

# “Celebrating Early Childhood Music”

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NMMEA GM All State Session Hand Out  
UNM ED Room 206, Albuquerque, NM  
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## I. Introduction

Young children, babies and toddlers do not view the world the way adults do. Their reality is a mix of fantasy and reality, since their life experience is limited. Our job as music teachers is to offer them rote and active musical experiences that bring joy to their lives and lay a foundation for music literacy. One must learn to listen and speak before he or she can read and write. (Suzuki Philosophy)

This workshop is geared towards teachers of public preschool programs embedded in elementary schools for ages 3-5 and kindergarteners with some ideas for parent and baby or toddler classes like those offered at the UNM Music Prep School.

## II. My Background...Why I Love the Little Guys!

A few years ago, my kindergartners were singing a closing song with my puppet, Mary Flora. At the end, my little Sophia stood up, and blurted out, “You need to come to my birthday party, so you can sing and play the piano, and I can dance!” It was quite the surprise. A hush fell over the class as everyone waited for my reply. Not wanting to disappoint Sophia or start a trend, I brightly replied, “Maybe...”. Sophia’s impassioned request honored, humbled and reminded me why I love the little guys so much!

## III. Why Aren’t They Singing? (Or what is going on when they just stare at you...)

Children develop in their own time and their own way: “A berry ripens in its own good time . . . & so does a child’s readiness . . . trust children to grow according to their own timetables.” Mr. Rogers

Babies, toddlers and many young children need observation time. It is part of the learning process. Some children will just do it while others need to figure out what to do

first through observation. Again, the Suzuki philosophy comes to mind: 1) Listen, 2) Speak, 3) Read and 4) Write.

#### IV. Developmental Milestones:

Ages 0-3>Babies & Toddlers/

Ages 4-6>Preschool & Kindergarten/

Ages 6-8>1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grades

The timing of Early Childhood Music Education is so important, because physical and mental development is happening at an exponential rate during those first years. According to music researcher Dr. Gordon, music aptitude starts before birth. Studies have suggested that babies can hear well in the womb during the last trimester. Therefore, they can learn songs by rote during that time.

The next window is birth to three years old. The brain triples in size during those years. Synaptic pathways (brain connections) are rapidly being made and developed during birth through three years old. The next most active time for making and developing synaptic pathways is between three and six years old. It dwindles between six and nine years old. Then after nine years old, aptitude for learning new things becomes harder.

Also, synaptic pathways are pruned when unused. When my daughter was born, I decided to make Mondays Italian or Spanish days, Wednesdays German days and Fridays French days. We ate foods, read books and sang or listened to music from those different cultures. We did it for about two and half years until my son came along. Then it became difficult to continue... Years later, my teenage daughter was able to learn Spanish very quickly. She skipped a semester on the recommendation of her teacher. It personally validated that Gordon was right!

John Feierabend, a Gordon fan, also proposes that there has been a cultural change in recent years. Music making is not happening at home as much as it once did, so ECME is more important than ever. With most families now living far apart from one another, grandparents are not able to teach wiggles and tickles and bounces to their grandchildren like they did in the past while living in the same house or very nearby.

- V. Creating Lessons for Early Childhood Music Education  
Lesson routines should include:
1. Predictable structure: beginning (opening), middle, end (closing)
  2. Repetition: Change it up-think senses
  3. Flow and Transitions: active, quiet, singing, moving
  4. Sing: *you* will sing, mostly
  5. Do, don't say
  6. Choose age-appropriate & good quality songs, books, props, instruments
  7. Context: classroom space, class dynamics, etc.
  8. Relationship: trust and connection
  9. Play!

VI. Preschool/Kindergarten Lesson Format

This format is a suggestion based on years of ECM workshops and experience. When I taught baby and parent classes at the UNM Music Prep School, I added a "Name That Tune" reading component for the parents. Sometimes adults get bored with the slower pace needed for the babies and that segment helped keep their interest.

- Opening Song
- Movement
- Vocal Warm Up
- Lullaby
- Dancing
- (Name That Tune)
- Playing Instruments
- Book
- Closing Song

**Needs:** **Music for "It's So Good to See You," "Trepak" from The Nutcracker, "Frosty" The Snowman, Music for "A la puerta del cielo," Stuffed Animals, "Seven Jumps" Shenanigans: Dance Music for Children, Drums and Cymbals and Gongs, (Youtube: CNY 2013 ~ Acrobatic lion dance by Khuan Loke @ Tropicana City Mall,) My First Chinese New Year book, Music for "Under One Sky" by Ruth Pelham**

**Theme: We Are All A Family Under One Sky**

- I. Opening: “It’s So Good to See You”**  
*All stand in a circle ready to do body percussion and count with the steady beat.*
- II. Movement: “Trepak” The Nutcracker**  
*Students dance to the ABA form following the chart.*
- III. Vocal Warm Ups: Follow “Frosty” the Snowman**  
*Students stand and follow the snowman with their hands and voices.*
- IV. Lullaby w/stuffed animals: “A la puerta del cielo”**  
*Students sit in a circle, and sing to their babies the “A la puerta del cielo” chorus of the song.*
- V. Dance: “Seven Jumps” Shenanigans: Dance Music for Children**  
*Students stand in a circle and follow the teacher’s moves.*
- VI. Playing: Drums, Cymbals and Gongs**  
*Students play a jogging-walk pattern on their cymbals and drums and teacher leads it with the bass buffalo drum.*
- VII. Book: “My First Chinese New Year” by Karen Katz**  
*Students sit in a bunch and listen to story.*
- VIII. Closing: “Under One Sky” by Ruth Pelham**  
*Students summarize class, sing the chorus to “Under One Sky” and line up after Mary Flora says goodbye.*

**VII. Long Term Planning Strategies**

- Figure out your class routine categories
- Make a notebook with tabs featuring those categories and fill with them songs and activities
- When planning a concert performance, make smaller goals backwards from the concert date.
- Try to choose concerts songs from the categories and make them part of the routine as much as possible.
- Realize that the little ones have very little if any experience, so performances require more repetition, rehearsal time and creativity.

## VIII. Resources-My Influences

This list is not comprehensive. It includes materials that I have used most created or collected by the teachers who I respect most. There are many other resources that you can use too; these teachers and materials are the ones that are part of my journey as a music educator.

- Early Childhood Music Books-John Feierabend Collections
- Kriske and DeLelles Books
- Jill Trink's Song Books-Folk Song Collections
- Musikgarten-Materials
- Music Rhapsody-Lynn Kleiner
- Music Together-Guilmartin & Levinowitz