

Reviewed by **Holly Gilster**

## Bake You A Pie

By Ellen Olson-Brown and Brian Clafin

Illustrated by Jeffrey Ebbeler

Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press, 2006

The other day I was making my weekly visit to the local thrift store. I wasn't looking to outfit my kitchen: I was on a treasure hunt for children's books. Any thrift store's book section is a veritable gold mine for music teachers. Parents, retiring educators, and kids who've "outgrown" their books keep the thrift store and me well stocked.

Usually I sit on the floor browsing through books that have been so well-handled they are falling apart. Children must have loved these books! Call this clue number one on my treasure hunt. Good books have obviously been read and re-read.

Jim Trelease first published his *Read Aloud Handbook* in 1979. As a parental guide it is fantastic, but for the music teacher it is incomplete. My need for music classroom books is different. Sometimes I need a specific meter, or rhythm, or I'm in search of books about various musicians' lives. I might need a book to springboard into one of my extensive units. Enter clue number two in my search for literature: A musical focus.

Finally, as an artist myself, I'm a snob about illustrations. Since I read to elementary school kids, I will, of course, be showing them the pictures. These can either complement or distract from the story. Good-book clue number three requires entertaining or informative illustrations.

Imagine my delight then, when I find *Bake You a Pie* by Ellen Olson-Brown and Brian Clafin, and illustrated by Jeffrey Ebbeler. This is a hilarious and engaging set of verses about baking pies.

The book seemed a perfect introduction to my unit "Songs About Food." Each verse introduces a new "pie" (alligator, nuts-and-bolts, or tambourine tangerine), and the illustrator takes readers to a specific location to enjoy it. We ride a horse in cowboy country to eat blueberry pie. We travel

to New Orleans for mud pie. We walk the streets of New York City for a garbage-truck pie.

The illustrations are packed with details about the geographical locales of the pies. Neat! Now I have a social studies connection for my food unit as well. These informative illustrations clearly meet the needs of clue number three.

The text is written in metered verse, as if elaborating on a folk song. Could this be the answer to clue two? Eureka! Each verse IS a song! And look! Each is about a different style of music disguised as a pie. Ten distinct pies are introduced: opera, country, techno, western, gospel, jazz, bluegrass, a capella, Cajun, and rock-n-roll.

But then I discover that the back cover holds a CD. On it, each song is both sung and accompanied in the musical style of the accompanying picture. Now I have a book that I can use to introduce a unit in different musical styles. Clue number two requirement met.

Not only is each song recorded with full stylistic accompaniments, but the CD contains a karaoke track for sing-a-longs and a third track with a simple acoustic guitar. Any average student can sing the song, too.

This book is a treasure for the music classroom. If you can't find it at your local second-hand store, it can be purchased new or used from Amazon online. For any music teacher, *Bake You A Pie* is a treasure trove of experiences that unite music, language, and learning for your students. ■

**HOLLY DEUEL GILSTER** has been teaching music using an Orff Schulwerk approach for more than 30 years. She has studied children's literature with the acclaimed author Jeanne Whitehouse Peterson. An author herself, her young-adult short story "Lost" won first place in the 2008 SouthWest Writers International Writing Competition. She has published a book of listening "maps" for the elementary classroom teacher, called *Learning to Listen, Listening to Learn Vol. 1*, and is a frequent presenter at music teacher conferences.

