



# SANTA ROSA AREA MUSIC TOGETHER NEWS

A newsletter for Music Together families in Santa Rosa, Windsor, and Healdsburg.

Volume IV, Issue I ♦ Winter 2008



## How Babies and Young Children Learn (or, “Why doesn’t my child participate in class?”)

As young children, we learn by experiencing examples of life skills going on around us, then processing what we see, then attempting to imitate it. This imitation is really practice, and it’s how we finally learn to master skills. Children really teach *themselves* through play, picking up what they’re developmentally ready to practice and learn. With rich examples to draw from, this informal style of learning is the most powerful for a young child. This is true for language, too, and it’s a process that takes time. Our class time provides the rich exposure needed for your child’s own practice at home.

I often hear, “my child just sits in class, but at home he sings, dances, and does everything!” This is actually what we teachers expect our students to do. This is how your child will acquire music skills. It’s less usual for a child to attempt his “skills practice” in class; this is usually done at home, especially when a child is new to the program (in the first year of classes). Sometimes children jump in and imitate us right away, but much more commonly they sit and watch, or move all around seeming not to pay attention! Please don’t mistake this “lack of participation” for a lack of enjoyment; your child is just trying to process this stimulating experience to which he is being exposed. He’ll show you what he is getting out of the class by his engagement with you musically at home! We never gauge a child’s music development by what we see him do in class. If I want to know what’s happening musically for your child, I will ask you “what’s he doing at home?”

So, don’t worry. If your child is not engaging musically in class but engages musically at home, he is right on track! Please, keep the music coming from YOU daily, and appreciate your child’s learning without giving him verbal instruction. I invite you to trust the process, notice what your child is doing, and enjoy it!

## Healdsburg Changes

As most of you know, we currently have classes in Healdsburg on Monday and Thursday mornings. I’m sorry to say that this spring we’ll have to drop our Thursday morning classes, and we’ll only offer classes on Mondays. If you are now in one of the two Thursday morning Healdsburg classes, and you’d like to continue, there are a couple of options. Helen will be teaching still on Thursday mornings at Ellington Hall in Santa Rosa (less than a 15-minute drive from central Healdsburg), and Star Tom will continue in Healdsburg on Monday mornings. We hope you can find a class time that will work for you!



## Spring Session

Priority registration for Spring Session will begin February 18. All that week, pre-registration materials will be given out in class, including the schedule of classes. There will be some changes in class offerings and teachers this spring, so look at the schedule carefully! News about pre-registration and teacher changes can also be found in this newsletter; please see the next page.

## Cool brain development info...

If your child is between 2½ and 5 years of age, you may notice her pull back in participation in class, even if she used to participate more in the past. Most likely your child is becoming aware of the difference in her own singing and movement compared with the way the class sings or moves. She may want to observe without participating in order to take in more information and study “how things work”. She’s developing her receptive system and processing information. While it may look on the surface as though she isn’t interested because she isn’t participating *physically*, it may very well be an important developmental step on the way to completing the receptive-expressive loop necessary for group music-making. Her receptive system lets her know what the group is doing, and the loop or link to her expressive system will eventually allow for participation with the group. While a child is developing this receptive skill, watch for the intensity of her absorption in class - and listen for her music play at home, where you’ll see the expression of what she’s learned. It’s fascinating to witness your child “teach herself” through imitation and play, correcting and fine-tuning. Sometimes you might want to join in, but other times definitely be a “fly on the wall” and watch the miracle take place as your child works to make her voice match the sounds in her head, and her movements match the rhythm. It is between 2½ and 5 that children work the hardest at this. Enjoy!!

### In This Issue:

- Registration News
  - Teacher News
  - End of session calendar
  - ‘Homeplay’ ideas
  - Big Kids’ News
- ...and more!



## Registration News

• **Priority registration** for SPRING session begins **Monday, February 18 until Friday, March 7**. If you register in this 3-week period, you will be guaranteed your spot for spring session. You'll be given registration materials in class the week of February 18; **read your materials carefully, there are some changes!** I'll also send an email reminder out. You must **include your payment** with your registration, whether you register in class, by mail or online.

**If you wish to change your class day or time, registering early in the priority period will put you in the best position to get your first choice to switch.** Spring session begins March 31, and will go for 10 weeks. There will be no class on Memorial Day, Monday May 26.

### **Why continue in classes anyway?**

Most families choose to keep their children in classes for several sessions, because the development of music skills, like language development, is ongoing, continuing to build in a deep way with focused experiences. Brain research shows us that music aptitude can actually increase or decrease depending on environment. In other words "use it or lose it"! The brain is making important neural connections in early childhood that must continue to be exercised so they're not "pruned". In classes, you can be sure your child will have exposure to a meaningful and powerful group music-making experience each week!

If you have any questions regarding your child's musical progress please ask your teacher about it, or call me (Ginger). I love to help parents interpret what's happening for their children from a developmental standpoint - it's such an amazing journey to watch your child grow through!



## Scheduling Make-Ups

Go to: <http://makeups.musictogether.com>

The access key is: **wiggle**

(Also, [www.santarosamusictogether.com](http://www.santarosamusictogether.com) has a link on the home page.)

**Don't wait!!** They get filled at the end of the session!!  
**The scheduler is best, but if you can't do it online, you can call me (Ginger) at 544-5747 to set one up by phone (don't email me for a make-up please!!)**  
**Thanks!**

## Teacher News

### ***Some teacher changes coming up . . .***

Our dear **Anna Jennings**, who has been singing and playing in the Santa Rosa Thursday mixed-age classes, will sadly be leaving us this spring. She is taking a leave of absence, but look for her to continue teaching Music Together in the future. Her families have enjoyed her warmth and creative style. We'll all miss you, Anna; thanks for all you've done!

**Helen** will be teaching the Thursday morning classes at Ellington Hall, as she'll be leaving her Healdsburg Thursday morning classes. Aside from that, her schedule will remain as it has been this winter.

**Ginger** will be teaching two more classes this spring. She'll take over Anna's Thursday 4:45 class in Santa Rosa and will add an 11:30 class time to Wednesday mornings at Ellington Hall.

**Star Tom** has been loving his new role this Winter as a Music Together teacher, and will be continuing this spring with his Wednesday late afternoon Windsor classes and the Monday morning Healdsburg classes. We're so happy to have him with us!

You can take a look at our "bios" on the website or on the schedule you'll be getting in class, to read more about all of us teachers. We are all delighted to be able to bring this wonderful curriculum to so many families!! Thanks for singing with us!



## Big Kids' News!

**"BKFM"** -The new Music Together curriculum, called Big Kids Family Music™, is underway! BKFM is a new 60-minute class geared for children ages 5 and 6. (To attend, your child must be 5 yrs. by the start of the session.) Adults still play an important role in this class, although the adults and children may have different musical roles. We are having SO much fun in there! I'm planning to offer it again this spring! We meet Thursdays at 3:30 PM in Santa Rosa. This class includes game songs, folk dances, jam sessions, and more structured work in rhythm and tonality. Check it out for your 5 or 6 year-old! No prior Music Together experience is necessary.

### **Keep the Music Alive!**

As you finish this session, please remember to **keep** doing music with your child every day! It's really **YOUR** model of music-making that means the most to your child educationally. You're taking your child on a wonderful journey toward music competence; don't stop when class ends!



Keep up the good work!



## FEBRUARY / MARCH

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
10 <b>Feb.</b>	11 <b>Week 6</b> Regular classes	12 Regular classes	13 Regular classes	14 ♥♥♥♥♥ Regular classes	15 Regular classes	16
17 <b>Winter 08 Pre-Registration:</b>	18 <b>Week 7</b> Regular classes <b>*Priority begins</b> →	19 Regular classes	20 Regular classes	21 Regular classes	22 Regular classes	23
24	25 <b>Week 8</b> Regular classes	26 Regular classes	27 Regular classes	28 Regular classes	29 Regular classes	1 <b>March</b>
2	3 <b>Week 9</b> Regular classes	4 Regular classes	5 Regular classes	6 Regular classes →	7 Regular classes <b>Priority Reg. period ends!</b>	8
9	10 <b>LAST DAY</b> Regular classes <b>Open Registration begins for Spring 08!!</b>	11 <b>LAST DAY</b> Regular classes	12 <b>LAST DAY</b> Regular classes	13 <b>LAST DAY</b> Regular classes	14 <b>LAST DAY</b> Regular classes	15

**Spring Session Classes will begin on Monday, March 31!**

### Redirecting Distracting Behavior

Sometimes the excitement and stimulation of coming into a Music Together class can cause a child to be very active. If your child is active in class, this is generally just fine, although if his behavior becomes disruptive to others' enjoyment or processing of class activities, we ask that you, the parent, please take an *active* role in re-directing your child's behavior. Disruptive behavior would include running, throwing objects, or hitting the glass mirrors.

I think it's important, no matter how you may be feeling when a child acts this way in class, to try to not make the child feel bad. You honor your child more, and diffuse the situation better, if you use positive redirection. *What's that?* That just means trying to encourage your child by telling him (non-verbally, with music) what he can do instead of what he can't. (Refraining from using the word "no" can actually get you better results!) For example, if your child is beating on the mirror, you can pick him up and dance him to the rhythm of the song we're doing. If that doesn't work, just try staying near him while you keep singing and moving with a big smile. Sometimes just a musical distraction from you is all it takes.

However, if your child doesn't respond to your model of more appropriate behavior, just step out for a brief change of scene, and come back in when you're ready. You might say "If you want to run right now, why don't we go into the hall and you can run, until you're ready to be with what the class is doing?" This is very different than taking your child out as a punishment. Others will thank you for taking an active role, and your child will benefit by being shown, positively, more appropriate ways to behave.

**It Takes a Village...** even to keep the germ transmission down! Please take some simple precautions to help us all stay well this cold and flu season. This issue is important to me, as I was appalled by some toddler programs when my son was small. All of us teachers really try to keep a handle on this so our program can be different, but it takes everyone's awareness and help! As teachers, we do an awful lot to ensure that the instruments are clean, but there's no way we can do it all. **Every adult needs to help and make sure that slobbery instruments do not go back into their containers.** The following is excerpted from what I sent home with you on your first day:



"If your child puts an instrument in his/her mouth, please put it in the "wet box" so we can clean it. If in class you see a child mouth something then put it down, and his/her adult didn't notice, please take it out of play yourself. If any child puts fingers in his/her mouth then touches instruments, please put those instruments in the wet box too.

In general, especially during this season, we appreciate if you **wash your hands and your child's hands before class**, this can really help reduce the transmission of germs. (Nothing is better than soap and water!) For everyone's health, a sick child should stay at home."

If we all raise our consciousness around this stuff, it does help immensely. THANK YOU!!



## “Homeplay” suggestions ...

of like homework, except without the work! They weren’t utilized by enough people to justify my continuing them weekly, but so many did say they enjoyed them, that I thought I’d use part of the newsletter three times a year to give a few suggestions. Here are some ideas just for fun:

In the past, “Homeplay” sheets were available after each class. They were kind



### I.) Time out for play:

- This week, do “Mary Wore a Red Dress” at home at least once without the CD. Make up some new verses for it, using things about your child or funny movements. Remember to just do it yourself, even if your child isn’t participating with you. It helps your child just to see your example of spontaneous music making!
- Play the song “Play-Along, Too” with instruments (if you don’t have many, use some “kitchen” ones), and watch your child’s reaction. Let yourself really listen to it and get into it, regardless of what your child is doing.
- Have a parade! Sing something with a marching beat (“When the Saints Go Marching In”, and “The Ants Go Marching One by One” come to mind...), and play instruments and march around. It’s fun to do with more people, so see what family members you can get to do it with you! Set up a row of stuffed animals on the couch to watch the parade go by!

**Important:** When you do a musical activity at home, whether scarf-dancing, playing instruments, whatever, **see the song through to the end even if your child is not participating with you!!** If you stop, perhaps feeling frustrated that your child isn’t engaging in that moment, your child will notice!! This will teach two things: 1) making music isn’t something worth sticking with for your own enjoyment, and 2) your child will think his/her participation is the only reason you make music (it may actually be, but it’s better to send the message that it’s something **you** do for fun!!). You’re the role model!

### II.) Fun with daily routines:

- As you’re coming in the house from a car ride, sing “Hello Everybody” to things in your house. Another time, play “peek-a-boo” with a scarf or your songbook while singing the Hello song to your child.
- At bath time, chant “Water Play” (it’s the one that starts “dip, drop”). You can make up new words and sounds to reflect things you’re doing. Using silly voices - high or low - and interesting new sounds in rhythm is always fun. Silly parents delight their children!
- The next time you are picking up toys or doing some other repetitive motion, sing a rhythmic song such as “Follow Me Down To Carlow” and turn the job into a music time, popping toys away on the beat! Maybe your child will even join in with you... (This was my son’s favorite clean up song for two years!)
- The rhyme “I’m Freezing!” can be very engaging for little ones. Try using it this week while you’re doing a diaper change - it may stop a wiggly baby or toddler long enough to do the job quickly! If your child is no longer in diapers, use this chant while dressing or putting on shoes.

### III.) Songbook Activity:

- Read the parent introduction pages (particularly pgs. 5-8) in your songbook (especially if you haven’t already!) - see if you can relate any of it to what you did in class this week.
- Point out pictures in the book that relate to this week’s class (instruments, animals, etc.) Talk about seeing/doing those things in class as you look in the songbook. Sing or chant a song or two while you’re at it!
- Sit with your child and your songbook, and find “Ridin’ in the Car” (pg. 15). Point out the different parts of the picture. Sing the song while you’re looking at the book. It’s fun to tap the beat onto the picture while you sing. You can do this while the song is playing on the stereo or not. Or, find any one of your favorite songs or rhymes in the book and sing it to your child while tapping the rhythm of the song or rhyme on the page. Point out the pictures that go with it too. The “Jack-in-the-Box” picture (pg. 35 ) works well for this. You can hide the picture under your hand, and uncover it with a flourish on “yes, I will!”

### Spring Song Collection

Coming up in Spring, we’ll be using the MARACAS song collection. This is a really fun one, with the very silly “Sad Little Puppy”, the super-fun “All Around the Kitchen” and even “Frère Jacques”. Many of the songs on this collection will become family favorites!

