



THE SOUND OF MUSIK

by natasha mancuso
 photography by james woodcock and larry mayer



musikgarten
 trains little
 ears for
 early musical
 development



Top left: Karen Haughey conducts a xylophone orchestra. Top: One of many xylophones used to teach children. Center: Karen Haughey, owner of Musikgarten Studio. Bottom: Mothers dance with their children. Left: Sy Gellner playing the xylophone.



KAREN HAUGHEY IS A TREAT TO MEET.

WHILE MANY OF US GO ABOUT OUR DAILY ROUTINE WITH A SENSE OF OBLIGATION, KAREN EXUDES A REMARKABLE PASSION FOR HER WORK, AND HER ENTHUSIASM IS UTTERLY CONTAGIOUS.

I FIRST MET KAREN AT HER MUSIC STUDIO FOR MUSIKGARTEN PARENT ORIENTATION. BY THE END OF THE SESSION, I WAS COMPLETELY ENGAGED, AND I KNEW THAT MY YOUNG SON WOULD BE, TOO.

Musikgarten offers early childhood music education to children from birth to 9 years. Started in Germany (hence the unusual spelling), Musikgarten operates with the belief that every child has musical potential. It offers sequential curriculum for each developmental stage. By building upon and repeating patterns and melodies semester to semester, children learn to listen, recognize and reproduce music, by singing, tapping or even writing down the melodies and rhythms. “Every child has potential to be musically literate,” says Haughey. “That is to be able to hear a melody and to write it down.”

Before the opening of her music studio, Haughey taught traditional piano lessons for 15 years. In college she developed a curiosity about musical talent: how much was inborn and how much could be developed. “I researched music education giants of the 20th century: Kodaly, Orff, Dalcroze and Suzuki,” she recalls. “When I discovered Musikgarten, I saw that the authors had researched these philosophies and more, including brain development, the importance of nature in a child’s development, how children learn best through movement.”

The primary authors of Musikgarten, Dr. Lorna Heyge and Audrey Sillick, combined methods in music education with early childhood education, such as the Montessori method, to develop a spiral system that layers activities and practices appropriate

for the child’s age and supports general development. “Class activities are broad-based,” says Haughey. “Every class at every level involves the student in singing, movement, listening, playing instruments and working toward music literacy.”

Music education benefits a child at every stage of development. As babies and toddlers move to music, they learn body control – dancing when music plays, stopping when music stops; they learn how to express and be aware

of emotion through recognizing sad and happy sounds. “Body and impulse control are important skills for school readiness. In our classes we work on connecting aural skills to body movement. We also work on coordination and space awareness which improves kids’ social skills.” As the word about Musikgarten spread, speech and hearing experts started recommending Haughey’s classes to families of children with speech delays or hearing challenges.

“All four of our children have taken Musikgarten lessons at one time or another,” says Louis Spencer-Smith, the owner of All

About Pianos and an inspired parent. “Not only did I come to appreciate the curriculum, but I earned a tremendous amount of respect for the dedication, skill, patience and quality of Karen Haughey’s teaching. Knowing how active and recognized she is on a national level, I feel

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— Karen Haughey
 Owner, Musikgarten Studio



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1) Karen Haughey teaches note reading to young children. 2) Kids raise their hands to answer questions. 3) Jennifer Bodine and her 2-year old daughter play with colorful scarves. 4) Tiny drummers form a circle to learn rhythm.

Billings is fortunate to have an early childhood music educator of her caliber."

Inspired, I signed up my son for the "Play with me" class, which proved to be completely opposite of my own childhood music lessons experience. Growing up, I learned to play piano the old-fashioned way. Although I had a wonderful piano teacher, the general approach of the time was strict: sit up straight before you touch the keys, memorize your notes, don't fidget, practice, practice, practice. "Eighty percent of students drop music after the first year in the traditional school system," says Haughey. "We often look for "talent" when it comes to music. We don't take a kid who's slow in reading and say 'Oh, it's Ok, you are not very good at this, so let's do something else'. But we do that in music. In Musikgarten, 75 percent of students continue from year to year."

As my son and I began to attend weekly classes, I was amazed at how much he and I learned while having fun. We played drums, bells, and bars, danced the waltz, listened to and mimicked nature sounds, repeated rhythms into a "microphone," learned the difference between loud

and quiet, sad and happy. His favorite part was dancing in a circle with other children at the end of every class. I was impressed with the quality of the recordings chosen by Haughey for the classes and by how much she was able to engage children with virtually no equipment. "Our society is losing community culture due to constant visual stimulation," observes Haughey. "We replaced telling stories around the campfire with reality shows and singing together with watching "American Idol." We have become passive observers of our culture - watching, listening but not participating."

Haughey's past helped her form this ideology. "My dad sang and danced with me in my childhood," she recalls. "Both my parents loved children, were playful and encouraging. They also taught us that we needed to think beyond ourselves and to try to make the world a better place." Musikgarten does just that - inspires parents, teaches children to love music and makes the world a better place one family at a time. **MC**

For more information on Musikgarten visit Karen Haughey's Web site at www.karenmusicstudio.com or e-mail karenmusicstudio@yahoo.com For information on classes and enrollment contact Darci Hertz at 406-690-2427 or at dhertz@q.com

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