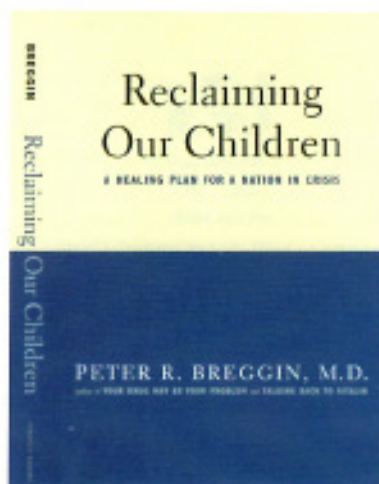




## RECLAIMING OUR CHILDREN

**A Healing Solution for a Nation in Crisis**

**By Peter R. Breggin, M.D.**  
Perseus Books, 2000. \$24.

In the wake of the spring 1999 high school shooting tragedies in Littleton, Colorado, and Conyers, Georgia, the first White House Conference on Mental Health was convened in Washington, D.C., in June 1999. The school shootings were repeatedly mentioned by the conference speakers as they recommended increased psychiatric drug treatment for the emotional and behavioral problems of children. The director of the National Institute of Mental Health informed the conference that two million children have depression, and that this, as well as other diseases of the brain, should be treated like general medical illness, with drugs.

Author Peter Breggin is outraged that personal suffering and misconduct by children is being increasingly attributed to genetics and brain disease without any consideration of environmental effects. He believes that the widespread drug therapy we are seeing for children is a mistake. "Instead of focusing on how to 'fix' our children, we will have to transform ourselves," he says (emphasis his). "We must begin immediately as individuals to transform our personal relationships with the children in our lives by making them a higher priority and especially by creating meaningful relationships with them."

Breggin goes on to discuss what he believes are environmental stressors for children, including the lack of a mean-

ingful parent-child relationship, divorce, domestic violence, abuse, isolation caused by technology, violent entertainment, peer abuse, racism, sexism, religious persecution, poverty, drugs, the availability of guns, and children's perceived lack of meaning in life. He continues with case studies from his private practice as a psychiatrist which show time after time that "a child's behavior will improve within a short period of time if the parents take responsibility for learning better ways of parenting."

Several chapters are devoted to problems children face in school, such as "school slavery" (too much homework) and social ostracism. An interesting chapter is the one in which the author describes several successful alternative schools, including a Quaker high school, a Jewish Yeshiva, and the "Phoenix" schools in Maryland which offer a Twelve-Step Alcoholics Anonymous approach to help children recover from drugs and alcohol.

One unsettling aspect of this book is the numerous graphic descriptions of school shootings and profiles of the shooters. The author makes the argument that drugs commonly prescribed for problem children, such as Ritalin and Luvox, did nothing to prevent the teenagers from committing these violent acts, and in fact, probably contributed to their propensity to do so. In a chapter titled "Are Psychiatric Drugs Making Our Children Psychotic and Violent?" he states that there are absolutely no good reasons to prescribe these drugs for children: "The drugging of our most energetic and rebellious individuals not only crushes them with drugs, it sends a frightening message to all school children. It warns, 'If you do not quietly conform, you're in danger of getting diagnosed and drugged, so sit down and shut up.'"

No doubt drugs are frequently prescribed as a quick fix for troubled children when parents are unwilling to change their own behavior in order to improve relationships and environment for the child. However, the author's main point is that drugs are always the wrong choice. This seems extreme, since the quality of life is improved dramatically for many children when an appropriate diagnosis is made and the prescription is

the right one. The author does make a compelling argument that in order to "reclaim our children," parents must make the needs of their children the highest priority, even if it means a sacrifice of time, desires, relationships, or career goals, and he gives many good suggestions for beginning this process.

—Martha Riley



## THE OUT-OF-SYNC CHILD

**Recognizing and Coping with Sensory Integration Dysfunction**  
By Carol Stock Kranowitz  
Perigee Books, 1998. \$14.

Because we Orff teachers often take cues from the responses of our students' bodies as well as their minds, we witness an array of behaviors that others may not notice during a normal day. Often we take note of a movement that may seem a trifle clumsy, a facial expression hinting at confusion, or too strong a response to a seemingly insignificant touch or remark. All students have odd moments, but as teachers we pay special attention when inappropriate or slightly off-the-mark behaviors occur in repeated patterns. We write notes to ourselves or consult with a classroom teacher or parents for enlightenment, often to find they are as perplexed as we are.

A key to understanding these behaviors is found in *The Out-of-Sync Child* by Carol Stock Kranowitz, a book that every teacher and parent will want to read and keep on hand to consult frequently over the years. The subtitle, *Recognizing and Coping with Sensory Integration Dysfunction*, may seem daunting for some, but the book was carefully written with

*continued on page 38...*

the lay person in mind.

In her introduction, Kranowitz confesses that years ago when a sprinkling of young children in her music classes did not respond to her teaching in ways she expected, she was "annoyed" by them:

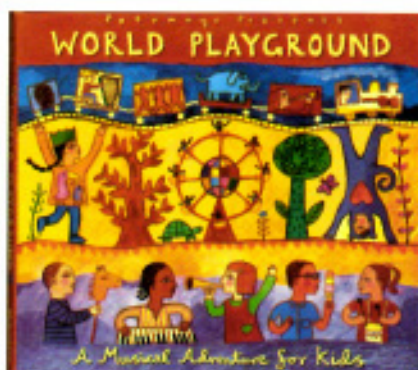
"At first, these children annoyed me. They made me feel like a bad teacher. They also made me feel like a bad person when their inattention or disruptive behavior caused me to react negatively. Indeed, on one regrettable occasion, I told a child that turning away and covering his ears when I played the guitar was 'just plain rude.' That day I went home and wept."

But Kranowitz, determined to do more for those children, went to work learning to understand sensory integration dysfunction. Knowing that every teacher and parent could benefit from the same understanding, she wrote this handbook.

Throughout Part I, she describes in clear, precise language the symptomatic behaviors exhibited by children afflicted with various sensory integration problems. She tells the reader what smoothly functioning tactile, vestibular and proprioceptive systems look like and describes characteristics of each when they are dysfunctional. Part II is devoted to strategies for coping with sensory integration dysfunction at home and at school. She includes a section on various therapies and the professional resources available. Since many in the medical community are unfamiliar with sensory integration dysfunction, this section is particularly useful for parents and teachers.

Teachers who recognize the frustration evident in the quotation above will want to read and discuss this book with colleagues and parents.

-Liz Gilpatrick



**WORLD PLAYGROUND**  
**A Musical Adventure for Kids (CD)**  
**Multicultural Curriculum Kit**  
**("World Playground" CD/cassette,**  
**teacher's guide, maps, "passports")**  
**Putumayo World Music, 800-995-9588;**  
**www.putumayo.com**  
**Curriculum Kit, \$29.95 (starter kit),**  
**\$69.95 (full kit); CD only, \$15.95;**  
**cassette only, \$9.95.**

"World Playground," the first children's CD/cassette from Putumayo World Music, reaped much critical acclaim last year. One need only play a track or two to start stepping and dancing. It's music that will make you "feel good," as the company's founder affirms.

Each of the 12 selections is an introduction to the heartbeat and timbres of a different world culture featuring highly qualified native artists: Buckwheat Zydeco from the United States in "Mardi Gras Mambo," the Colibri group playing the Bolivian morenada "La Mariposa," and Touré Kunda from Senegal singing about elephants and giraffes in "Fatou Yo."

Some excerpts have truly meshed several musical traditions. For example, "Zichronot M' Africa" ("Memories of Africa"), is sung in Hebrew by Ethiopian-Israeli children using a five-tone Ethiopian scale. "Bonjour Pra Você" from Brazil's Amazon River basin, using a native Indian drum, a Brazilian chocalho tube, and an African caxixi basket, is sung in a mix of Portuguese and Patuá. Australia's "Waltzing Matilda," renamed "Nyanpi Matilda," is heard in Pitjantjatjara, an original aboriginal language! Other countries represented are Greece, Jamaica, eastern Canada, France and Congo.

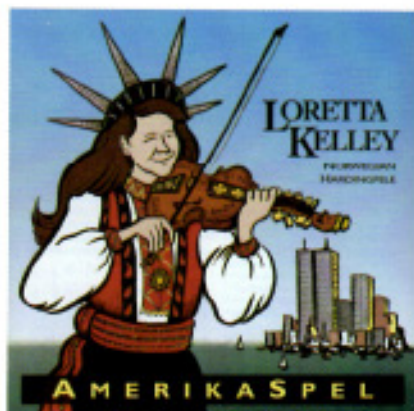
"World Playground" is an excellent resource for introducing elementary children to musical styles and instruments

from other cultures. Most songs could be compared to songs already familiar to a class, such as Cedella Marley Booker's and Taj Mahal's reggae-inspired "Three Little Birds" from Jamaica, which is similar to the work song "Day-O." The CD also opens up myriad opportunities for designing one's own movement explorations or creating structured forms with any age children.

There are over 50 different teaching ideas in Putumayo's Multicultural Curriculum Kit designed for kindergarten through sixth grade students. A starter kit contains the CD/cassette, a teacher's guide with song lyrics, maps, and two student "passports" — mini-workbooks. A larger kit with 25 passports is also available. While I found that most lessons in the kit were more suitable for upper-elementary grades, there are also many good ideas for primary children. This kit could be used as a detailed resource of lesson plans for a substitute music teacher.

There are many more CD/cassettes available from Putumayo World Music, which donates a portion of its proceeds to support arts and multicultural education programs in schools. Putumayo also supports many non-profit organizations in the countries where the music originates. Do consider adding "World Playground" to your school music library.

-Veronika Schultz



**AMERIKASPELE (CD)**  
**Loretta Kelly,**  
**Azalea City Recordings**  
**PO Box 5441 Takoma Park, MD 20913**  
**www.azeleacityrecordings.com \$15.**

Loretta Kelly is an American who plays the traditional fiddle of Norway, the hardingfele (Hardanger fiddle). This instrument differs from the ordinary