

Carolyn McCall

Music and Movement



Prepare For Instrument

Study with “Music and Movement” Experiences

Setting the Stage

“Music and Movement” classes of many types provide opportunities for parents and young children to start on a path toward successful instrumental study. The process reminds me of the adage, *“In order to have wings, we first must have roots.”*

“Music and Movement” classes are all about **roots**. Singing, movement, pitch awareness, and concentration and coordination exercises help prepare class participants for instrument-specific lessons. Some children absorb these skills from existing musical environments; other families need guidance to begin creating those fruitful environments. All benefit from a head start on these skills **before instrument-specific lessons begin**.

Some of the abilities developed through music instruction are:

- Listening
- Observing
- Imitating
- Memorizing
- Concentrating
- Performing
- Discipline
- Perseverance
- Sensitivity to feelings and emotions

I developed what I do in “Music and Movement” classes by working backwards from my early violin group classes. I look for ways to replicate common instrumental group activities with simple vocal songs and body movements.

I choose **songs and activities that are simple and/or common** so that families can remember and reproduce them at home. My classes are designed to be an early, less-formal experience of the types of structure necessary in successful instrumental lessons. I choose activities that appeal to the variety of ages and experiences found among family members. My activities are never instrument-specific, involve minimal special equipment, and involve no written notation. Though I gear the classes for children ages 4-6, younger and older ones often participate.

A key area of my classes is **parental participation**. In my home program, this class is part of the orientation time necessary before formal lessons begin. Anyone is welcome to participate in “Music and Movement” class, whether or not they plan to join my violin program later. The class is scheduled just prior to the beginners’ violin group class so that

prospective families can stay and watch them. “Music and Movement” gives parents and children a chance to DO something constructive and musical together during the weeks when the parent is reading weekly handouts and the family begins listening to classical recordings if they were not doing so already. The class gives parents a chance to see if they are ready for the big commitments of instrumental study:

- Attending class regularly
- Arriving on time, ready to learn
- Following my directions

I have a chance to set the stage of measuring progress in things OTHER than melodies learned. Parents see right away that class members participate on different levels; some are previewing while others are reviewing. Some children need to watch rather than participate at first. Often they later sing class songs at home or in the car. All of the children are learning to watch and listen to the teacher because their parents are modeling it. The parents’ interest, enthusiasm, and enjoyment are contagious to their children. An old proverb is,

“Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may not remember. Involve me, and I will understand.”

“Music and Movement” helps parents with limited musical experience feel more comfortable about taking on the challenge of helping their children learn about music. It is easier to follow the singing and movements of a group than to try out these new activities alone. This class also provides me with a glimpse of family dynamics. If the family later joins my violin program, I have gained some insight into how best I may help them learn.

Class Routine

It is important to have a trained musician teach “Music and Movement” classes, because such a person has the best chance of creating a successful “can’t fail” environment. It takes skill and experience to lead a group using simple, clear instructions and relaxed, communicative body movements. To become good followers, class members need a solid leader; eventually they in turn may learn to lead also. The teacher must model basically good singing skills for the class.

In class, the teacher *sets the tempo and pitch* before the song begins, using a variety of Ways such as singing the instructions in tempo on the starting pitch. The teacher maintains the tempo as well as consistent musical pitch. Using instrumental accompaniment in class may be fine, but will the home situation reinforce that? What is in our minds and bodies is usable anytime, not only when a live or recorded musician is heard at the same time.

The teacher must recognize what the class needs to have reinforced and guide the class’ achievements. Lesson plans are only the beginning – the teacher assesses if they all understand and are able to do the goal to the best of their current abilities. A creative teacher reinforces in aural, visual, and kinesthetic ways.

The main equipment the class uses is their minds and bodies. I may bring a few things to class, including:

- tuning fork (for a consistent A-440 “A”)
- violin (a bowed note shows rhythm duration better than a drum)
- metronome (with an arm- shows rhythm duration visually)
- paper tissues
- paper plates’
- beachball

The ways I use these items are detailed in my handout for teachers, included later in this article.

A highly-important thing about “Music and Movement” class is the atmosphere. A teacher needs JOY, not PATIENCE. (Patience may include a suffering endurance quality.) My class is positive and interested – I keep the participants busy DOING things with minimal instructions or explanations. Sometimes I must make general statements about parents not giving their children hints and reminders during class; each child’s attention needs to be focused on the teacher, and parents show respect for the teacher by letting the teacher teach. Sometimes teachers choose not to comment directly on everything....

I try to create an environment with cooperation instead of competition. John Holt wrote, *“A competitive child is happy when he wins. A cooperative child is happy when he does his very best.”*

Parents and children show various degrees of competence; I **do not comment** on anyone’s competence, especially whether or not they match pitch when they sing. In my experience, negative comments about pitch matching set up mental blocks to learning that skill. During 5-day institutes, many young class participants ding imaginary tuning forks and sing an in-tune “A” to me when they see me elsewhere on campus; their non-musical parents often don’t realize that this can be considered extraordinary.

Class Activities

Some of the written resources I have benefited most from include:

Wee Sing series by Beall and Nipp (includes booklets and recordings) **Complete Handbook of Music Games and Activities for Early Childhood** by Athey and Hotchkiss **Help Your Child to Grow With Lullabies**, Action Songs, Rhymes by Dorothy Jones; this comes with a top-quality recording

My class routine is structured and orderly, which appeals to young children. There are three main sections to the class time:

- **sitting on the floor in a circle, children next to their own parents**
- **moving around the room**
- **sitting again**

I open and close the class with establishing a physical beat (clapping, tapping, etc.) and chanting each child’s name in turn. The whole class repeats the name in rhythm after me. I bring out my “A-440” tuning fork, ding it, and sing *“Everybody sing A with me — A!”*

Then to the pitches A-F# I sing "Hello/Good-bye, [child's name]" in turn to each child in the circle; the whole class sings the name after me. When the class is ending, each child stands as we sing goodbye to him/her. When all are standing, we take a final bow and class is over.

Our bow is how I tell the class, "**Thank you for coming**" and how they tell me, "**Thank you for teaching me.**" In addition to labeling the note A-440 as "A" in class, I label the D a fifth below it as "D". I first reinforce "A" with my tuning fork and have the class follow me singing "5-4-3-2-1" [A-G-F#-E-D]. Then I sing on D, "I is named 'D'." I then start a song on that D. If we sing in the children's easy vocal range (middle C to the C above it), they are more likely to sing in tune. I tell the class that just as we consistently label visual colors, we also can label consistent sounds. A common Fisher-Price or Little Tykes toy xylophone can provide reasonable **starting pitches** at home (the biggest, lowest bar is C), and so my handout for parents lists our class songs and their starting pitches. (Musicians know that the starting pitch and the key of the song are not always the same.)

I build the class' ability to **audiate songs**. (Music educator Edwin Gordon coined the term "audiate" to mean imagining music.) We think the songs in our heads but do not sing aloud. Choosing songs that have actions with them makes this easier; we all can do the actions to keep track of what we are audiating.

Teacher Handout

The next part of this publication is my Teacher Handout, which lists a variety of activities for a teacher to put together into class plans.

Parent Handout

The final section of this publication is my Parent Handout, which I give to class participants.

TEACHER HANDOUT – *Music & Movement with Carolyn McCall*

Favorite Songs (with good starting pitches)

My Four Voices (Athey & Hotchkiss)

Speak/shout/whisper/sing [though any order works!]

Hand on chest = leader's turn / hand outstretched = class' turn

Twinkle (starting on D)

Move hands in air- floor for lowest pitch, higher for higher pitches ["audiate" = imagine]

Replace lyrics for lowest note with "D"

Lower notes = softer, higher notes = louder

Bread/Peanut.Butter/ Peanut Butter/ Bread sections [ABBA]

Row. Row. Row Your Boat (D)

Pound, Pound, Pound One Fist (2 fists, 1 foot, 2 feet: more = louder)
Brush, Brush, Brush Your Teeth

Now Tall. Now Small (D) (Wee Sing)

Hands in air [eventually audiate]
Lower notes = softer / higher notes = louder
Use whole bodies

Are You Sleeping (D)

Different languages, “Where is Thumbkin”, & “Walking, Walking” lyrics (*Wee Sing*)
“Walking, Walking” with walking fingers on selves or use whole bodies
Replace “Brother John” with class’ names in turn [sleep- wake on “morning bells”]
Harmonizes with *Three Blind Mice* (start “Three” on F#)

Down By The Bay (D) (Wee Sing Silly Songs)

Hand on chest = leader’s turn, hand outstretched = class’ turn
Invent funny endings [do not have to rhyme!]

John Brown’s Baby (D) (Wee Sing Silly Songs)

Replace words with actions only – baby, cold, chest, rubbed, camphorated oil
Last time – audiate only
[*Battle Hymn of the Republic* tune]

I Like To Eat (F) from Cub Scout book

“I like to eat apples and bananas”
A-E-I-O-U sounds

Five Little Monkeys

Chant and actions – with metronome

Wheels on the Bus (D)

Wheels, money, wipers, doors, driver, people, baby, parents, etc. – actions

Five Little Ducks (G)

Fingers hands, actions

Old MacDonald Had A Farm (G)

Each chooses an animal to sing about
(Harder-keep a chain of animal names, always adding the new one. Use only the sound of the new animal in the verse.)

Three Blue Pigeons (E) from Wee Sing

Set up 3 chairs for the 3 “blue pigeons” to use in turn

Pick It Up (D) by Woody Guthrie, from Very Favorites of the Very Young (Henry)

Each chooses something to pretend to pick up as all sing the song

Ten In the Bed (C)

Use metronome – make each verse one notch faster/slower

Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes (G)

Good with different tempi

Stand Up and Move Around

Teddy Bear (A) from *Wee Sing*

Actions match lyrics –

(“turn around, touch ground, show shoe, that will do / upstairs, prayers, light, goodnight”)

Forwards and backwards

Different speeds- leader counts

“1-2-ready-GO!”

“Dance”

“Clap, clap, clap, and tap, tap, tap, and turn around and stamp, stamp, stamp!”

Different speeds- leader counts “1-2-ready-GO!”

Swing Hands in a Circle

Class gets swinging FIRST, then teacher starts playing

Swing to the teacher’s beat- teacher gradually changes tempo

(Drop hands and step the beat)

(Class swings to consistent beat but teacher plays notes 2x fast or 2x slow)

Walk [Four] Steps

Walk [four] steps in any direction, then change right away to a new direction

Teacher plays pitches in walking rhythm: new pitch for new direction

(Clap when take first step in new direction)

(Class could just walk in place)

Scarves (or Paper Tissues)

To smooth (legato) or choppy (staccato) sounds the teacher plays

Ball up and throw in air- teacher follows scarf’s motion with instrumental line

Throw in air- student follows scarf’s motion with sung line

Move the Speed the Instrument Says

Children may hold hands with their parents

Teacher plays rhythms [on different violin strings]

When teacher stops, class stops

[run / walk/ “step-hold”/ “hold that long note”: run is fastest/ walk is twice as slow/ etc.]

Only at first – have higher pitch be faster rhythm

Musical turn = class turns around and goes the other way [B-C-B-A-B] (different tempi)

High and higher pitch = class jumps [f#-g]

[2 separate circles – each reactions to particular rhythm(s)]

Paper Plates

Put one under each foot- walk to teacher’s legato or staccato [or pizzicato] sounds

When teacher stops, class stops (class’ swishy sounds stop)

Legato/Staccato Circle

Class holds hands when teacher plays legato, drops hands when teacher plays staccato

Move in the Direction of the Dynamic the Instrument Says

One end of room is for “soft”, other for “loud” - class moves according to dynamics of constant pulse teacher plays

Accents

Class walks to teacher’s steady soft beat – JUMPS on sudden accented beat
Teacher might set up consistent patterns or might not

Reaction to Tempo

Teacher plays 4 beats- class jumps on the 4th
(*change tempo the next time*)

Walk Around the Room During a Song

Class walks around while teacher plays; students return to starting places by the end

Song Sections OR Dynamics in a Circle

Class walks in a circle – turns and goes in other direction at each new section/dynamic

High/Low Pitches

Teacher plays 2 very different pitches. Class claps for high, stamps for low pitches.

One end of room is “high”, other is “low” – class walks in proper direction while teacher plays notes/song that go higher/lower.

Repeated note = step in place Make it easier – do glissandi, accent and change bow in new note direction

Echo Rhythm

Teacher plays rhythm- class echoes with feet [possibly with different dynamics]
(Teacher gives 4 pulses with a rest on the 4th pulse while teacher says “go”)

More Sitting Activities

Instrument Demonstrations

tenor, alto, soprano, and sopranino recorders (*smaller recorders make higher sounds*)

ocarinas / slide whistle

xylophone (Little Tykes or Fisher-Price: biggest bar is C)

boomwhackers (tuned percussion tubes)

High and Low

Teacher plays melodic line [glissando] – class claps when line changes direction (or class moves hands up/down in air while teacher plays)

Tonic

The most-important pitch of a piece is called the “tonic”. The “tonic team” hums this note while the “tune team” sings or hums a song. (For example, the tonic team hums D while the tune team sings or hums Twinkle starting on D.)

Basic Rhythmic Movements

Clap, snap, pat (pat different body parts for variety)

Teacher does movements while class simultaneously copies

Echo the teacher's rhythm

(Teacher gives 4 pulses with a rest on the 4th pulse while teacher says "go")

Ostinato – repeated pattern (some clap/snap/pat an ostinato while others sing a song)

Possible word ostinati – some chant "cold" [peas], add others with "cloudy" [carrots], add others with "raining raining" [rutabaga] (whole, half, and quarter notes)

Pick an important word that goes with a particular song, and chanters repeat that word in rhythm while others sing the song [i.e. chant "star" while Twinkle is sung]

A steady beat is like a steady heartbeat- the song may move faster or slower around it

Respond to the teacher's pulse: teacher does 4 consistent beats/class echoes. Then teacher chooses a new pulse

Teacher plays piece? in different meters- class feels

In 3: Pat (while swing to one side) clap clap

In 4: Pat clap clap clap

Class claps twice as quickly (or slowly) as the teacher (or a metronome)

Leadership

Leader holds hands wide apart = class sing loudly

Leader hold hands close together = class sings softly

Divide into 2 groups – leader points at the group that should sing (switch during the song)
(Groups could sing the real lyrics or replace them all with "ho" or "hay" for groups)

Leader points to mouth = class sings out loud

Leader points to ear = class hears song, continuing in the heads only

Keeping A Pulse in Turn

Each person in the circle claps in turn, trying to keep the pulse steady

(helps to use a follow-through movement to the next person)

(metronome may help) (helps if teacher says "clap-and-clap-and-")

(Teacher might start alone; others, join as teacher calls out their names)

Class passes a (beach)ball from person to person, trying to keep the pulse steady

(Teacher claps or chants or plays instrument – 2 alternating notes helps)

(If teacher stops, person with ball holds it over his/her head)

(If teacher plays low note, class reverses passing direction)

PARENT HANDOUT-

Music and Movement with Carolyn McCall

This is a general music class geared to children aged approx. 4-6 and their parents. These activities help prepare everyone for instrument-specific group lessons.

Class Routine

Children sit by their parents in a circle on the floor

Class opens and closes with class chanting/singing names after teacher in rhythm

Teacher has "A-440" tuning fork and labels A and D pitches (important- consistency!)

We sing a lot of songs that start on D- easy vocal range, more likely to be in tune

We stand up and move around for awhile in the middle of the class

We might have an instrument demonstration (recorders, ocarinas, xylophone, etc.)

Favorite Songs (with good starting pitches)

- My Four Voices (speak, shout, whisper, sing)
- I Like To Eat (F) Twinkle (D) 5
- Little Monkeys (with metronome)
- Row, Row, Row Your Boat (D)
- Wheels on the Bus (D)
- Now Tall, Now Small (D)
- 5 Little Ducks (D)
- Are You Sleeping (Walking, Walking) (D)
- 3 Blue Pigeons (E)
- Down By the Bay (D)
- Pick It Up (D)
- John Brown's Baby (D)
- 10 In the Bed (C)

Stand Up and Move Around

Teddy Bear (A)- turn, touch, shoe, will do/ upstairs, prayers, light, goodnight

"Dance" (clap, tap, turn around, stamp)

Circle Shows Form of Song – walk; go other way at new song section

Circle Swing Hands to the Beat

Walk [Four] Steps – in any direction, then change to a new direction [clap on 1st step]

Walk Around During the Song – return to starting place by the end

Move the Speed the Instrument Says – run, walk, step-hold, hold-that-long-note, turn, jump

Paper Tissues – to legato/staccato sounds // throw in air, follow motion with singing

Paper Plates – under each foot, walk to legato/staccato sounds

Legato/Staccato Circle – hold hands during legato sounds, drop hands during staccato

Accents – walk to teacher's steady soft beat, JUMP on sudden accented beat

Reaction to Tempo – Teacher plays 4 beats: jump on 4th beat // echo all 4 beats

Loud/Soft – Class moves closer when teacher plays loudly, further when softly

High/Low – stamp for low, clap for high // move toward "high"/"low" places in room

Echo Rhythm – teacher plays rhythm, class echoes with feet More

Sitting Activities

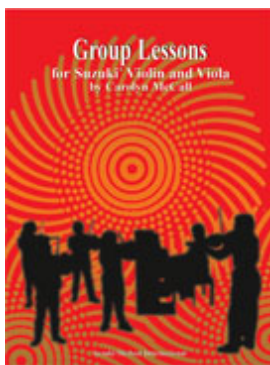
- High/Low** – Class follows notes with hands in air // claps when line changes direction
- Tonic** – “tonic team” hums most-important pitch of song while “tune team” sings song
- Canon** – Class follows teacher’s action 4 beats later [ie. clap 4x, tap 4x while class claps]
- Basic Rhythmic Movements** – clap, snap, pat: echo rhythms//do ostinato (repeated pattern)
- Feel Rhythmic Differences** – clap twice as quickly or slowly as the teacher claps
- Basic Meters** – feel different meters while teacher plays [in 3 = tap clap clap]
- Dynamics** – hands apart = loud // hands together = soft
- Giving Directions** – leader points at group that should sing in turn (randomly)
- “Audiate”** – “hear the song in your head” (point to ear) [point to mouth = sing out loud]
- Keeping A Pulse in Turn** – each in circle claps OR passes a beachball in steady rhythm

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-----*Carolyn McCall*-----

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Carolyn McCall was a Suzuki violin student in John Kendall’s program at the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) beginning in 1966. She earned music degrees from the University of Illinois and SIUE, where she did her Suzuki teacher training with Kendall. She was a Suzuki parent to her children and lived and taught violin, viola, and **music & movement** in Austria, Wisconsin, and Illinois. She published many articles and the book “**Group Lessons for Suzuki Violin and Viola**” and was an internationally active Suzuki clinician and conference organizer until 2011. She now works as Director of Connections and Care at a large United Methodist church.



Carolyn McCall
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