



Family Music for Toddlers – Semester 2, Week 4 to 6

Dear Teachers,

Before exploring the new songs introduced in Weeks 4 – 6 in the *Dance With Me* lesson suggestions, I want to briefly encourage you to add back in the Rhythm and Tonal Patterns that you might forget to do each week. Yes, those puzzling patterns. Parents don't seem interested, the children won't echo you, and well, what are they there for anyway? Here is what Jill Hannagan writes to her parents:

In every class, I will do a series of both rhythmic and tonal patterns – short rhythmic phrases or little snippets of melody. I ask everyone to echo me as a group. As our comfort level dictates, I invite individual children to come take turns. Some children delight in this activity, while others don't want to have anything to do with it. Take heart; at this point, it really doesn't matter what your child does with patterns in class. Much more important is what they do in the comfort of your home, or in your car! Think of the pattern work we do in class as a model for you and your child to play with patterns at home.

*However, I do want to take a few moments to remind you where we are going with these patterns in later Musikgarten classes. You will notice that there are 4 basic sets of patterns that we use in all of this year's classes. That is because these 16+ patterns form the basic building blocks of the music language; in fact, you might think of these as the keys that the children will use to unlock the code of traditional music notation. Next year, in *The Cycle of Seasons*, the children will learn a special language for these patterns (some toddlers may have already begun this process), and they will begin to aurally find these patterns in the songs we sing. The following year in *Music Makers: At Home in the World* they will see these patterns in notation; and the following year in *Music Makers: Around the World*, they find these patterns in written music. In *Music Makers: At the Keyboard*, it all comes together for them, as they are able to look at the music in the book and sing the songs represented by the notation. Simply stated, they are able to read music with comprehension!*

So don't worry if your child doesn't come to take a turn echoing patterns with me. But do encourage pattern play at home, in the car, or anywhere that you have time to pass. It is easy and oh so valuable!

As I teach this program I watch the delight in the children's eyes when I pull out my microphone. When these same children years later go to the keyboards and begin to find these patterns in a song I am delighted knowing I sowed those seeds many years ago. The patterns are a natural language for these children. So your homework is to begin to work on your patterns so they feel natural to you also. As your comfort grows I hope you will add them weekly to your toddler classes.



Week 4

There's a Little Wheel – Make sure you start on a D and no higher! This piece goes up an octave, and if you don't plan ahead your parents will squeak and creak on that high note! Keep a D resonator bar close by and quietly tap it to get your starting note.

Whoops! Johnny - Keep the pace slow as you name each finger. Ask the parents to play this finger play using their child's hand. As you repeat, use the children's names. Don't forget to include your own name. Some children love it when YOU play the game with THEIR fingers. Some don't. Weeks later I often hear parents mention how their children will play this game at home including the names of everyone in their family including grandma and grandpa. Don't be surprised if they include your name on their list!

Who is Walking? – This piece calls for some logistical planning. I prefer to hand out the scarves, giving one color to parent and child. Depending on age I will either ask what color that child would like. I limit my colors to the four colors – Blue, Red, Yellow, and Green. If you have more, fine, just know it may take longer for the child to decide. Keep a scarf in each color for yourself. Now you can begin. Let the children explore the scarves first, swooshing and swirling. I like to add verbal descriptions to the movement in the room and perhaps have everyone do the movement one child is non-verbally suggesting. I may have to play a game of peek-a-boo before we start this song. As long the parents are playing along, this game will run smoothly. Please don't expect the children to follow all the instructions and stand only when their color is called out. Hey, adults also will not be listening so give them time, too.

Week 5

Looby Loo – This familiar song has some interesting variations on the name. My parents sing, "Loopty Loo" – could it be our Long Island accent? Remember to show the actions without the hoops. Then distribute the hoops and let the children explore the hoops. The rule I say aloud is, "Parents, stay close to your children as they explore the hoops." I don't give hoops to grownups – too dangerous! Once the children have had a moment we play the song. I model sharing my hoop with a child, and we go around holding the hoop together. Many of the children will refuse to share their hoop with their grownup. Please reassure the parents that this is fine. They can continue to sing and move as if they have a hoop. Give the children time to put their hoop on the floor, IF they choose to put their hoop on the floor. Repeat this game often.

Five Freckled Frogs - has become my favorite story of the semester, but this didn't happen the first time I taught it. I was nervous that the song had too many repeats and by the third verse the children were running around, and I lost them. I brought in 5 green stuffed frogs. That sort of worked, but I had a tough time getting the frogs back AND I needed more frogs so everyone could hold a frog. I found the frogs too visual and got in the way of the intention of the piece. So I ended up changing it into a finger play. A asked the parents to play along. This has kept the song a favorite over the years of repeating this song. It is always a temptation to bring in a visual prop, but I find it moves the child AWAY from the



aural experience. What is the purpose of this song? It is a call and response song. Practice the responses with the parents at the beginning. Then let the story of the song bring the children to it. We also love to subtract between verses. "How many frogs are left?" Each time a frog disappears I act out getting a bit more anxious, "Where did the frogs go?" At the end, they are all gone. I am visibly upset. I look for the frogs everywhere in the room. You can decide if you want the frogs to come back or not. Then we jump, jump, jump like the frogs around the room.

Week 6

Bim Bam – This lovely rocking song is actually a Chassidic circle dance. By slowing the tempo, it becomes a soothing activity in your classroom. I like to mention to my parents that when their children are in the Music Makers at the Keyboard Program, they will learn how to play this piece on the piano!

Like *Sing with Me, Dance with Me* has many songs and activities to keep your families coming back. The program is active and joyful. We also get to send a weekly message that music makes a difference. "Here at the dawn of the 21st century, music is once again being valued as part of a well-rounded education. Researchers, teachers, parents, and educational leaders are all coming to the same conclusion: music makes a significant difference in the lives of children. Music improves overall development, decreases learning problems, and enhances brain functioning – all in a learning environment that fosters the building of community. Through music, we touch the whole child and can make a positive impact on the child and family." (Page 7, Family Music: Volume 1)

Happy teaching,

Ellen