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GROWN-UPS STILL GROWING MUSIC TOGETHER PARENTS DISCOVER THEIR OWN MUSICALITY

As we begin a year-long celebration of Music Together's 15th Anniversary, we acknowledge and appreciate the essential role of parents—it wouldn't be Music "Together" without them. In this issue, we celebrate the ways Music Together classes have helped grownups discover and enjoy their own musicality.

After a few semesters of attending a Music Together class with his daughter Louise, Potter Palmer decided to learn to play the ukulele. He admits he felt a little sheepish at first, using the class as an excuse to learn the instrument, and going through the songbook with her, trying to play the songs. "But now," he says, "I don't need Louise in order to play!"

This is the kind of story Music Together parents have been sharing over the last fifteen years: stories of beginning to play an instrument abandoned years earlier; of arriving to class with a child sleeping in the stroller, yet joining the circle and participating for their own enjoyment; of joining a chorus, taking a dance class, or finding themselves spontaneously sharing songs on the playground.

When Kenneth K. Guilmartin first conceived of a music program for children, he knew that parent participation was essential. Because a parent is a child's most important model for music-making, Ken created an environment where learning music occurred naturally, from parent to child—just as the music of our culture had been passed from generation to generation for centuries. But he recognized that recent generations of parents had more likely grown up clustered together in front of the television rather than standing around the piano singing. They were accustomed to hearing music from transistor radios, vinyl records, cassette tapes, and CDs, but were not necessarily used to singing together with groups of friends or relatives.

Not surprisingly, as music has become more of a passive listening experience and less of an actively shared experience, there has been an erosion of music competence in our culture. Would today's parents even know how to participate with their children in a musical setting? Ken and program co-author Lili Levinowitz realized they had to make Music Together a safe place for adults to explore their own music-making abilities in order to foster the relaxed, playful atmosphere where learning could flourish in their children. "Rather than simply allowing the parents to be present as observers," Ken explains, "we took it as part of our mission to provide them with as fulfilling an experience as we give their children."

And it worked! It soon became clear that many of the parents passing through the program were beginning to see themselves as music-makers for the first time and

loved it. A program conceived so that children could reclaim their musical birthright was giving adults their voices as well.

Potter Palmer thinks that Music Together brings parents back into the musical world they enjoyed as children or teenagers but may have lost in the busyness of adult life. "The constant presence of the music, via the recording and songbook, has encouraged me to

Parents Ben Shedd and Janine Boise have also brought Music Together into their personal community. "We didn't ever think of ourselves as being musical, but we now share Music Together songs with our friends and family, even singing the 'Hello Song' and 'Goodbye, So Long, Farewell' at family gatherings."

Although they consciously chose the Music Together program for its interactive philosophy, they are surprised and delighted by how much the learning has, in Ben's words, "mirrored back" to them personally. "Now we are musical all the time," he says, having become adept at improvisation—"playing" the playground slide or turning the inside of the car into a giant percussion instrument. And, he says, "Janine has found her voice. It's wonderful hearing her sing and realizing my wife has such a beautiful voice."

Initially cautious about introducing television or other passive entertainment to their twenty-month-old daughter, they've discovered that Callay has no doubt that music is meant to be an active, shared experience. Her response to the music on Sesame Street or to CDs her parents bring home from the library is to jump off the couch and dance, insisting her parents do the same. "Before Music Together, it wouldn't have occurred to me to join in like that," said Ben. "We hadn't noticed what fun it could be. But now making music saturates everything we do."

This is true for Patricia Haddad as well. "Just about everything we do—if we're cooking, or cleaning... or out on our deck playing, we're always singing."

She also uses music to defuse potential confrontations with her two boys. Instead of allowing battles over shoes, baths, or bedtime to escalate, she puts music to creative use. "I'll start singing whatever the message is I want to get across, and the change from talking to singing will get their attention and they'll start singing back to me. It breaks up the mood. It's like the Pied Piper, and suddenly they'll go along with whatever I'm trying to get them to do."

Other parents have discovered this magical aspect of music. When Diane Rickert's son Logan fusses at being in the car, she uses the recording or sings the "Hello Song" to calm him down. Cynthia Schreiber discovered that when two-year-old Jack "is in the middle of a tantrum, a good Music Together song might bring him out of it."

Whether parents are using their Music Together experience for creative child management, or as a journey of self-discovery, or as a way of sharing with friends and family, or just for their own pure music-making enjoyment—they agree that being in the program has brought them unexpected benefits as parents and as people. Besides, as Ben Shedd put it, "It's such a wonderful way to have a conversation with our child before she can actually speak."



make space for it in my life again, and that has enriched all our lives in unexpected ways."

In fact, he's now playing his ukulele in a band with other parents from Louise's former preschool, and their practice sessions have a distinctly Music Together flavor. Band members bring their kids, who can choose to enjoy their own games or to join in the music-making whenever they're inspired.



MUSIC TOGETHER

WOW!

"Wow—I just finished teaching my first week of Music Together!" said Susan Archer, a brand new teacher in Red Deer, Alberta, Canada. "I have to tell you, it was a wonderful experience! Watching the children respond was so rewarding. The babies... the toddlers... amazing!"

"Watching the music engage both the children and the moms was a thrill and a testament to what a wonderful job the folks in Princeton* do. Believe me, I spent all summer checking children's CDs out of the library and listening, listening, listening... there is NOTHING on the market that compares to the rich simplicity of Music Together productions. And the training I received revolutionized my way of presenting music to children."

Teachers learn the Music Together philosophy and program in trainings like the one Susan attended. Professional growth continues on-line and in-person through regional workshops offered several times a year. Please see the information to your left to learn more.

*The national offices of Music Together LLC are located in Princeton, NJ.

IT'S A GOOD THING...

Employees at Music Together LLC have grown accustomed to working in an environment where the program they work to create makes itself heard—and sometimes loudly! Systems Director Michael Reddy complains good-naturedly about the working conditions: "My computer programming station is just on the other side of the wall from the teaching studio. Sometimes I wish Music Together songs weren't so catchy!"

Accounts Manager Marianne Bruswitz once caught sight of her boss, founder/director Ken Guilmartin, in the middle of a teacher training demonstration class. He was howling and barking to a room full of children, parents, and trainees. "I immediately felt better about my day," remarked Marianne.

And National Workshops Coordinator Rosemary Hurley certainly learns the songs each semester. "I attend classes with my daughter and grand-daughter; then I hear the same songs every day for ten weeks through the studio wall!"

It's a good thing the music's so good!"

"I LOVE IT, TOO."

"My youngest son Jacob and I went through the Music Together program, and he loves the music. I love it, too," said Danella Halle, a parent in Springfield VA.

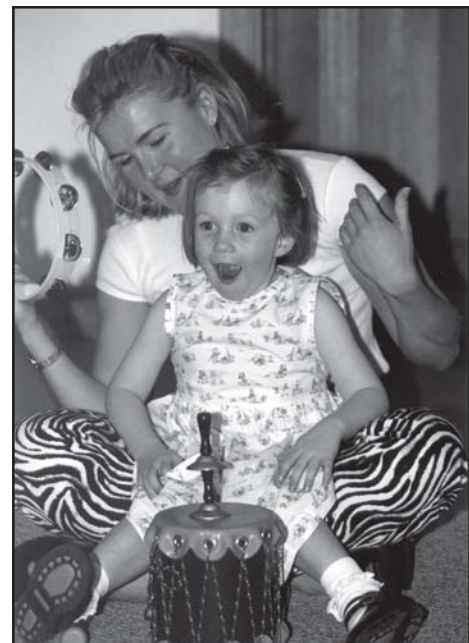
"I have an anthropology background, and I think it is especially important for children to be exposed to music of the world—and because of Music Together, I've been stimulated to do some folk-song research again myself. Also, I picked up the guitar which I haven't played for years. One night my three boys were each in their own rooms trying to fall asleep. When I started singing, one came out and said, 'I didn't know you could sing.' I felt great and all three of them fell asleep easily."

Danella plans to become a Music Together teacher. "I lead movement at the cooperative preschool that Jacob attends. I think they will want Music Together, because the preschool is a family enterprise—their philosophy is that you educate the children and the families. This is just like Music Together."

MAKING MUSIC TOGETHER

Like so many Music Together parents across the country, Patricia Haddad of Plainsboro, New Jersey, has discovered her own enthusiasm and love for music after attending classes with her sons. Music Together inspired her to take up piano study, and she is now learning so much more about music herself.

"I've become more aware of music in my life and much more active about including it in every aspect of our family's daily life. The relationship with my children has been deeply enriched through our sharing of music. And living the music through the children has, in turn, brought music to life for me—and for all of us."



DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dear Parents, Teachers and Caregivers:

Although anniversaries celebrate arrival points in time, they also call for a look back at beginnings. Long before we first offered classes to the public in the fall of 1987, and well before my earliest investigations and experiments in early childhood music, a most important event occurred: I became a parent!

Through their children's eyes, parents get to discover the world all over again, especially the things they love. I loved music, and watching my daughter respond with fresh ears to piano sounds, or moving her brand-new body to rhythms for the first time, put me back to the thrills of my first musical experiences.

But I also loved learning itself. Learning, growth, development—all were endlessly interesting to me, whether my own, my family's, or that of the carrots in my garden. As I watched my daughter grow, and as I got past the classic parenting fears (responsibility, money, repeating the errors of my own parents...), I learned an amazing thing. I didn't have to teach her to do very much at all. Like all little ones, she watched and listened to everyone in her extended family and pretty much taught herself. I learned that by being myself, my daughter could learn to be herself.

Like parents who are fascinated with how their children grow, teachers who love teaching also love to learn—that's why we often take learning vacations. We know that by learning and growing ourselves, we are better able to help others learn and grow. As we develop skill and confidence in what we are teaching, we can shift more attention to studying our students. And we discover that these circles of teaching and learning help us grow not only professionally but personally, too.

Parenting is perhaps the most profound teaching that many of us ever do, although we may be unaware of it at the time. We tend to see ourselves more as caregivers, providers, and protectors than as teachers. We focus so intensely on what we are doing for our children; meanwhile, they are experiencing who we are. We do, do, do for our children, often not realizing the power of how we be, be, be.

I love to watch an adult in class gradually shift from monitoring her child's learning or behavior to participating and enjoying the music for herself. It's a magical transition to witness. New parents focus so intently on their children, as if no one else were there, even in a room full of two dozen bodies! But, as a grownup gets comfortable with the idea of just doing the music in whatever way she can, her head starts to bob loosely, maybe her eyes close a little, the shoulders pulse or the hips sway. Then the tambourine comes alive, the singing comes out, and—Ah, Success!—there's another adult who's reclaiming her inner music.

Then I know that for the rest of the week, her child's most important teacher will follow through on what I've sparked in the classroom, just by enjoying music herself at home. And whatever musical skill level her child may or may not achieve in the future, I know he will at least have learned to love being a music-maker, just like his mom or dad.



Kenneth K. Guilmartin
Founder/Director, Music Together LLC

CENTER NOTES

"I feel very privileged to have been part of Music Together from the beginning. At first there were only five or so centers, and we had to learn from each other and from our mistakes. Now we share experiences with hundreds of other center directors," explained Margery Hesney, director of the Dresher School of Music in Philadelphia. The commitment and collaboration of teachers and directors has been essential to the growth of Music Together from a single lab school to a program for thousands of families around the world.

"I've been with Music Together for over ten years because of the quality of the materials—the songs, the arrangements, and the production value of the CDs," said Larry Goldfield, guitarist, and center director from New Hope PA. "The material is appropriate for children, it's musically rich, and it's fun. It's not only stimulating for the children and the families, but it's also stimulating for me as a teacher. So I look forward to the classes to share music that I value and enjoy with the families."

Erica Mason, director of Manhattan's East Side Music Together since 1992, is inspired by the total joy that a family experiences through this program. "The classes are the joyful part; the challenging part is the administration. I've spent years building the community's awareness of the value of early childhood music classes. I want to preserve this and offer classes for the next generation of babies. It's the Music Together program that's so very valuable for us all."

RESOURCES

Many parents and caregivers who find the Music Together experience enriching are stimulated to seek out similar activities in their communities. They may sign up for a Dalcroze music-and-movement course, go dancing on the weekend, or join a chorus or a folk music group.

Music for People is an organization which is very complementary to Music Together. Founded by Grammy-nominated cellist/composer David Darling and Bonnie Insull, it is a grass-roots organization dedicated to revitalizing music-making for individuals and groups and to promoting music as a means of self-expression. David and the Music for People staff lead programs in the United States and Switzerland each year, providing workshops that are open to anyone who wants to bring more musical play and improvisation into his or her life.

The activities are based on a deeply-held belief that we are *all* musical, regardless of whether we took lessons or learned to read printed music. Music Together founder Ken Guilmartin speaks fondly of the program: "Music for People reminds me of why I got into music in the first place. And in recording the Music Together CDs, I've had the chance to work with about half a dozen Music for People alumni, including cellist David Darling and singer 'Uncle' Gerry Dignan."

Music for People workshops create the same atmosphere of acceptance and excitement that is a familiar part of the Music Together classroom—so any Music Together parent would feel welcome and comfortable there! To learn about these adult music-making opportunities, or to find out about their workshops, newsletter, or members in your area, contact Music for People at (877) 44-MUSIC or on the web at www.musicforpeople.org.

MAKING MUSIC

Fussy children and tired parents may find that travel time seems shorter, and family reunions are more fun when everyone makes music. Try singing some favorite songs at family gatherings and be ready for grandparents to be the first ones to grab an instrument or jump up and dance! The children will follow. You may need to put aside your shyness—but once you get going, you, your child, and everyone else will have a great time.

Some families dance after supper; others schedule Saturday morning play-alongs. Other families sing "Hello" and "Goodbye" to guests who visit, and some keep the cooks company playing pans in the kitchen. After a meal, people are generally happy to sit, so sing some familiar songs, like "She'll Be Comin' 'Round the Mountain" or "Eensy, Weensy Spider."

Families who travel know that Music Together CDs and songbooks can make the day. Bring some instruments, tie them on a short ribbon to your child's car seat so he or she can drop them and get them back with ease. Then sing your favorite songs, creating new verses to suit your situation. Make up stories about the illustrations in the books, using names of people or pets you know. When getting your child out of the car seat or waking a child when you finally arrive, make the transition easier with a song without words like "Ding-a-Ding" or "Mountain Dew." When you want the children to go to sleep, sing and snuggle with a lullaby like "Sleepyhead."

And whenever you feel like singing or playing instruments or moving to music do it... and see who follows!