the beauty of winter snow. The rhyming text is metrically clear and musical. A little boy sings the pleasures of both seasons. In a creative shift, raindrops transform to snowflakes across a double page as the reader leaves "Rainsong" and enters "Snowsong." Standing in a field of freshly fallen snow, the boy observes "that slowly, and without a sound, soft snow has pillowed all around." This gentle book is a wonderful way to demonstrate seasonal contrast.

Musical Stories

Ackerman, Karen. *Song and Dance Man*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988. This 1988 Caldecott Medal winner recounts a grandfather's story of a rich and exciting vaudeville career. During an excursion to the attic, the storyteller is inspired to open his old trunk and share with his grandchildren a number of tales of his life as a "hooper." In an affectionate and upbeat presentation, the American vaudeville world is recreated. Bursts of color as background to the grandfather's white shirt, red suspenders, brown pants, and blue-striped socks, along with shadows and silhouettes, provide an illusion that takes the reader back to the man's youth and days on the road.

Millman, Isaac. *Moses Goes to a Concert*. New York: Frances Foster Books, 1998. Moses and his kindergarten classmates, all deaf, attend a concert. Along with their teacher, Mr. Samuels, they ride a school bus to the

Online Resources

MusicKit: The Virtual Music Classroom: cnet.unb.ca/achn/kodaly/koteach

The Children's Music Web Guide: www.cowboy.net/~mharper/Chmusiclist.html

Award-Winning Children's Literature Database: www2.wcoil.com/ellerbee/cgi-bin/childlit.html/

Music in Motion: [www/musicmotion.com](http://www.musicmotion.com)

MENC Early Childhood Network: www/menc.org/networks/earlyc/earlyc.htm

event, use sign language to communicate, experience the performance, and meet the soloist. This book deals with inclusion and special needs and also presents aspects of acoustics. Each of the children holds a balloon during the concert to experience the music through what is felt as well as seen. Ironically, the percussion soloist is also deaf and wears no shoes on stage to feel the sound and create music.

The author's note at the beginning of the book explains American Sign Language, and each page contains boxes showing Moses signing specific words used in the text on that page. Afterwards, Moses tells his parents about the concert and adds, "When you set your mind to it, you can become anything you want when you grow up ... a doctor, artist, teacher, lawyer, farmer, electrician, or actor. I want to become a percussionist."

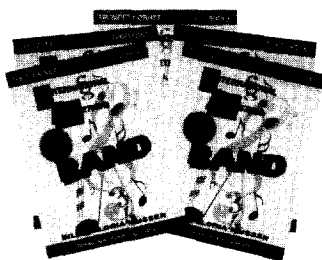
Start the Journey!

Reading to children has long been accepted and encouraged. Songs, rhymes, chants, and musical stories readily engage children. Recognizing the potential of musical books as a genre of children's literature transforms them into aesthetic treasures, and sharing them can increase your students' literacy.

Start browsing in libraries and book stores. Begin with the items listed in the sidebars in this article, and then find others on your own. Looking through materials at conferences, as seen in this new light, is also useful. A number of Web sites, including those listed in a sidebar in this article, include musical literature that can provide an online browsing experience on the topic. Perhaps you'll even be inspired to write a musical book yourself! ☺

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