

## What's Inside

Director's Letter

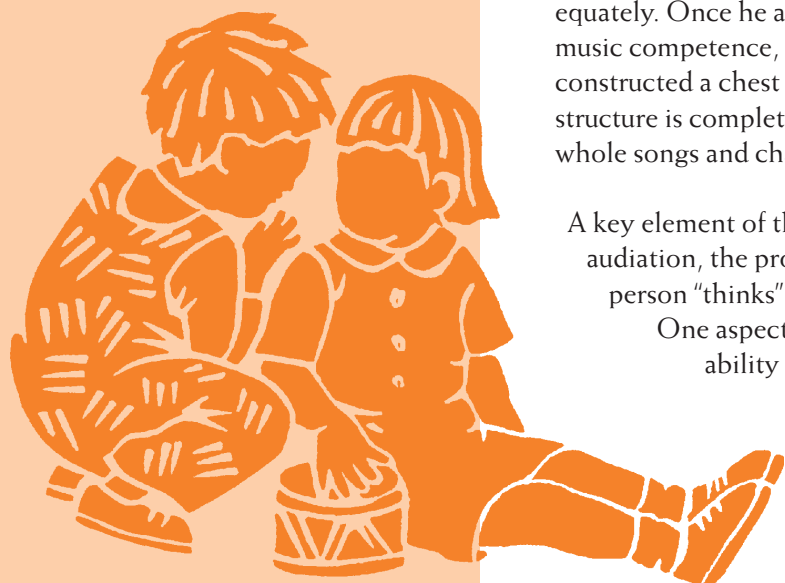
Parent & Teacher



Call and Response

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## Filling the Chest of Drawers

Why can't I ever remember the words to that Joni Mitchell song but can sing along flawlessly when it comes on the radio? How is it that I once walked home from a Broadway

musical singing all the tunes, only to forget most of them the next day? And why, decades later, can I still remember every song from the St. Patrick's Day pageant in second grade?

I'm not a cognitive scientist, but I know that the answers to these questions have to do with how music is stored in my memory or, more precisely, how adequately it was stored there to begin with and how easily I can now access it. Humans have the capacity to develop remarkable mental storage systems, even though occasional sloppy filing may make some music memories difficult to retrieve.

Establishing systems for memory and learning is an essential childhood task. Children's brains are, in a sense, doing double-duty. At the same time that they are processing many types of information, categorizing them, and storing them into memory, they are busily forming the very neural structures which perform these tasks. "Early experiences in Music Together help create the child's mental structures for understanding music," says Music Together Director of Research Lili Levinowitz, Ph.D. "Before the child develops the ability to sing in tune and move with accurate rhythm, it's difficult for him to store music memories adequately. Once he achieves this basic music competence, however, it's as if he's constructed a chest of drawers. Now the structure is complete, and he can store whole songs and chants for later retrieval."

A key element of this mental construct is audiation, the process by which a person "thinks" music or creates it.

One aspect of audiation is the ability to hear music when it isn't physically present—something we all do, say, in

the shower, when we think a song before singing it. Audiation is also the process which first helped us to learn the song—that is, to create an aural memory of it—and now helps us retrieve the memory so we can sing while we soap up.

It's really quite an impressive series of events. When we hear a song, our brain first gains an overall impression of the music. Then it begins to analyze its structure (the tonality, the rhythm, where the strong beats occur, etc.). Next it compares and contrasts the song with all the other music stored in our memory (that sound is a violin; this is classical music, it's a waltz). Then it predicts the likely paths the piece of music will take (we will be astonished if the waltz ends with a crashing electric guitar chord).

These are fairly rapid, preverbal processes, and the first two steps are, to a surprising degree, inborn. Just as children are predisposed to decode the language of their culture—to tease out the syntax and understand the rules before they can even speak—they are also predisposed to decode the music of their culture. Infants are alert to changes in pitch, can discern differences in meter, and can recognize whether two melodic contours are similar or dissimilar. A recent study even showed that one-year-old children could recognize a song they hadn't heard since they were in the womb!

Clearly, we all have an innate music intelligence, certain inborn abilities that we bring into this world. Like so many potentials in the child, however, natural music aptitude cannot flourish without a sufficiently rich environment. Music, like language, is a complex, learned skill which requires support. For this reason, Music Together provides a wide range of song styles, tonalities, and meters throughout its song collections. A family participating in all nine collections will develop a repertoire of over two hundred songs. A young

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## Dear Parents and Caregivers,

“Quality time” together may be the most important benefit of any class or activity you do with your child. But how do you choose among the proliferation of opportunities available? You might ask yourself if the skill or experience is fundamental to your child’s overall development and whether you feel competent to be your child’s role model.

For example, suppose you didn’t feel particularly competent at talking and, except for occasional manic bouts of it in the shower or while driving solo in your car, you did very little of it around the house, much less in public. But because you wanted to give your child the opportunity to learn the fundamental life skill of speaking her native language, you signed up for a “Talking Together” class. Suppose you found the class to be enjoyable for the whole family, and effective in stimulating the development of this skill. Perhaps you even improved your own talking skills! You’d settle in for the long term, confident that this experience will help your child acquire verbal fluency over time.

I make this analogy to language because:

- Like talking, music-making—singing, dancing, playing simple instruments—is a basic life skill, fundamental to our human nature and available to all, regardless of so-called “talent.”
- Like talking, music-learning requires the modeling of primary caregivers. By actively making music regardless of their ability, the grownups who love and care for children help them acquire the disposition to be music-makers, too.
- Like talking, acquiring a basic level of fluency—the ability to “speak” the language of music and be understood, that is, to sing in tune and move with accurate rhythm—requires most of the early childhood years, birth through kindergarten.
- Like talking, basic fluency in “speaking” music is a developmental prerequisite to formal instruction in reading, writing, and performing the language of music.

Of course, the idea of young children going to talking classes is silly; and they didn’t used to need music classes, either. People used to make their own music by singing, dancing, and playing instruments—in the home, on the porch, in the field, and by the fire. They didn’t need someone on stage or television to do it for them. Children learned to sing while bouncing on grandma’s knee or “dancing” on daddy’s shoulders.

For some families, two or three semesters of Music Together may be enough to reconnect them to their own natural music-making skills and dispositions. They learn why and how and have the ability to carry it forward on their own. Hooray! We’ve done our job.

But most families need ongoing support in this area. So for them, Music Together class becomes the porch, the living room, the fireside community of music-makers they can’t find elsewhere. Their children thrive in this musically rich environment. And these families discover how music can help make their quality time together even more precious.



Kenneth K. Guilmartin  
Founder/Director, Music Together LLC



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child with that kind of musical breadth is likely to develop strong audiation skills, and his “chest of drawers” will start to fill with music he can mentally reference, compare, and categorize as his music intelligence deepens.

Because it takes some time to develop basic music competence and create this mental structure for understanding and audiating music, it’s important to take the long view in thinking of early childhood music education. Children’s developing brains have a plasticity that enables them to gain new skills at an impressive

rate. This same plasticity, however, can also cause them to lose newfound abilities that aren’t exercised—the efficient brain will simply convert the neural connections to a different task. A child who has just begun to sing in tune and move with accurate rhythm needs ongoing active music experiences to maintain and enhance his ability or else it will atrophy. We’d find it comical if an adult who’d taken tennis lessons for two years announced she was going to keep up her game just by watching the US Open; how can we expect a child to maintain his newfound skills simply by listening to CDs?

There are too few opportunities for non-performance-oriented, live music-making in our culture. It’s no coincidence that too many people can sing only along with a recording; they’ve never been given much support for independent singing. Unfortunately, with music disappearing from elementary education, we can’t rely on schools to offer our children developmentally appropriate, ongoing music experiences. We at Music Together would like to change these realities, but in the meantime we can remain a safe haven for your musically developing child.

If a child can continue in Music Together classes beyond the age of three—the point at which, for most of us, conscious memory begins—then his relationship with music can become permanently linked with memories of positive nurturance and emotional connection. The bond already present with his parent or caregiver finds musical expression in shared classroom experiences which can extend into daily life.

A vital, engaged relationship with music at a young age thus creates the structures for music-learning and forms the basis for a lifelong love of music. Experiencing a wide repertoire expands one’s appreciation and sense of musical expression. Exposure to many different sounds makes them more familiar; and because we can recognize and categorize the familiar, music memory is enhanced. Best of all, that mental chest of drawers will be solidly built. With the ability to reach in and find a piece of music whenever she likes, a child can be an independent music-maker for life.

—Susan Pujdak Hoffman,  
Certified Music Together Trainer and ‘PlayAlong’ Editor

### Ongoing Research and Development at CMYC®

The Center for Music and Young Children® (CMYC), developer of Music Together, was founded in 1985. CMYC is committed to helping families, caregivers, and early childhood professionals rediscover the pleasure and educational value of informal musical experiences. Rather than emphasizing traditional music performances, CMYC encourages family participation in spontaneous musical activity occurring within the context of daily life. CMYC recognizes that all children are musical and that every child needs a stimulating, supportive music environment to achieve basic competence in the wonderful human capacity for music-making.

[www.musictogether.com](http://www.musictogether.com) • (800) 728-2692



# ■ ■ Parent & Teacher ■ ■

Any Music Together teacher will tell you that music is a naturally occurring, fundamental human expression which is important for its own sake. Yet there's no denying that facilitating a child's music development can also support other types of learning. At preschools that use the Music Together Preschool program, our music specialists support classroom teachers in weaving music into the entire school day rather than making "music time" an isolated event. As a result, the teachers see first-hand the power and enjoyment of making connections between music activities and art, reading, dramatic play, and storytelling—all of which help develop pre-literacy and other skills that are invaluable to the growing child. And parents can use these very same ideas at home.



Musical ideas can enhance the ways teachers or parents use other books, too. For example, adults and children can make connections between a story like "The Hungry Caterpillar" and the

song "Butterfly." Artwork can also be inspired by songs with children creating a collage of pictures of fruit for "Apples and Cherries" or making cardboard-and-string fishing poles inspired by "Crawdad."

While music is important for its own sake, its ability to deeply engage the emotions and the imagination make it particularly suited to a wider context, touching on other aspects of a child's development. We're not suggesting music will create "super kids," but it can enhance their lives in many ways—and bring great joy in the process.

For more information on teaching Music Together, please feel free to call us at (800) 728-2692 x329 or visit us online at [www.musictogether.com](http://www.musictogether.com).

The Music Together songbook is a wonderfully imaginative resource. Teachers or parents can use the fullpage illustrations as a springboard for storytelling by asking children to describe what's in the picture and then to imagine what happens next. The Fiddle song collection's picture for "Old King Cole," which shows a boy playing dress-up as a king, might inspire

## Singin' Every Day

When your Music Together teacher encourages you make up little substitutions in a song like the Fiddle collection's "Goin' to Boston"—singing of all the different ways the class could get there ("let's all take a train now," or a tractor, airplane, or elephant)—she's not only enlivening the class, she's teaching the adults how to improvise. Once adults discover how simple it can be to make up verses or simple dance moves, they're more likely to play with music in an active way with their children at home. And at home, of course, is where the young child's true learning occurs.

Perhaps you already embrace this idea. You're adept at making up verses about little things you do at home with your children, and even use spontaneous song at bath time, in the car, or when helping with a recalcitrant pair of shoes.

Your ability to improvise and adapt songs to daily living needn't stop with the songs you've learned in Music Together. While not every song is as fluidly adaptable as the Music Together songs are designed to be, you can still find ways to transform your relationship with your favorite music into a creative experience.



Is there a love song you enjoy listening to? Why not get out a few scarves and move to it with your child the way you might in a music class? If you enjoy classical music, remember that minuets and waltzes were designed to be danced to. You can even put on a Beethoven symphony and invent moves that imitate the ebbs and flows of the music or the characters of the various instruments. A chorus of violins might inspire different movement from piccolos or kettle drums. If you love the blues, try using a melody you know and make up words for your own "Bedtime Blues." Insert little references to your child's life into rock 'n' roll songs, or sing her name to a Latin beat.

You can apply Music Together's imaginative approach to many songs, reinforcing for your child the idea that music can be an actively creative experience. It's a great way to introduce your child to the music you love—and it may deepen your own appreciation of it, too.

Child-safe and creative instruments are available at Music Together LLC. For a brochure or to place an order, you may contact us in any of the following ways: call (800) 728-2692 (x345) between 9 AM and 4 PM EST; email [storeorders@musictogether.com](mailto:storeorders@musictogether.com); fax to (609) 924-8457; or visit [www.musictogether.com](http://www.musictogether.com).

**My son and I have been in Music Together since he was an infant, and we just finished the three-year cycle of song collections. What music activities do you recommend now that we've completed the program?**



Why, Music Together classes, of course! The Music Together program is a continuous cycle, not designed to be "completed" in three years. Because children learn through a spiral of exposure and experimentation, continually revisiting information on a new level, they can get tremendous benefits from repeating song collections as they grow older. The mixed-age environment allows them to explore their growing music skills in a supportive, family-like setting, while being acknowledged as a socially evolving "big kid."

Your son is completely different now in physical, cognitive, emotional, and social ways. As an infant, he could receive music information and process it but couldn't express it beyond sounding and wiggling. Now, as an older child, he can finally claim the music as his own, singing and moving with confidence. His understanding of music will deepen with repetition, which is an important aspect of learning.

Even Music Together teachers feel the benefits of repeating the collections. Many teachers have taught several cycles of collections; yet they consistently report that it's different each time because they themselves are different. Their teaching experience retains a freshness over time because of the new possibilities they glimpse.

This same freshness awaits your son, who will have an almost entirely new experience this time around, facilitated by his teacher's responsiveness to his needs as an older child. You'll also be giving him the wonderful opportunity to continue to practice and explore his emerging music skills in a supportive, friendly, and fun atmosphere.



# Almost Twenty

Just a year shy of its twentieth birthday, a constantly growing Music Together is undergoing big changes not only in bricks and mortar, but in bits and bytes. Bursting out of what once seemed to be an enormous office space, Music Together LLC is moving into new international headquarters in Hopewell, New Jersey, while retaining our Princeton offices as the home of our lab school and research and development arm, the Center for Music and Young Children. At the same time, we've introduced a fresh look on our redesigned website.

The new 15,000 square foot building is notable for its geothermal heating and cooling system. This energy-efficient system uses a series of deep underground wells to transfer heat to the ground in summer and extract it in winter. "If I have to look out the window and see a paved parking lot," says Kenneth K.



Guilmartin, Music Together founder/director, "it makes me feel good to know there's something going on underneath it that helps the environment." Ken is also pleased with the building's overall relationship to its natural environment, with landscaping and courtyard spaces inviting families attending classes or community events to linger and enjoy.

Our new website is now a great place to linger, too. Video clips offer glimpses of classes and interviews with parents and teachers. Visitors can find information about the Music Together program, check out the newsletter archive, read about the research behind the program, purchase instruments, and find a listing of all the Music Together centers around the world. Scrolling through the listings in 46 states and 14 countries tells just how far we've come in nearly twenty years—who knows what the next twenty will bring?

## Music Together® is...

a research-based, developmentally appropriate music and movement program for infant, toddler, preschool, and kindergarten children with their parents, teachers, and other primary caregivers. A curriculum pioneer since 1987.

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- Music Together classes near you
- Teacher training information
- Research, articles, stories

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