

## Newsletter of

## ECMMA's Greater Washington, DC Chapter

*The region's professional association for teachers of early childhood music and movement*

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### Family Arches



Photo K. Weeks

#### A Family Music Afternoon

On a cold, rainy spring day close to 75 people showed up for the free, service-project of the GWDC Chapter of ECMMA on Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> in North Chevy Chase, Maryland.

Families enrolled in any of our chapter member programs had been invited to participate in a Family Music Afternoon, where our teachers led young and old in musical storytelling, circle dances and singing. The chapter hired professional musicians – a fiddler and guitarist – to play all the musical accompaniments.

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ECMMA-Greater Washington, DC Chapter

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*Teachers using hand puppets to act out Fiddle-I-Fee, led by Vera Owens.*

*Photo by Gina Lacy Wilt*

### **A Family Music Afternoon, cont.**

The afternoon began with **“A Ram Sam Sam”** done as a round with gestures. Having teachers strategically placed in the room helped to lead the crowd in canonic sections, and in the final verse which was a silent “movement round” of the claps and gestures. The dance **“Rig a jig jig”** followed and served as a perfect “mixer.” In between verses, during a 10 – 15 second break, participants were encouraged by leader Diana Greene to turn those nearby and introduce each other. With a pre-arranged patterned-signal from her drum, the rhythmic, free-form walking around the room resumed.

Kaja Weeks led the simple ring dance “Shoo Fly”. This was followed by **“Old Bald Eagle,”** in which individuals or groups of individuals (“if you’re dressed in red”) got to “sail around” the circle in their preferred manner. Led by Diana Greene.

Next, Vera Owens grouped everyone into one giant seated circle. The round, **“Row, row row**

**your boat”** was a good preparation for Vera’s leading of the next circle game, **“Two in the middle and you can’t jump, Josie.”** The lyrics speak of

the Ohio River and describe more and more folks jumping “in the middle, “ which occurred by those in the middle pulling in new participants for lively jumping. In between, the standing circle swayed to a languid, duple meter, singing “Floating down the river, we’re floating down below, we’re floating down the river on the Ohio.” As the jumps always ended with the phrase, “Oh my Susie Brown,” Vera, in her introduction, nicely explained to the children that she imagined there were two girls getting ready to go on a boat ride, Josie and Susie.

All warmed up by this time, the group was led next in a lively Israeli folk dance, **“Yesh,”** by Caron Dale. “Think of it as Jewish Virginia Reel!” counseled Caron, who tirelessly and deftly coordinated countless verses so that ALL participants got a turn to go under and form arches. The “family arches” pictured on the first page were a spontaneous formation during this much enjoyed dance.



After “Yesh”, all were welcoming of the quiet, meditative lyrics, “**I am a tall, tall tree.**”

Vera Owens modeled deep breathing and gentle stretching as the tree’s branches transformed from season to season.

*The Tree Song can be found in Down in the Valley: More Great Singing Games for Children, Schools & Communities. New England Dancing Masters Productions. Brattleboro.*

“Fiddle-I-Fee” completed the program as Vera Owens led the “musical storytelling” and all the teachers joined in using hand puppet characters while the audience sang along to the accompaniment of fiddle and guitar.

*Thanks to the Program Committee members, Diana Greene, Vera Owens, Kaja Weeks; to Caron Dale for organizing the musicians; Rita Clarke for “Meet, Greet and Register”; for Gina Lacy Wilt, photography; Ming Hsieh, Jodie Lin, Naomi Kusano. Rebecca Sparrow as Facilitators, and to all the teachers whose families attended this event.*

#### **TIPS for running a smooth Family Music event**

*Or ... What we noticed, learned & how we planned*

**We really planned!** Over the course of several months, a program planning committee of a few members was able to construct a well-thought out program, primarily by:

- Phone calls (3-way when needed)
- Group emails

- One final face-to-face meeting, which took place late one evening at the Northeast Regional Conference hotel with wine, cheese, and very good spirits!

The most important early achievement was getting a good draft that could then be imaginatively modified by each and all. After that, careful scrutiny to a **balance of activities** (songs/rounds, dances of different style and energy) and **analyzing whether the program met the developmental needs of our age range AND the adults.** We combed through many collections of songs and dances and initially had enough for an entire festival! That was fine, however, because once we “mercilessly cut” we knew we had good reserves in store, if needed.

For a smooth event, **technical details really ended up mattering**, and we had prepared for them. The room was examined for:

- Electrical outlets
- Space
- Lighting
- Acoustics (we used one microphone on stage with a small set of portable speakers)
- Crowd flow (where do they enter, where can they leave coats and boots, where do we need tables for personal items, registration, snacks).
- Visual Cues (We actually envisioned each dance and thought about what spatial cues we might need, such as carpenter tape of different colors on the floor)

We planned exactly how teachers could be useful within the crowd for each piece. We planned **“Transitions”** – how do you get 75 children and adults from scattered positions to a sitting position in 4 circles?

We found, for example, that **singing transitions** quieted and got people's attention immediately, especially when **used together with big gestures** such as rolling arms from high to low to indicate sitting down. When the person **on the stage and all the teachers in the crowd** are doing this, it is quite effective.

One person was responsible for figuring out and making all **outdoor and indoor signs**. Another person was responsible for figuring out how to offer a crowd **snacks** in the midst of the Swine Flu epidemic! (Individually manufacture-wrapped crackers and cookies only and lots of wipes!)

**Program Notes.** Once the program was finalized we created a simple-to-read but detailed **chart for all our teachers and musicians** that clearly indicated the order of the pieces, who was leading each, what special items might be needed, transition tactics, etc.

**Musical accompaniment.** Though this could have been done with live singing and audio recordings, we decided early on that we really wanted **live musicians**. We felt that it was a good use of the dues money we'd been saving, both for the enhancement and unique pleasure it would bring children and their families as well as to support local musicians in their livelihood. Although we could have drawn from performer-teachers from within our membership, we wanted each of the teachers to be free to experience the event interactively with the children and parents. The fiddle and guitarist we hired really brought this event to life.

**Enrollment.** We required RSVP's via email that detailed **number of people attending and ages** of the children so we could form a good picture of needs ahead of time. For example, we saw that many of the children signed up were on the young side (even though we were open up to age 8), which helped us pre-plan on parallel variations for the dances. We had originally planned for 20 more slots in terms of enrollment, and we all agreed afterwards that we were glad it hadn't filled to that! We were reminded that even with the best of planning, a live event with lots of kids, a big space, and room for spontaneity takes on a life of its own very easily. It could easily have turned chaotic, or "well-run but impersonal" rather than well-run, spontaneous and intimate.

**Staying Organized!**

**ECMMA-GWDC FAMILY MUSIC AFTERNOON – PROGRAM GUIDE FOR MEMBERS**  
Sunday May 31<sup>st</sup> 2009

Time	Event	Lead By	Teachers	Instruments	Notes
7:00	Chapter Members Arrive, Set Up	Wes Clarke	Set Up		Caring: Safe, Water, Table: Filler; Chair for instruments; Tissues, Wipes, Mobile SPECTORS
7:30	Families Arrive, WELCOME TO US	Wes Clarke Katie & song	Carol families throughout room "greet" families and sing & motion for "power" transition		"Down down, down down, now it's time to sit down" (all hands answered, keep repeating until everyone is seated) Central Guidance; Water; Electronics; Watching kids, etc.
8:00	A Fun & Jam Song Round WELCOME TO US	Carol	Position to help with round sections Follow Carol's lead	Can join as they arrive	How to lead to sit back down, sit back down in on time of sig. 4 Teacher: Demara Lisa explains dance
8:30	Big & Big Musical Dance WELCOME TO US	Diana	Sing with Diana		
8:45	Shimmy Demo	Lina	Dance as DEMO in center of room		

The children and the parents really loved it. The greatest reward was watching children reacting so happily while "playing" with their parents in a gorgeous sound-bath of music, and parents beaming at their children's joy. We're ready to do it again!



*Washington, DC area musicians, Susan Jones on fiddle and Bobby Betlejewski on guitar.*

The **ECMMA Northeast Regional Conference** in Lansdowne, PA, provided a well-rounded variety of themes through its workshops. Embedded in the presentations were topics such as the influences



*Jill Hannagan (right) led evening dancing and drumming. Pictured here with Diana Greene (left).  
Photo by K. Weeks*

of Dalcroze and Laban; Orff in the classroom; the organic, creative growth of movement and storytelling through music; gentle yet effective classroom management ideas; providing in-service training to preschools; the effects of music listening; and what researchers are learning about infant imitation and improvisation.

Earth Rhythms provided a vibrant closing drum circle and concert. Attending from the Washington-

Baltimore area were Gina Lacy Wilt, Heike Burghart Rice, Vera Owens, Kaja Weeks, Roselinda Rampp, and Anna Gerrish-Fisher. Dorothy Denton (Ohio Chapter) traveled with GWDC members to the conference.

The **Greater Washington, DC Chapter** held a **Special Interest Group** meeting prior to the Northeast Regional Conference on the work

and practical applications of Edwin Gordon's **Music Learning Theory**. Mara Bershad, Maddy O'Neill Dean, Vera Owens, and Kaja Weeks examined and sang through wordless, modal, unusual-meter chants in the collection "Music Play," and viewed a video interview of Edwin Gordon and Wendy Valerio at a South Carolina preschool where Music Learning Theory is applied. The group pursued this partly for continuing education and partly to prepare for Alison Reynolds' and Jill Reese's presentation at the NE Regional Conference, which was based on Music Learning Theory.



## **BOOK CORNER**

**By Vera Owens**



*FROGGIE went a-courtin' and a-hummin', and  
a-ridin', and a-sewin', and a dancin', and  
a-singin', and a-strummin'*

The age-old ballad about Mr. Frog and Miss Mouse is retold by John Langstaff, and illustrated by Feodor Rojankovsky in the book **FROG WENT A-COURTIN'**. In the introduction Mr. Langstaff explains that the origin of the story is unknown, but it was first written down in Scotland over 400 years ago. It traveled to America with the settlers from Great Britain and spread across this country. There are many variants of words and melody. The story John Langstaff tells in this book is derived from many variants he heard in the different regions of America. The melody he provides is the one sung in the southern Appalachians to tell the story. Two other versions of this ballad can be found in **AMERICAN FOLKSONGS FOR CHILDREN** by Ruth Crawford Seeger, and **150 AMERICAN FOLK SONGS TO SING READ AND PLAY** edited by Peter Erdei.

Langstaff's illustrated version in **FROG WENT A-COURTIN'** lends itself to incorporating a number of related musical and movement activities. The first, of course, is simply the immediate invitation to hum the two-note, refrain (low sol - do). A

lifting gesture of the hand is a natural accompaniment to this interval.



In the first part of the story, Frog rides on his horse to visit Miss Mouse who is at home spinning on her spinning wheel. He asks her to marry him, and she proceeds to get consent for her wedding plans from her Uncle Rat in a rhyming question and answer exchange.

At that point in the story, it is a good time depart from the book, and enhance the story with activities that represent the time that passes and preparation before the wedding day arrives. We can assume that Mr. Frog gallops to and fro visiting Miss Mouse, so this can be dramatized with galloping movement and galloping songs. He can even jump off his horse and without missing a beat, and recite a love poem in 6/8 meter:

Roses are red,  
Violets are blue,  
Sugar is sweet,  
And I love you!

Miss Mouse helps in the sewing of her wedding gown, and as often would happen, the work is accompanied with a song. Since not all children these days have observed sewing with a needle and thread, I demonstrate with a jumbo plastic needle, yarn, and felt to show the thread going through the needle's eye, and then the needle leading the thread down and up, in and out of the cloth, with the resulting stitches.



A very fine song for this activity is "The Needle's Eye" which can be found in **THE HANDY PLAY PARY BOOK**, by Lynn Rohrbough, revised by Cecelia Riddell. The children can pantomime the down and up hand motion of sewing to the beat of the song while they listen. Miss Mouse would sing the verse with the words, "Many a beau have I let go, because I wanted you," or "Many a guy did I let by..." When Mr. Frog stitches his wedding clothes, he can sing the verse, "Many a lass did I let pass, because I wanted you."

There are a few different variations of the action for the singing game to this song. The easiest for preschoolers is the same as the action for "London Bridge Is Falling Down." The arch (bridge) represents the needle's eye, and the line of children passing through represents the thread. Someone is caught on the final "you" so the children have to listen and wait for that. The children begin to learn the song and join in with the many repetitions during the game. Another good needle and thread singing game is "Thread Needle" or "T'read Needle", from Jamaica. One line of children stands stationary, holding hands, forming arches that are the needles' eyes. Another line of children holds hands to form the thread that weaves in and out through the arches of the children in the stationary line. It's like "In and Out the Windows" in a straight line. This formation could also be interpreted as thread, lead by a needle, stitching in and out through the cloth. Of course the lines should switch roles so children can experience both parts. An adapted version of "T'read Needle" is in **SILVER BURDETT MUSIC 1**. The notation can also be found on Books.Google.com from the collection by Olive

## Lewin, **ROCK IT COME OVER: FOLK MUSIC OF JAMAICA.**

By the time of the next music class meeting, all the preparations are complete and the day of the wedding has arrived, so we return to our **FROG WENT A-COURTIN'** book to see what happens. In this part of the story, each guest, a little animal friend, arrives and does something special. The last word of the description of his/her action rhymes with the name of the animal: The moth spreads out the tablecloth; the ants do a dance; the fly eats the pie... This repeating pattern is excellent for hearing and anticipating the rhymes, and it helps the children to join in and remember what is really quite a long song. The last to come in is the old tom cat which frightens the gathering of little creatures, and they all scamper away. Fortunately, they all appear to escape, unlike the version in Ruth Crawford Seeger's collection. The frog and mouse are last seen on an ocean liner bound for France.



After singing and humming through to the story's denouement, the wedding day is fun to dramatize. Everyone can explore each animal's characteristic motions and pantomime his/her special action at the wedding. This can lead to a little play with children taking individual turns to act out one of the wedding guests arriving, or there can be "families" of animals which arrive together.

The CD, **RHYTHMICALLY MOVING 1**, by Phyllis Weikart, contains a number of excellent pieces for movement activities related to this story. Most of the selections are Celtic or American folksongs, which fit with the origin and genre of "Frog Went A-Courtin'." The instrumentation includes guitar, violin/fiddle, penny whistle, bodhran, spoons, bones, shakers, so the timbres are delicate and conducive to dramatizing the tiny creatures in the story. There are songs which clearly demonstrate the sounds of the banjo and the fiddle, instruments that are illustrated in the book being played at the wedding by the bumble bee and the old grey goose. There are songs of varying tempi for dancing slow and fast,

for sitting and eating very formally and politely at the wedding breakfast, for swaying in the branches of trees, and for scampering away from the cat!

The ballad ends with the traditional line for long story-songs, "If you want any more you can sing it yourself", and in fact, there can be an epilogue – it is so tempting to spin a yarn here! Let's just imagine that the fly and the bumble bee met at the wedding, had a wonderful time dancing together, and before too long we hear some happy news:



***Fiddle-de, fiddle-de-de,  
The fly has married the bumble bee***

Four verses of "Fiddle-De-De" can be found in **CYCLE OF SEASONS** by Lorne Heyge and Audrey Sillick.

There are some more traditional children's songs that can be tied-in before and after Langstaff's

**FROG WENT A-COURTIN'**. The Swedish folksong "Sarasponda" is a spinning song that Miss Mouse could be singing before Mr. Frog sets out to visit her, because when he arrives she is busy at her spinning wheel.

At the end of the tale, the newlyweds go to France. We hope they learn to sing a few tunes in French, such as "Frere Jacques," "Sur Le Pont d'Avignon," or "Les Petites Marionnettes."

"Frog Went A-Courtin'" and all these related songs and games have been favorites for many generations. There is a sense of cultural vitality in being among the threads connecting past, present and future in this tradition of singing and storytelling.



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**Vera Owens** is a teacher of early childhood music (Levine School of Music and NIH Preschool) who has taught generations of young children in the Washington, DC area. She is a Founding Member of the Greater Washington, DC Chapter of ECMMA.

*Photo Regina Lacy Wilt*

## OF NOTE

*Music Research  
Music in the News*



### Exploring Research in Music Education and Music Therapy by Kenneth H. Phillips

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How often do we read the phrase “research has shown ...” followed by claims -- some perhaps reasonable, some preposterous -- to support a particular path of music education or music intervention? This phrase can be the first step into a sand-trap!

Often there is no reference whatsoever to the original research or authorship. Sometimes a reference is made, but it is clear that the person or organization that is presently making use of the claim is simply taking the claim on faith, and asking the reader to do as well. Educators, therapists, and administrators owe it to themselves and their clientele to become informed consumers and purveyors of research.

Kenneth H. Phillips is a Professor of Music, recognized by MENC as one of the nation's most accomplished music educators. In *Exploring Research in Music Education and Music Therapy* he presents an introductory text that aims to help students read and comprehend music research. He describes different research genres (such as historical, philosophical, qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, and action research) and gives real-life examples (articles) of them. He gives excellent pointers on how to locate research articles. A glossary of common research terms is included.

Importantly, Phillips demonstrates how research findings can be applicable in therapeutic and educational settings. Phillips states:

**Researchers also need to accept their responsibility to achieve an integrated view of educational theory and practice. This is a matter not only of bringing research to bear on the practice, but also of bringing the practice to bear on the research. The researchers need to recognize teachers' needs and problems, listen to their questions, and assume a more respectful attitude toward teachers and praxis.**

**... Teachers are not used to “owning” educational research. Through the years they have deferred to the power of universities, politicians, and administrators who have expected them to implement ideas initiated by others.**

This bridging of scholarship and practice that Phillips describes – which works (or should) bi-directionally – is what will help music catapult forward in a meaningful way in our research-driven (and rich) 21<sup>st</sup> century. Kenneth Phillips book, read side-by-side with a research topic (or journal article) that is vested with one's personal keen interest is a fine place to begin.

- Review Kaja Weeks

## Member News

Photo by Regina Lacy Wilt



**Diana Greene, Katie Cole, and Gina Lacy-Wilt** (pictured left) attended the **Learning, Arts and the Brain Summit** in Baltimore, Maryland at the Visionary Art Museum in May. The event was Sponsored by Johns Hopkins University, School of Education Neuro-Education Initiative and Council on K-12 Education with the aim of bridging researchers and practitioners.

In addition to her Music Together classes, **Maddy O'Neill Dean** has been busy with her band, Mad for the Road, in which she is lead singer and plays guitar and hammered dulcimer. The band's Irish, Celtic, and other traditional music can be checked out and heard at <http://www.madfortheroad.com>

**Beth Rubens'** most recent musical theatre performance was in February 2009 in **Orpheus in the Underworld**, an InSeries production.

**Kaja Weeks**, together with **Dorothy Denton** (Ohio Chapter) have registered for the **Arts in Healing** Conference in Alexandria, VA, in July where they will take part in two days of training with Dr. Clive Robbins, Co-founder of Creative Music Therapy, which he founded beginning in 1959 with Dr. Paul Nordorff.

Photo by K. Weeks

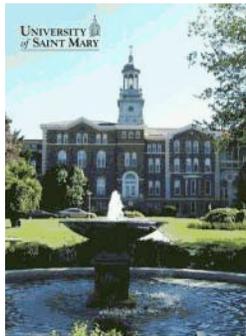


**Ming Hsieh** (pictured left) in one of her many early childhood music classes from the past ten years, playing "A Tisket, A Tasket." Ming will be pursuing her **Masters of Education degree in the Kodaly Music Education program at Loyola College, in Baltimore, Maryland**. The program is offered by the American Kodaly Institute at Loyola College.

### In Memory of Lisa Flaxman

**Beth Rubens**, soprano, with pianist Gillian Cookson, presented a recital of arias and art songs at the Dennis and Phillip Ratner Art Museum in Bethesda, Md, in memory of *Lisa Flaxman*. Lisa, founder and CEO of MusiKids, a passionate advocate of music for children and well-known arts entrepreneur in the Washington, DC area, lost her courageous battle with breast cancer in January of this year. All proceeds from Beth's recital benefited the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer for the "Friends of Musikids" in memory of Lisa Flaxman.

## Announcements:



### SAVE THE DATES!

## ECMMA INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION August 5 – 8<sup>th</sup> 2010

University of St. Mary in historic Leavenworth, Kansas  
Keynote Speaker, Dr. Jane Healy

Please note that **session proposals** are NOW being accepted for the ECMMA International Convention. You can access the applications online at [www.ecmma.org](http://www.ecmma.org) Click on Events and 2010 Convention.

### *Finale ...*

*Have a fruitful and restful summer filled  
with music you love*

*Until Next Time... Lift your Voices!*



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