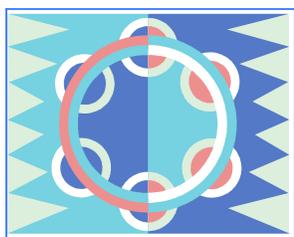


# Musings



## Newsletter of

## ECMMA's Greater Washington, DC Chapter

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

Volume 2, No. 1  
June 2007

### Spring 2007 Chapter Meeting

#### CIRCLE, CONTRA & FOLK: A GATHERING OF SONG AND DANCE



Sunday, April 29<sup>th</sup> was a quintessentially beautiful spring day in the Washington, DC area – golden sunshine, breezy, perfect air, the scent and color of blossoms spilling off of trees and shrubs everywhere. The heady joy of one of these rare natural treats seemed to follow us indoors and infuse our meeting with heavenly singing, instrument play, and dancing.

As we entered the Crossway Community Center in Kensington, sounds of a mountain banjo, played by **Greg Adams** already greeted us. Soon **Caron Dale's** playing on a custom-made banjo, **Maggie Corfield-Adams** on flute, **Kaja Weeks** on recorder, and **Marie D'Andrea** on cello joined in. Other members took up drums, spoons, and assorted rhythm instruments. The tune *Three Time Round the Cuckoo Waltz* provided live accompaniment for the American play-party dance by the same name in which the dancers promenaded, cast-away and learned right and left-hand star formations.

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### Photos:

*In the **Troika**, groups of three pranced, stamped, and swirled under arched-arm formations in this lively Russian dance that imitates horses*



For an opening round **Corinne Turner** led **The Bells Are Ringing Everywhere**. An unusual text – the opening words in English changed into French, “Entendez vous le carillon” and were then followed by a string of “Dingy dong, dong, dings” that left us almost breathless, as we sang the round at increasingly quicker entries, ending with starts of one beat apart!

As we moved into an auditorium to enjoy movement in a large space. **Vera Owens** taught a series of dances: first, her own choreography for a simple parent/baby circle dance using the **Renaissance Dance** from a Musikgarten cd.

Later the group took on the spirited and intricate **Troika**, led by **Vera Owens and Diana Greene**, both having enjoyed it at the recent NE Regional Conference.

Vera also led an enjoyable “family version” of the **Virginia Reel**. Originating in England, this dance has been passed on from colonial days as a community dance with many possible variations. It’s characterized by a light walking dance step, do-si-do’s, “slip-sliding” and, of course, reeling! Though the form Vera taught is a perfect Family Night activity for us to

use with our children and families due to its relative simplicity, anyone observing the quickly changing formations can nonetheless appreciate the benefits gained from the timing, motor planning, and physical coordination required. The inevitable bumps, goofs, and learned successes bring incomparable social connections and simple joy.

The “break” allowed us to enjoy pot-luck foods and drinks and catch up with each others’ news. We also discussed possible future chapter activities. The idea of hosting/leading musical family nights (based on the kinds of activities we were doing) as a form of community service was appealing for all, and Vera Owens gathered a preliminary volunteer list.



**Photo:**

*Ready for a breather, the group was led by **Kaja Weeks** in Neesa, Neesa a Native American dance that is a meditative homage to the moon and unfolds with canonic singing, co-centric movements and gestures.*



**Photo:**

*Diana Greene's performance of the rarely heard **Southern Lullaby**.*

*Diana's delicate soprano voice and accompaniment on a Wing created a moving interpretation of this Shaker lullaby. Diana explained that while Shakers do not have children of their own, this would be sung to orphans and adopted children.*

### **The Spring Meeting ended with the Swedish/English round**

**Who can Sail the World without Wind?**

*Who can sail the world without wind?  
Who can row without oars?  
Who can part from their dearest friends  
without a falling tear?*

*I can sail the world without wind,  
I can row without oars.  
But I can't part from my dearest friends  
without a falling tear*

## **BOOK CORNER**

**By Vera Owens**



Vera's Book Corner is taking a break -- back soon!

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**In the meantime, you may want to check out the following new book.**

### **My America by Jan Spivey Gilchrist**

**Consider using it as a companion to our musical exploration of songs, games, traditions and cultures that continue to grow here.**

(The following review excerpts quoted from *Publisher's Weekly*, June 2007)

#### **My America**

Jan Spivey Gilchrist, illus. by Ashley Bryan and Gilchrist. HarperCollins. \$16.99 (40p)

ISBN 978-0-06-079104-9

"In celebration of this country's diverse population comes a title that marries color and copy to create a luminous work of art. Set to Gilchrist's (*When the Horses Ride By*) poetic verse, the text offers a series of questions that does not necessarily beg responses, but rather prompts children to take a closer look at the world around them. The words roll effortlessly off the tongue ("Have you seen my country? Seen my magic skies? Seen my mighty waters? Have you seen my land?")

Gilchrist's muted watercolors showcase sweeping naturalistic landscapes of swirling skies in majestic purple and golden hues and children exploring or integrated into the seas and universe around them.

The alternating styles of illustration underscore the multitude of experiences and viewpoints that make Americans unique, furthering the text's tone of tolerance and acceptance. The final pages pay tribute to a modern world where peace is paramount: an international grouping of men and women stand smiling together, their hands firmly clasped in unity—a hopeful message to which future generations can aspire. Ages 4-8."

**To read a portion of the text of My America and see the cover illustration, visit the publisher's website**

[http://www.harpercollins.com/books/9780060791049/My\\_America/index.aspx](http://www.harpercollins.com/books/9780060791049/My_America/index.aspx)

# OF NOTE

Music Research  
Music in the News



## NEW FINDINGS CONFIRM BENEFITS OF MUSICAL EXPERIENCE

IMPLICATIONS FOR LITERACY AND MORE

The April 2007 issue of *Nature Neuroscience* reports on the work of researchers from Northwestern University providing concrete evidence that playing a musical instrument significantly enhances the brainstem's sensitivity to speech sounds.

Nina Kraus, senior author of the study and Director of Northwestern's Auditory Neuroscience Laboratory is quoted in *Science Daily* as saying,

**"Increasing music experience appears to benefit all children – whether musically exceptional or not – in a wide range of learning activities."**

**"Our findings underscore the pervasive impact of musical training on neurological development. Yet music classes are often among the first to be cut when school budgets get tight. That's a mistake."**

The study, **"Musical experience shapes human brainstem encoding of linguistic pitch patterns,"** used a novel approach in

which participants were exposed to Mandarin Chinese, a so-called "tone language" in which pitch inflections confer different meanings on same sounds. The sounds were embedded into movies while researchers measured each individual's brainstem accuracy and ability to track the sounds. Though the sounds had no linguistic or musical meaning for participants, the musically-trained subjects were far better at tracking the different tones than non-musicians. Moreover, there was a significant positive correlation between the ability to track the most complex tones with the length of musical training and age at which musical training began (early onset.)

These findings, which examine pathways of speech and music, are hoped to assist in new lines of inquiry. These results are also consistent with Kraus' previous studies at Northwestern with children who have learning disabilities, which can be helped by auditory training programs. It is felt that the new work may have far-reaching clinical and educational implications.

For an interesting, brief audio interview with Nina Kraus that was broadcast on NY radio station WNYC, click on:

[http://www.communication.northwestern.edu/mp3/brainvolts/soundcheck\\_032807.mp3](http://www.communication.northwestern.edu/mp3/brainvolts/soundcheck_032807.mp3)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### SAVE THESE DATES!

→ **August 3-4, 2007**

**Richmond, VA**

#### **ECMMA Southeast Regional Conference**

**"The Water is Wide: Cast your Nets in a Sea of Sound and Capture the Joy of Childhood"**

**Ride down the rolling river of early childhood and discover the joys of music and movement! Come, join us near the banks of the beautiful James River - whether you are a music/movement specialist or an early childhood educator - this is the conference for you.**

→ **July 3-6, 2008 - NEXT SUMMER**

**Biltmore Hotel – Providence, Rhode Island**

#### **ECMMA Biennial International Convention**

**"Waves in Motion – Sailing through Learning Connections"**

For more info about these and other ECMMA regional conferences, visit  
<http://www.ecmma.org>

## MEMBER NEWS

Beginning this Fall, **Maggie Corfield-Adams** will be on sabbatical from her music teacher's position at Frederick County, MD schools in order to begin her PhD degree at **University of Maryland**.

**Caron Dale's** Klezmer, Jewish & American music group **LOX & VODKA** will be performing on Saturday, July 28th at the Columbia International Day Festival, located at Columbia on the Lake, Columbia, Maryland. They will be featured from 2:00-3:30. Come out and join them!

**Monica Dale** recently completed a residency at the Lucy School (an innovative arts-based institution for early childhood.)

**Marie D'Andrea** will be teaching at the **Blue Ridge Suzuki String Camp** in Orkney Springs, VA. This is Marie's fourth year teaching Music Mind Games and cello and it is the camp's tenth anniversary that will be celebrated with a Baroque Ball on Wednesday evening, June 20th. <http://www.blueridgesuzukicamp.com>

**Nancy Nuttle's Music Together Montgomery** celebrated 10 years of family music making, Sunday, June 10, 4:00 p.m. at Glen Echo park with a free concert, open to the public, featuring all 7 MTM teachers and favorite Music Together songs chosen by hundreds of adoring families.

Congratulations to **Larissa Karp Sanders** and her husband. Larissa gave birth to their first child, Katherine Grace Sanders on April 10<sup>th</sup>!

**Maddy O'Neill-Dean** invites everyone to hear her and her Irish band, The Shebeens, on Sunday June 17<sup>th</sup> 6-8 pm at the Auld Shebeen Irish Pub & Restaurant in Old Town Fairfax. Reservations 703-293-9600. Very family friendly venue – come enjoy Father's Day! For more performances, visit <http://www.theshebeens.com>

**Corinne Turner** has been hired as Music Teacher at **The French International School** outside of Washington, DC beginning fall '07. Corinne was also recently featured in a *Washington Post* photo, conducting school choirs at the Farewell Concert of the **Rock Creek International School**. Corinne, husband Matthew, and their two daughters are thrilled to be moving into their own newly purchased home in Silver Spring, MD.



## TEACHER TIPS and BEYOND

By Regina Lacy Wilt

### A PICTURE SPEAKS A THOUSAND WORDS

## Teachers Learn and Enjoy Music and Movement At ECMMA's NE Regional Conference in Hopewell, NJ

In March chapter members -- *Marie D'Andrea, Diana Greene, Ming Hsieh, Vera Owens, Rebecca Sparrow, Kaja Weeks, Marni Ratner Whelan* -- traveled to NJ in order to take part in an informative and fun-filled regional meeting. Here -- a photo essay to convey the content and sensibilities of that 3-day event.

The meeting was hosted at Music Together's International headquarters -- a brand new, gorgeous, eco-conscious facility that no doubt contributed to everyone's comfort and high spirits.

**Laurie Mueller**, Conference Organizer (Left) called the Greater Washington DC Chapter to the stage during the final assembly to pay tribute and thank them for coming as a group.



Closing concert by the **Trenton Children's Chorus** and the **Princeton Homeschool Choir**. After all the teacher training, these young people beautifully showed what our work is all about.



**Robin Gilmore** (Left photo in back) leads groups in creative, cooperative, improvisatory movement. Each group has a few minutes to become an animal in movement. Can you guess what they are?



**Eve Kodiak** leads a music, sensory, and reflexology session.



**John Feierabend** with **Kaja Weeks** and **Regina Lacy Wilt**

**Ken Guilmartin** (Above, Right photo) realistically improvised the part of a “problem parent” while **Vera Owens** (Right photo in back) masterfully played the role of a well-intentioned yet challenging preschool class teacher! **Marni Ratner Whelan** (Left photo) became a spirited child in the class, while **Lynn Ransom** (Center Photo) was the music teacher who coped, taught, cajoled and made music with the whole class.

The innovative pre-conference workshop was led by **Lynn Ransom** of Music Together to illustrate the **Music Together Preschool program**.

*NE ECMMA Photos by  
Regina Lacy Wilt*

## The “UKE” – IT MAY BE THE INSTRUMENT FOR YOU!

By Lara Davis

*Lara Davis, is founder and owner of KidsTunes with Lara’s base in North Carolina and franchises in other locations. Lara was a presenter at the recent NE Regional Conference in New Jersey. Her workshop offered refreshing insights that balanced practicality, musicality, and humane attitudes regarding music teaching and the relationships that arise with children and teachers in preschool, daycare, and private school settings. Recently, Lara was Moderator for the ECMMA Forum (a cyber meeting place for members of ECMMA) and she offered a somewhat unusual but valuable suggestion for accompanying children’s singing and facilitating young fingers’ exploration! We thank Lara for her guest contribution as she shares her experience with the “uke.”*



I have been playing the piano since I was 5 years old. Naturally, when I became a "traveling" music teacher 12 years ago - providing music & movement classes mostly in preschools and daycares among other things - it was a natural extension to find a good keyboard and lug it in with me everywhere I went. I was very comfortable with a keyboard and loved the variety of sounds and rhythms I could use with the keyboard and how it added so much to many of our activities. What I *didn't* like was that it was often cumbersome, I always had to locate an electrical outlet that was close enough to our location for class (often requiring an extension cord) OR keep "D" batteries constantly in stock, it was difficult for me to really participate with my students during movement activities since I was tied to my keyboard, and it seemed to almost create a "barrier" between me and the children.

I had always wanted to play the guitar, but finding the time to learn and transfer my small motor skills learned via the piano to the unique hand positions of guitar chords, etc., seemed a bit daunting. A few years ago, one of my instructors encouraged me to try the Baritone Ukulele and I was surprised how easy it was! It is much smaller and lighter than a guitar, so therefore it is very easy to transport. Plus, there are only 4 strings instead of 6 so it's also much easier to learn the chords and configure your fingers accordingly. I used Mel Bay's "Fun with the Baritone Uke" - a bit dated, but easy to follow - and

learned 5 or 6 chords (I'm sure there are plenty of good guides available to get you started). Now, I can play almost any song I really want to with the children (I just transpose the key if needed) and I love it! I can get up and dance around with it. I can hold a chord and let the children take turns strumming. I even have the children in my first class each day help me tune it - they close their eyes and use "just their listening ears" to listen closely to each two-note set I play and tell me if they are the same or different. It's amazing how they have learned to discern even the slightest difference - meaning that one of them needs to be adjusted!

Two notes of caution: If you eventually want to play the guitar, make sure you get a **Baritone Ukulele** because it's four strings are identical to 4 out of the 6 strings on a guitar! However, the Soprano and Alto Ukuleles (even smaller - think of Don Ho) are tuned differently. Also, the ones I have used seem to go out of tune fairly easily, especially carrying them in the car all the time. So, I would recommend plenty of practice tuning your instrument with a piano at first but don't rely on this. Any good starter book will have instructions for tuning it just by adjusting the bottom 3 strings in relation to the top one. If you still feel uneasy about this, you can purchase an inexpensive electronic tuner from any good music store and carry it with you as well. Otherwise, play around with it and have fun!

Musically yours,

*Lara Davis*

Kidstunes owner

Early Childhood Music & Movement

[www.Kidstunes.org](http://www.Kidstunes.org) 1-800-635-6281

## *Finale ...*

This year has seen our "new chapter" move into a second year. Our meetings have been joyous events with new friendships developing and musical and creative ideas sprouting. We are still working out the logistics of bringing to fruition all our "good ideas in theory!" Part of that is having enough hands to go around and part of that is just modern life – but so far, we've been able to go with the flow and yet offer solid meetings and continued communication.

Everyone has their own way and ability to participate – but certainly every member's contributions -- whether in song, dance, writing, organization, thoughts conveyed, appreciative reading, cooking for our meetings, or bringing new friends and visitors – can be a valued facet of the kaleidoscope that we comprise. So, stay tuned and involved in whatever way you can at this time in your life!

*Have a wonderful, musical summer*

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



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