

## MOSES GOES TO A CONCERT

By Isaac Millman

Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998. \$16.

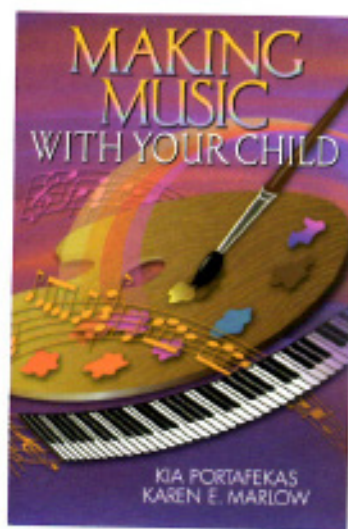
Upon first glance, *Moses Goes to A Concert* may seem like another picture book about the instruments of the orchestra or the concert-going experience, but a closer look reveals something more. This is a story about Moses, a young boy who has a dog, a toy-filled room and a new drum. He enjoys playing his drum, although he can't hear the sound it makes. Moses is deaf; he relies on feeling the vibrations of the drum through his hands and feet. He and his classmates, who are also deaf, are going on a fieldtrip to attend a young people's concert. Readers soon realize that this concert experience may be a little different from the usual.

The children find their seats in the concert hall and eagerly await the performance. They notice a variety of percussion instruments assembled in front of the orchestra, and their teacher, Mr. Samuels, describes some of them. When the female percussionist walks on stage to bow, Moses and his classmates applaud by waving their hands - as traditionally done in the deaf culture. This is only one example of the careful research the author has undertaken to authentically and respectfully represent the deaf community.

Before the music begins, Mr. Samuels hands his students balloons, which they hold to feel the vibrations produced by the musical instruments. Young readers will be intrigued by the ways in which deaf children can enjoy music. This may even spark a discussion about sound waves and the mechanics of the inner ear. Following the concert, the percussionist, who is also deaf, discusses her career and the obstacles she has overcome to reach her goals. Inspired by her story, Moses realizes that he too can do anything he sets his mind to. He excitedly goes home to share his experiences with his parents. Moses decides he will be a percussionist when he grows up.

Isaac Millman, author and illustrator of *Moses Goes To A Concert*, has written an inspirational story that teaches and entertains. He tells the story through traditional text, watercolor illustrations, and American Sign Language (ASL). The ASL illustrations, which include hand signs, body movements and facial expressions, are accurately depicted, enticing the reader to try them. The cartoon-like illustrations will capture children's attention without distracting from the story. Readers learn how those with hearing disabilities are able to communicate and participate in many activities enjoyed by others. And most importantly, children discover that through hard work and dedication they too can do anything they set their minds to - with or without a disability.

-Carlos Abril



## MAKING MUSIC WITH YOUR CHILD

By Kia Portafekas and Karen E. Marlow

MMB Music, Inc., 2001. \$12.95.

This little volume focuses on Ms. Portafekas's creative approach to teaching piano to students of all ages, with Ms. Marlow's collaboration in the writing process. Any music teacher, whether in a private studio or at any level of elementary, secondary or college teaching, is likely to be enlightened and challenged by the ideas in this book. The author's emphasis on helping the child express himself aligns very closely with the childlike discovery and improvisation so important in Orff Schulwerk.

How many of us were taught piano or an instrument from a method book, page by page by page? In elementary school, how many of us sat and sang songs from a book? How many hours did we spend in college ensembles performing the works of the classical masters? When were *our* musical ideas solicited, notated and shared with others? The answer is: never or hardly at all. By the time we became adult musicians, our creative sap had hardened inside petrified wood. Our discovery of Orff Schulwerk as teachers let the sap flow again, and books like this one can give us some special insights on opening and keeping the creative process flowing for our students.

In the author's studio, students practice technique in imaginative ways and work on two or three pieces each

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session. Lessons are fluid, though, and the author is always ready to seize a teachable moment and leap into the unknown.

From the outset, students explore the language of pure sounds, create their own ideas, tape them if they wish, and then keep them in their own special volumes. For beginners, the teacher will write these pieces down; later, students notate their own pieces. Play and discovery come first, followed by notation of a meaningful experience.

The book is divided into two main sections. "Simple Melodies," chapters 1 through 5, contains ideas on getting started, breathing exercises, basic theory, and ways to unlock creativity. "Now Take It," chapters 5 through 19, includes "one hundred games, ideas, exercises, and fantasies designed to release the creative flow."

The author uses the word "riff," taken from the jazz idiom, to describe this playful exploration of artistic elements that will become new expressions wherever they are tried. While developed for a piano studio, many of these riffs can be easily adapted for an elementary music classroom. These 14 chapters of riffs appear in a general directory in chapter 6. For example, there are ideas for children under age six, for energizing when tired, for starting a song, and for two or three people. They are also organized by topics: "Breathing Riffs," "Riffing Off Rhythm," guided fantasies, "Singalong Riffs," "On the Move" and "Musical Make-Believe."

This book makes it clear that activities which prepare students for and lead them into musical composition need not sit on the back burner of our lesson plans; instead, in this day of standards-based curricula, they should be the spark and fire that maintain creativity.

Pablo Picasso's quote in this volume, "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up," will challenge us to nurture self-expression beyond the elementary school years.

Read this book with an open heart. Let this author's many-faceted and lively process speak to you. Then, choose your own path and dance with your students, leading them to experience their very own musical ideas.

-Veronika Schultz



**WELCOME TO MUSSOMELI**  
**Children's Songs from an Italian**  
**Country Town (Book/CD)**

By Rosella Diliberto with Bryan  
Burton

World Music Press, 1999. \$20.95.

Rosella Diliberto was born in England to Italian parents and moved to Mussomeli, Sicily, at age 13. In this small Italian town she learned many children's songs and games that were a part of growing up in that area. In *Welcome to Mussomeli* she shares seven songs and much of the culture of her family's hometown.

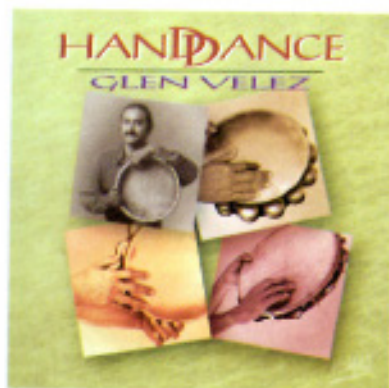
The songs, ranging from the silly ("Twenty-four Blue Cats") to the graceful ("Oh How You Dance, Beautiful Girl"), were all very appealing to my American students. While a few are obviously intended for younger children, each is appropriate for all elementary-aged students. A version of "Ring Around the Rosie" and a cumulative song helped my classes make connections to game songs with which they were already familiar. Most of the pieces have instructions for traditional movements and for extensions into other subjects, and all of the selections have suggestions for improvising movements or accompaniments. (None of the tunes are pentatonic and children would need to discover the chord structure before attempting accompaniments.) The cultural background of each song is also given.

All the tunes are easy to sing and remember. Each song is printed with

Italian lyrics and an English translation and includes permission for teachers to make copies for the classroom. The CD features Rosella speaking the text clearly — with pauses for student echoes — followed by the entire song accompanied by piano. This makes learning the songs practical and easy for teachers and children who do not speak Italian. A printed pronunciation guide is provided.

Also included in the book are historical and geographical information, two Diliberto family recipes, many photographs of Mussomeli, and a guide for linking the songs to the MENC National Standards. Three "OK-to-copy" sections are provided: a map of Italy, a timeline of Sicilian history, and three pages of cultural connections available on the Internet. These added features make this book valuable for foreign-language and social studies classrooms as well, bringing a new dimension to the music class.

-Alan Purdum



**HAND DANCE (CD)**

By Glen Velez

Nomad (a division of Music of the  
World, Ltd.), 1996.

Master drummer Glen Velez, who is a member of AOSA's Advocacy Council, has developed a dedicated following among AOSA members since his first AOSA appearance at the San Diego conference in 1991. This CD is a re-release of a recording by the same title from 1987, which was a re-release of an earlier recording titled *Frame Drum*

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