

What Is Being Done

Early Childhood Musicking: Two Very Quick Overviews
by Pat Campbell & Charlie Keil

Pat Campbell:

Outstanding early childhood music programs have been developed by individual musicians, teachers, and scholars as well as by collectives of musicians and teachers who have combined to form corporate ventures.

Two outstanding music educators whose research has clarified the musical capacities of very young children are Donna Brink Fox and John Feierabend. MusicTIME, designed by Donna Brink Fox for the Eastman Community Music School in Rochester, New York, continues the trend of parent-child bonding through music *after* the babies are born, moving them along into toddlerhood and the preschool years. The National Center for Music and Movement in the Early Years, at Hartt College, University of Hartford, Connecticut, is the creation of John Feierabend, who interacts with preschoolers and their parents at highest energy, chanting, singing, and moving musically to finger plays, action songs, and singing games that engage all who attend his sessions. Both the Eastman and the Hartford programs are grounded in research as they are also settings for ongoing observations of effective music pedagogy for little ones.

Three trademark corporations dedicated to the musical education of young children are Kindermusik, Musikgarten, and Music Together. All are national programs of instruction for children from birth to age 8 or 9, with developmentally appropriate group lesson activity available in multiple locations across the country. Kindermusik maintains that parents are the most important teachers of their children, so their sessions consist of songs, music-and-movement activity, listening, and instrumental play activity for parents and their children. Likewise, Musikgarten makes music education available for young children, and presents to parents a complete nine-year developmental plan for those who wish to go the course of this training. Music Together is also devoted to playful, age-appropriate musical learning that brings together children and their parents (and other adult caregivers) to sing, dance, and play music. These organizations recommend to parents the sorts of musical activities that fit at play time, before and after meals, at bath time, dressing time, and bed time. Materials are recommended or offered for purchase, including CDs, books, and musical instruments.

* Seek information on early childhood programs such as Kindermusik <http://www.kindermusik.com/>, MusikGarten <http://www.musikgarten.com/>, and Music Together <http://www.musictogether.com/>.

Charlie Keil:

Pat gave me the paragraphs above as an introduction to Section 7 and I'm very grateful for them because I haven't taken the time to find out what others are doing. Once these chapters are up on the web and we can begin sorting out what might be useful for children, parents, teachers, program builders, I hope to interview Fox and Feierabend,

visit sessions done by the people involved with the three corporations, find out more about the techniques that have been developed for helping children get into the groove.

My problem to probe has always been that the vast majority of children are getting less and less grooving experience at early ages, and none of the children in the "advanced" world are getting enough early enough because "it takes a whole village" and most of the village is wrapped up in media and tech. I know that all of those TV hours could be hours of face to face interaction, synchronized movement, inspiring creativity instead of passivity. I know that it was hard to find other "muse incorporating" programs to copy in the 1990s and that in most Buffalo schools minimal music instruction, usually of a drab music-reading sort, may not appear until fourth grade. Certainly what is NOT being done is a very long and grim story. What IS being done? I hope people will respond to this Section and tell us. Behind the minimum preparation for "General Music" that Pat describes in the opening assessment of Ch. 45 "Method Times Three," there may be a wealth of idiosyncratic practices by rebellious teachers who keep their work a secret from "the authorities." Now is the time to let us know what is possible, even if you have to report anonymously!

Assembled here are some reflections on my own limited experiences (Chapters 46, 47, 50 and 51), Becky Liebman's description of South Sound Kids Drum & Dance as a way to link an "escuela de samba" to local schools, Abbe Gregg's heroic effort to deliver the best practices of the music education tradition free of charge, and Steve Swell's moving account of connecting and creating with variably categorized children as a visiting expert in New York City. I have to say that what little experience I have of either witnessing or practicing what I preach is with me constantly. I remember my visit to a small one room schoolhouse in South Egremont, Mass and my trip to a small school on a small island off the coast of Japan as precious reference points. Small is beautiful. And I hold on to the moment – anytime, anywhere – when one child "gets it" and won't let go.