

Early Childhood Repertoire: Inherently Musical/Positively Enchanting

By Nancy E. Lineburgh and Chet-Yeng Loong

The soundscape in an early childhood music class creates a patchwork of musical experiences for the young child. This patchwork is laced with traditional songs and chants, children's literature, and high-quality recorded music. It is important for the early childhood music teacher to pay attention to the way repertoire and movement are performed, focusing on bringing young children to musicality through aesthetic presentations of musical materials.

The article that follows provides ideas regarding the choice and presentation of songs, chants, books, and recorded music for three basic purposes:

- 1) as preparation for singing;
- 2) as an exploration of the American and cultural repertoire; and
- 3) as an introduction to recorded music through movement.

The goal of the article is to provide teachers of young children examples of inherently musical material that, through thoughtful presentation, will positively enchant children.

Enchanting Children with Vocal Exploration as Preparation for Singing

At the start of an early childhood music lesson are activities that provide opportunities for vocal exploration. These activities help the child move from the speaking voice into the head voice, or the higher part of the voice, through silly sounds, such as "whee" and "whoops," by making environmental and animal sounds, by contrasting the high head voice with the lower speaking voice, and by using the voice expressively. Head voice exploration helps the child get out of the speaking part of the voice into the singing voice. The teacher's role is to model expressiveness and high, free vocal sounds when speaking chants, reading stories, and singing songs.

Chants with a "whee" or other words that use the head voice:

"Johnny, Johnny" (*The Book of Tapping and Clapping*, Feierabend)

"I Saw You in the Ocean" (source unknown, see below for text)

"This Is the Way the Lady Rides" (*Bounces*, Feierabend)

"5 Little Riders" (*The Book of Bounces*, Feierabend)

Chants that use high and low voices:

"Pussy Cat, Pussy Cat" (*The Real Mother Goose*, a Scholastic Book)—Alternate low and high voices. The high voice is the cat talking.

"To Market, To Market" (*The Book of Bounces*, Feierabend)—Say the first verse in a high voice, the second verse in a low voice.

"Grandma's Spectacles" (*Round and Round the Garden*, Williams)—Say the grandma verse in a high voice, the grandpa verse in a low voice.

"Here Goes a Turtle" (*The Book of Tapping and Clapping*, Feierabend)—Use high and low voices for the various animals.

"1, 2, 3, 4, 5" (*The Real Mother Goose*, Wright)—Use a low voice for the questions, a high voice for the answers.

Books in children's literature that promote vocal exploration:

Peekaboo by Mathew Price, Jean Claverie—Use a high, expressive voice for the "Peekaboo!"

Yo, Yes! by Chris Raschka—Inflect the voice up on the question words.

Mr. Brown Can Moo by Dr. Seuss—Use a variety of voices for the environmental and animal sounds. Give children ample time to make the various sounds.

Doggies by Sandra Boynton—Use a variety of voices for the various doggie sounds.

Hand, Hand Fingers Thumb by Al Perkins—Use an expressive voice for the "Dum ditty, dum ditty, dum, dum, dum" part. On "Hello, Jack" "Hello, Jake" use a

high voice for the small monkey and a low voice for the large monkey. Toward the end on "Many more..." start soft and get gradually louder through the end. The whole book should be read keeping a steady beat. Use a walking tempo for the beat.

The Very Lazy Ladybug by Isobel Fin—Children make movement sounds such as "boing, boing, boing," "swish, swish, swish," "swing, swing, swing," and "ah-choo" with the story.

Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! and *Don't Let the Pigeon Stay up Late!* by Mo Willems—Children echo "no-no" with *so-mi* throughout the book. (These are outstanding books for children between 5 and 7 years of age. Children who are too young cannot understand the humor.)

Enchanting Children with Materials from the Anglo-American Tradition

Traditional folk repertoire provides rich musical experiences for young children when performed expressively, with natural tempi and appropriate movements. For optimal expressiveness, the voice must inflect with the flow of the words for all spoken chants and the singing voice should be clear and in-tune for all sung material. The choice of tempo must make the song or chant feel alive, and dance-like or peaceful and serene, depending on the mood or intent of the piece of repertoire. The movements, either prescribed or invented by the teacher or the children, must complement the words and add to the expressiveness of the performance.

Songs and chants:

"This Is the Way the Ladies Ride" (*The Book of Bounces*, Feierabend)—Perform with a light voice, at a tempo that feels like a horse trotting. Change the pitch of the voice and the tempo for the various characters in the chant. Younger children can be bounced; older children can move their hands as though they are holding the reins of a horse.

“I Have a Little Pony” (*The Book of Bounces*, Feierabend)—Perform with a light voice in a tempo that moves, stopping after the word “stops” and speaking the end as fast as possible. Younger children can be bounced; older children move their hands as though they are holding the reins of a horse.

“So Fast, So Fast” (*The Book of Bounces*, Feierabend)—Use an easy, “trotting” tempo at the beginning of this song, moving to a faster tempo when the meter changes from triple to duple.

“Slowly, Slowly” (*The Book of Wiggles and Ticks*, Feierabend)—Perform the first verse of the chant slowly doing the prescribed movements; and the second verse quickly, again with the prescribed movements.

“Old Gray Cat” (*Share the Music*, Grade 1, Bond)—This song can be done as a tickle. The children creep, sleep, and nibble for the mice and cat. Then, on the “scamper” verse, the adult/teacher tickles the children.

“Jump, Jim-a-long” (*The Book of Simple Songs and Circles*, Feierabend)—Jump, walk, run, or twirl to this song. Set the tempo with the natural walking tempo of the children.

“Sally Go ‘Round the Sun” (*The Book of Simple Songs and Circles*, Feierabend)—Set the tempo with the natural walking tempo of the children. Use a high voice for the “boom.” Try the song faster and slower as you pretend that Sally is happy, sad, tired, full of energy.

“I’m Gonna Bore a Hole” (*The Book of Wiggles and Ticks*, Feierabend)—This chant is performed without a definite beat feel, but with a teasing voice. The adult/teacher makes a circle with the pointer finger that gets smaller and smaller and finally tickles the child.

“This Little Wind” (*The Book of Wiggles and Ticks*, Feierabend)—Perform using a quiet voice while rocking the child.

“This Little Baby” (*The Book of Wiggles and Ticks*, Feierabend)—Perform using a quiet voice, while enjoying the rhythmicity created by the repeated words “This little baby...”

“Roly Poly” (*The Book of Wiggles and Taps*, Feierabend)—Perform this chant with young children by moving their arms/legs up, down, in, and out. The voice can inflect higher on the “up” part and lower on the “down” part. Eye contact is important, too.

“Pat It, Kiss It” (<http://fairytale4u.com>)—Perform using a quiet voice. The first part has the feel of three meter. The last three lines are spoken quickly. Create motions based on the words of the chant.

Books:

If You’re Happy and You Know It by David Carter—Playful pop-up book creates a playful setting for this song.

The Wheels on the Bus by Paul O. Zelinsky—Playful pop-up book for this already playful song.

Hush Little Baby by Marla Frazee—Illustrations depict a pioneer family for this traditional lullaby.

When I Was Young in the Mountains by Cynthia Rylant and Diane Goode—Read using a hushed voice to capture the mood of this book.

Barn Dance by Bill Martin—Use a variety of vocal timbres to capture the mood of this book. This book is also featured in a *Reading Rainbow* video with the same title.

Enchanting Children with Other Culture-Specific Materials

Songs, chants, movement activities, and children’s books from the cultural literature also have a place in the early childhood music classroom. It is best to focus on one culture for an extended period of time, for at least a month, or better yet, a semester if you want children to develop an in-depth understanding of a given culture.

It is also important to provide recorded examples from the culture being studied. These recordings can help you and your students perform using a vocal timbre and style that is true to the culture. Make sure that the recordings you choose provide authentic examples of music.

Books that show people from various cultures, such as *Children Just Like Me* by Anabel Kindersley, are an important part of a cultural unit. The PBS series *Reading Rainbow* (www.readingrainbow.com) also provides another way you can help your students understand the people and customs of the cultures you present.

African-American Materials

Songs:

“Little Johnny Brown” (*Step It Down*, Bessie Jones)—Give each child a scarf or

small blanket or have one scarf/blanket that is passed around the class. As the first part of the song is sung, the scarf/blanket is smoothed out on the floor. As “fold one corner, Johnny Brown” is sung, you and/or a child fold a corner of the blanket. Follow the instructions given in the song. The teacher can improvise at the end of the first part of the song on the word “down” to allow time for the scarf/blanket to be smoothed out.

“Shoo Turkey” (*Step It Down*, Bessie Jones)—In performing this song it is important to teach the children to sing “Yes, m’am” in a syncopated way. Best to listen to the recording. This is a call-response song with the responses being “Yes, m’am” and “So, so” with an ending of “Shoo, turkey, shoo, shoo” that is sung by all. Little children like to either shake their finger on the “Yes, m’am” or jump on those words.

“Mama Don’t Allow” (*Mama Don’t Allow*, Thatcher Hurd)—When singing this song it is fun to allow the children to think of things “Mama won’t allow” and then sing about that. Just don’t “allow” anything dangerous!

“Charlie Over the Ocean” (*Share the Music*, 1st Grade, Judy Bond)—This is an easy echo call-response song for young children. The game is a drop-the-handkerchief one. This game is always a favorite!

“Down, Down Baby” (*The Music Connection*, 2nd Grade, Jane Beethoven)—To gain the full effect of the style, sing this song with the recording. Create motions for the roller-coaster and the “pop,” then follow the directions given in the text of the song.

Books:

What a Wonderful World by George David Weiss—Simply play the recording of Louis Armstrong singing this song and show the book. It’s magical!

Mama Don’t Allow by Thatcher Hurd—The book provides a story for the song. This book is also featured in a *Reading Rainbow* video with the same title.

Shades of Black by Sandra Pinkney—This book has wonderful celebration of African-American children. Use your voice expressively as you read the simple, poetic words in the book.

African Materials

Songs:

“Sorida,” song from Zimbabwe (*Let Your Voice Be Heard!* by Abraham, et al, and *The Music Connection*, Grade 1 by Beethoven, et al)—Perform this echo call-response with hand motions. The suggested motions need to be simplified for young children.

“Kye Kye Kule,” song from Ghana (*Let Your Voice Be Heard!* by Abraham, et al, and *The Music Connection*, Grade 2 by Beethoven, et al)—Perform this echo call-response song with the suggested movements for optimal expressiveness.

Books:

Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears by Verna Aardema—Use a variety of vocal timbres to enjoy the full expressiveness of this book.

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughter by John Steptoe—Be sure to make the voices of the two sisters different. This book is also featured in a *Reading Rainbow* video with the same title.

Cumbayah by Floyd Cooper—Sing the song with this beautiful book.

Mexican/Mexican-American Materials

Songs and chants:

“Bate-Bate” (*De Colores*, Orozco)—Be sure to accent the individual syllables of “chocolate” as they come in the chant and crescendo the last line.

“Buenos Dias” (*De Colores*, Orozco)—This is a fun song because it is the Mexican version of “Are You Sleeping?” which is the English version of “Frere Jacques.”

“La Arana Pequenita” (*De Colores*, Orozco)—This is the Mexican version of “The Eensy Weensy Spider.”

Books:

Musicians of the Sun by Gerald McDermott—Instruments can be added to enhance the story.

The Three Little Javelinas by Susan Lowel—This is a Hispanic version of “The Three Little Pigs,” bringing in some Spanish words and flavor. The story actually takes place in the Southwest of the United States.

Fiesta by Ginger Foglesong Guy and Rene King Moreno—Counting to 10 in

Spanish is made even more fun with this book.

Borreguita and the Coyote by Verra Aardema and Peter Mathes—A variety of vocal timbres will enhance this book. This book is also featured in a *Reading Rainbow* video with the same title.

Finding Your Own Way to Enchant Children with a Chant

Play around with voices, tempo, and movements to create a performance of “Father and Mother and Uncle John” that would be appropriate for the younger crowd:

“Father and Mother and Uncle John”
(*The Book of Bounces*, Feierabend)
Father and Mother and Uncle John,
Went to market one by one.
My mother fell off,
My father fell off,
But Uncle John went on and on and on
and on and on.

What did you notice when working with this chant? Is it in triple or duple, or could it be in either type of meter? What kind of voice would you use, high or low, or somewhere in between? How would you inflect your voice? How fast would you perform the chant and would you change the tempo at any point? What movements would you do? Is there more than one way this chant can be performed?

These are all questions you need to ask yourself when you are preparing a song or chant to use with your students. Experiment with different ways of performing the material. Your goal is to illustrate the feeling and meaning of the chant or song in the best way possible, bringing as much artistry to the material as possible.

Enchanting Children with Movement to Recorded Music

Choosing quality recordings and developing artistic movement routines for Western “art” music as well as cultural music is another challenge for the early childhood music teacher. Keep the examples to approximately one to two minutes in length, editing when necessary. Tailor the length of the example to the attention span of the

children being taught. Below is a list of musical examples and some suggestions for aesthetic movement that can enhance the listening experience of the young child.

Bach, “Bandinerie”—Use this composition for non-locomotor beat movement. The children face the teacher and simultaneously copy his/her movement. The movement of the teacher should reflect the lightness of the beat for this piece.

Bach, “Air in G”—Scarves are a perfect prop for this music. Model moving the scarf gently and smoothly through the air. Feet can move, but only occasionally and not to the beat.

Vivaldi, “Spring”—Provide pictures of the following: the sun, birds singing, a river, lightning/thunder for a rain storm. As the music plays, hold up the picture that goes with the music, starting with the sun, the birds, the sun, the river, the storm, and finally the sun again. This listening activity can be followed by a drumming activity where the children create wind, clouds, rain, and thunder on a drum.

Haydn, *Surprise Symphony*, 2nd movement—Children wad up a scarf in their hands, then tip-toe to the music, changing directions at the end of the first section (16 beats). On the sfz, the children throw their scarves up into the air and catch them. For the music that follows, the scarves are swayed, gently to the music.

Saint Saens, “The Swan,” *Carnival of the Animals*—The teacher provides swan-like movements for the children to mirror. The movements should be smooth and follow the contour of the melody.

Grieg, “Norwegian Dance,” Opus 35 No. 2—Read the book *Come Along Daisy* by Jane Simmons without the music. Then, read the book with the music, matching the part where Daisy gets lost with the faster part of the music, the B section. Daisy finds the mother when the music becomes slower, back to the A section. (The music is in ABA form.)

Mannheim Steamroller, *Traditions of Christmas*—Turn out the lights and slowly shine flashlights on the walls and ceilings to this peaceful music.

“The Wang Wang Blues” by Benny Goodman—Different movements are used

for each section as follows: running, following the leader in a zig zag pattern for the A section; moving in a circle stepping four steps and then a jump for the B section; free dance for the C section.

“Maple Leaf Rag” by Scott Joplin—Create a movement routine for the A section of this song incorporating beat movement and movements showing the contour of the melody, especially for the longer passage that moves up.

“La Raspa” (*Music Connection*, Grade 3, Bond)—Perform a simplified version of the dance that is prescribed. Instead of doing heel jumps with alternating feet, simply jump three times, then pause to fit the music for the A section; for the B section, swing with a partner by linking arms.

Conclusion

The materials suggested in this article are, in our opinion, inherently musical. Most of the materials are taken from the traditional repertoire, the repertoire that has stood the test of time. The more contemporary materials have been carefully chosen for the musicality they can impart. Through musical presentations, the repertoire presented here can become positively enchanting for the child. As the early childhood music teacher pays attention to the way repertoire and movement are performed and the choices of repertoire that are presented, the young child can be enveloped in an aesthetic, musical soundscape. Thus, the seed of musicality can grow.

Sources for Songs and Chants

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Web Addresses Cited

http://fairytale4u.com
http://website.lineone.net

Chant with Unknown Sources:

“I Saw You in the Ocean” (source unknown)
*I saw you in the ocean,
I saw you in the sea,
I saw you in the bath tub,
Whoops! Pardon me!*

Children's Books

Aardema, Verra and Mathes, Peter. (1998). *Borreguita and the Coyote*. New York: Knopf (Random House).

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Bach, “Air in G.” *Bach's Greatest Hits*. (1991). RCA.

Grieg, “Norwegian Dance,” Opus 35, No. 2. *Grieg: Peer Gynt Suites Nos. 1 & 2; Norwegian Dance No. 2; Homage March*. Andrew Davis and Eugene Ormandy, Philadelphia Orchestra. (1993). Sony.

Haydn, *Surprise Symphony*, 2nd Movement. *Haydn, London, Surprise and Military Symphonies*. Antal Dorati, Philharmonica Hungarica. (1999). Decca.

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“The Swan” from *Carnival of the Animals*. *Carnival of the Animals, Children's Classics*. Leonard Bernstein, New York Philharmonic. (1998). Sony.

Traditions of Christmas. Mannheim Steamroller Christmas Celebration. (2004). American Gramophone.

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Source for Reading Rainbow Videos (www.readingrainbow.com)

Barn Dance
Borreguita and the Coyote
Mama Don't Allow
Mufaro's Beautiful Daughter

Note: Many of the resources, especially the children's books, CDs, and videos/DVDs, are available from local libraries.

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