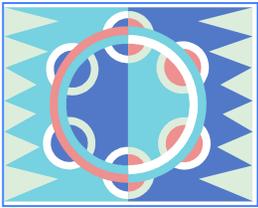


Musings



Newsletter of

ECMMA's Greater Washington, DC Chapter

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

www.ecmma.org

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The Opening Round



Photo K. Weeks

Ming Hsieh brings in a section of singers for a beautiful African round she has just taught the GWDC group. Beginning each meeting with a round is a chapter tradition.



The Fall Chapter Meeting

The goal of the Fall 2009 Chapter Meeting was to offer training that would explore age- & developmentally-appropriate material specifically for preschoolers culled from the rich foundation of Orff and Kodaly approaches.

Lynn Rechel was brought in as presenter.

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Regina Lacy Wilt, Photos

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Lynn's solid experience as a long-time music teacher in the Arlington VA Public Schools combined with a passion for both Orff Schulwerk and the Kodaly Method in her own education (she has a Mastery Certificate in Orff and is certified in Kodaly), as well as the training she has administered to others on both local and state levels made her a good match for our program. Lynn holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music and the New England Conservatory and is currently a doctoral student at The Hartt School at the University of Hartford.



LYNN RECHEL

As an Early Childhood/Elementary Music teacher, including a preschool class with special needs children, Lynn illustrated the use of core values and activities of both Orff and Kodaly based on realistic contemporary classroom scenarios. The areas she presented were:

- **Improvisation**
- **Singing**
- **Saying**
- **Moving**
- **Playing**

In each instance she gave examples or asked us to reflect on how the presence of creativity could be ensured.

- **Who generates the creative aspects?**
- **What would it look like in my classroom?**

Lynn emphasized how the concept of "parameters" helps a teacher end up with a contained space yet one with flexible, changing boundaries determined by all sorts of possible factors, e.g. your budget, what your school director expects as output, the kinds of children you have both individually and as a group, etc. The key is not to let those factors become constraints that produce rote, directed or confined musical work/play space with children.

The group participated in numerous enjoyable activities designed to show avenues for reaching creative singing, movement, etc. Pipe cleaners were used to facilitate sensory experiences of song contours –

- **Make a free-form shape with your pipe cleaner**
- **How would you sing it?**
- **Can you sing someone else's shape?**

Body shapes were also explored in dance and movement –

- **Can you make a full body shape and then dance that shape using space?**
- **Does the shape remind you of an instrument (e.g. round like a drum)?**

All these are **open-ended activities** in which children are able to **explore and lead** while the teacher provides a supportive scaffold and holds goals in mind.

For repertoire Lynn recommended traditional folk music that is passed from generation to generation. One particularly successful activity was paired with the song from the British Isles, "Dame Get Up and Bake your Pies ... on this fine day in the morning." As we searched for ways to move and play, **Corinne Turner** led us into a dancing, singing circle with a player in the middle who pantomimed new actions for the dame to take ... "wash your windows," "sweep the floor" and so forth.



"You can't catch me!"

Beth Rubens & Marni Ratner Whelan as two little monkeys taunting a crocodile in the familiar children's chant.

Lynn encourages abundant use of fingerplay chants and Mother Goose rhymes, which in their simplicity and familiarity offer children boundless opportunity for creative, dramatic play.

Lynn also showed how she uses barred instruments (together with rhythm instruments) with young children for exploratory purposes. For example she sets up a room with “**Music Stations**” (just as preschools have play areas with varying themes) and for sound effects or “sound carpets” to accompany stories. The group members enacted part of **Three Billy Goats Gruff**.



Diana Greene, Rebecca Sparrow, Lori McCarthy, Corinne Turner, Sherri Holdridge, and Roselinda Rapp.

We were fortunate to have Lynn's insights about how a major, leading public school system has developed **a comprehensive frame for preschool music**. Lynn helped to develop these standards for Arlington Public Schools and she gave us a very useful written guide of how domains (*performance/production; judgment; knowledge; cultural context; and aesthetics*) were integrated with musical concepts, such as melody, rhythm, form, etc.

The evening ended with our usual social potluck and, this time, with three door prizes that were books on Orff and or Kodaly. The meeting had an excellent turnout, with one new participant driving all the way from Pennsylvania to attend! (Happily, he won one of door prizes.)

SPOTLight on Members

From Musician/Performers ... to ECM Teachers to ... Cantors?!

Two GWDC Members talk about their growing musical world



Beth Rubens



Caron Dale

Caron Dale and **Beth Rubens** each grew up with a love for singing that would take them into professional performing careers; both are married and raising families -- Caron in Washington, DC and Beth in Takoma Park; both long-time early childhood music teachers; and as of this year, they have both embarked on new musical roles -- cantors, and as it turns out, for the same congregation!

Beth and Caron are each **cantorial soloists** at **Hevrat Shalom**, a reform congregation in Gaithersburg, Maryland. The fact that both women ended up filling this role is really a testament to the open-mindedness and musicality of the congregation and its leadership, for each woman brings her own distinctive style of prayerful singing.

In addition to being an early childhood music teacher with her own enterprise, **Caron Dale** has been involved and in love with Jewish songs, traditions, and celebrations for decades. For her a deep spirituality is inherently intertwined with the music. She sings in, plays guitar and

banjo and leads a popular Klezmer band, **Lox and Vodka**, which has been featured at Jewish events as well as venues such as the Kennedy Center.

Caron brings these sensibilities to cantoring. Most often with guitar in hand, she sings with a folksy, come-join-me quality. She strives to help others find and release themselves into the moment as she leads in musical prayer. She is especially fond of engaging the children both in service and in the religious school. "Being a cantor is being not only part of the clergy, but becoming part of a larger community," notes Caron as she describes calling upon and visiting members of the congregation who may be in need.

For now, Caron's repertoire consists of traditional melodies, some of which she can choose and some which are prescribed, as well as some more modern tunes. With her well-rooted style and past experience having led other services as a guest, she is on solid ground. However, in the background ("way in the background," emphasizes Caron) she has taken on a new and challenging dimension – the study of tropes, a ritual art of chanting which would eventually allow her to sing prayer in Hebrew directly from the Torah. Both beautiful and difficult, and originating from the 10th – 12th centuries, Caron quotes a description of them as "blessings to melismatic melodies."

Beth Rubens is a classically trained lyric soprano who received her Masters from the San Francisco Conservatory and studied French literature at the Sorbonne in Paris. Her facile, light yet resonant singing voice lends itself just as well to teaching young children (she teaches for Musikids and Levine School of Music) and for the rigors of opera and musical theatre. Beth performs regularly in the Washington DC area. In February 2009 she performed in **Orpheus in the Underworld** as part of the InSeries productions and in the fall she landed the lead role of **Pinocchio** (with music by Rossini) with the Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia.

Beth has embraced her role as cantorial soloist with the same perfectionism that has always guided her singing. She brings the congregants at Hevrat Shalom the unique spiritual beauty that is reflected from classical style. Sometimes singing a cappella and sometimes with piano accompaniment, she draws from classically composed as well as contemporary settings. "Music has always been a vehicle for me to find my spirituality," remarks Beth. "One of the joys for me is to come upon religious melodies I've known from my childhood (some from having sung in the children's choir) and interpret them here as cantor."

Beth has particularly been enjoying and valuing working closely with **Rabbi Arnold Saltzman** at Hevrat Shalom. Not only is he a guide for many aspects of services that surround her new role, his excellent musical background is a unique, rich resource. Before becoming Rabbi, he was Cantor Saltzman, as well as a composer and recording artist, and notably, sang as a child with the Metropolitan Opera! With his guidance and her own newfound desire for exploration, Beth has been combing classical cantorial repertoire and learning to make first-hand decisions about artistic and spiritual suitability. She has also been studying privately with several cantors and is inspired and impressed by the vast store of spiritual music that lies in wait for her to learn, interpret and sing.

Beth and Caron, who have each sung for the exceedingly demanding High Holy Days services, note how this new work is stretching them in unique ways. Caron hopes it will support her song composing; both refer to their development as musicians, as singers, and eventually as teachers who continue to grow musically.

BOOK CORNER

By Vera Owens



Play in the snow!

OH!

"A gem ... pure delight of play in the snow"

- Vera Owens' description of the book "OH!"

Snow is pretty special to children of all ages – and to children-at-heart of all ages.

The sense of wonder and excitement snowfall brings should definitely be tapped into for a playful, artistic experience with sound, movement and singing. There are many books about children in the snow, and some are inspiring for musical activities on those special snow or hope-it-will-snow days. I will describe one of my favorites.

OH! is by Kevin Henkes and illustrated by Laura Dronzek. Its title, text and illustrations are beautiful examples of straight-forward simplicity that is an invitation to further exploration. The title *OH!* is a response to waking up in the morning and seeing the snow - but how many ways can that word be expressed? Different vocal registers, dynamic levels, durations and inflections can convey different reactions to seeing the snow. Imagination, empathy, and vocabulary can be stretched to explain some different reactions to the snow - even disappointment if it means that a birthday party has to be cancelled.

Like the title, the text calls for reading aloud with articulation, inflection and duration of words that expresses their sound and meaning. The text is in a repeated pattern, so the contrast in the effect of the sound qualities is poetic. Notice the different sounds of the phrases:

**Skitter, skitter, skitter
quick gray squirrel.**

**Hop, hop, hop,
shy little rabbit.**

**Sneak, sneak, sneak,
brave young cat.**

After one reading it is very easy and natural to act out the story as each short page describes a different creature, or creatures, playing in the snow. I try to influence the quality of movement response, not with instructions, but with my vocal expression of the text: a high-pitched, staccato "skitter, skitter, skitter;" a soft, light "hop, hop, hop," a long, low, "sneak, sneak, sneak."

An expansion of this activity would be to extend the dramatization of each creature's play: "What does the squirrel do next?" The melody and adapted text of the song "**The Old Grey Cat Is Sleeping**" can be used to improvise a little

dramatization. It provides a good pattern with its repeated action word and clear ending:

**The little squirrel is searching,
Searching, searching,
The little squirrel is searching
In the snow.**

The illustrations might also suggest ideas for improvising a story, as tails appear on the edges of some pages that might suggest interaction between the animals. Also there are some visual "oh's", in the form of circles, to be found here and there in the illustrations. This little book is a gem in expressing the pure delight of play in the snow.

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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



Music and Meaning – the Musician’s Edge

Words, as well as wordless utterances, communicate very different things depending on prosodic changes. “Come on, come on!” fired in rapid staccato conveys a very different meaning than a mellow, slow-as-molasses purr of the same words. More than linguistic meaning, emotion in communicative sound is carried by various musical elements, such as pitch, timing and timbre.

In 2009 researchers at the Auditory Neuroscience Laboratory, directed by neuroscientist Nina Kraus, at Northwestern University published studies that, for the first time, provided biological evidence that musical training enhances an individual’s ability to recognize emotion in sound. Subjects with musical training and without musical training were both shown a nature film into which was embedded a “complex vocal sound from an emotional auditory scene from the Center for the Study of Emotions and Attention” – which was a 250 millisecond fragment of a distressed baby’s cry. Using scalp electrodes, scientists were able to measure the brainstem’s responses, especially to the part of the sound that contributes most to its emotional content.

Musician’s brain’s were found to react more quickly, accurately, and economically – their brainstems locked onto the complex part of the sound known to carry more emotional elements but de-emphasize the simpler (less emotional) sounds. This was not true in the non-musicians. In a related study, one of the lab researchers found indications that musicians may even be able to sense sound-based emotions after only 50 milliseconds!

This pioneering work has applications to many situations. Dana Strait, primary author, notes, “Quickly and accurately identifying emotion in sound is a skill that translates across all arenas, whether in the predator-infested jungle or in the classroom, boardroom or bedroom.” In addition, the same acoustic elements that have now been shown to be processed more efficiently by musicians are those which children with disorders such as language disorders and/or autism have difficulty encoding. Strait suggests that the fine-tuning music provides may promote emotion perception and processing in these populations.

Sources:

Science Daily “Musicians Have Biological Advantage In Identifying Emotion in Sound.” March 5, 2009.

Strait et al. (2009) Musical experience and neural efficiency - effects of training on subcortical processing of vocal expressions of emotion. *European Journal of Neuroscience*. 29 (3): 661

Strait D, Skoe E, Ashley R, Kraus N. (2009) Musical experience promotes subcortical efficiency in processing emotional vocal sounds. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences: Neurosciences and Music III* 1169:209-213.

- Review by Kaja Weeks

Member News

Naomi Kusano, pianist, performed in December with the **NIH (National Institutes of Health) Philharmonia Orchestra** in concert, under the professional direction of Dr. Nancia D'Alimonte. Naomi is the owner and director of a private Suzuki piano studio in North Chevy Chase, Maryland.

Marni Ratner Whelan and her family have moved to Olney, Maryland, where Marni has been busy opening a new location of **Musikids**.

"Musical Gold: The Partner's Singing Voice in DIR®/Floortime" by **Kaja Weeks** was published in **Early Childhood Newsletter of the AMTA** (American Music Therapy Association), v. 15, Fall 2009, pp 22-23.

Carole Thomas, MM, MT-BC, received a "**School and Music Therapist Award**" from the Arlington County Department of Human Services in VA. These awards are presented to professionals who provide an extraordinary level of service, enabling a person with intellectual or developmental disabilities to develop the skills they need to live safely at home and to fully participate in community activities. In addition to her work as a music therapist, Carole is a registered and active teacher of Music Together.

Welcome New Members!

Brenda Benjamin, of Silver Spring, MD, is a Lower School (Pre-k – 5th grade) music teacher at Sandy Spring Friends School in Sandy Spring, MD.

Youlee Dziuk, of Alexandria, VA, is the Program Coordinator as well as teacher at the ECEM department at Levine School of Music.

Giles Herman, of Washington, DC, is based at Levine School of Music and is a teacher of early childhood and early elementary music as well as Dalcroze and Orff.

Sherri Holdridge, of Kensington, MD, is the new owner and director of Musikids, based in Bethesda, MD and with numerous locations throughout the metro area.

Lori McCarthy, of Chevy Chase, MD, teaches early childhood music classes, preschool group piano, and private piano for ages 6 and up. Lori is President of the Montgomery County Music Teacher's Association.

Roselinda Rampp, of Arlington, VA, is Chair of (and teacher at) the Early Childhood & Early Elementary Music Department at Levine School of Music, Washington, DC.

Announcements:

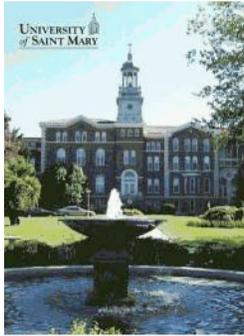


PERSPECTIVES

A PUBLICATION OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD MUSIC & MOVEMENT ASSOCIATION

"Perspectives" is now online! It is available to all ECMMA Members. The new site is searchable by authors, topics, and issues. It is a wonderful resource for teaching, research, or marketing.

Go to www.ecmma.org and log on, or join ECMMA.



SAVE THE DATES!

ECMMA INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
August 5 – 8th 2010

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

Finale ...

Happy New Year!

Until Next Time... Lift your Voices!



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