

Music for Early Childhood Book Review

“Catch a Song”

Hoermann /Bridges Collection

Review written by Heather Mclaughlin (VOSA)

Thank you Heather.

If you don't have a copy of this yourself, I would strongly recommend getting one. If your school doesn't have it yet, it may be time to put in on the list for next year.

The CDs “Catch a Little Song” and “Catch Another Little Song”, which have many of the songs in the book (those for younger children), are available from VOSA Sales. They use children's voices much of the time, and have simple ideas for using Orff instruments for accompaniment.

Here are some activities I have enjoyed with the children and teachers.

General lesson activities:

“*Rain is Falling Down*”: a useful song which only uses do, re, and do for handsigns.

“*Jack in the Box*”: great for getting children waiting till they hear a drum or other instrument before they jump up. Get them to distinguish between different instruments (“This time, wait till you hear the tambourine before you jump up. . . and now I want you to listen for the pattern ‘ti-ti ta’ before you jump up.”)

“*Left, Right*”: this song has proved very popular and useful with my Year 1 children. We march along lines on the floor, ideally matching feet to the words, and looking for children who have the ‘beat in their feet’. Then it can be used for ‘so-do’ in handsigns (just the start until you are looking for something a bit more challenging: “How many different handsigns am I using?”). The rhythm – starting with ‘ta ta ta ta’ (four crotchets) can be used for comparison with other songs. Sing it while walking around the school!

“*Bluebells, Rocklesheep*”: A partner game which can be tricky for 6 year olds, but a nice one for them to know. How many couples can turn over (Eevie, ivy, over!) without getting tangled up?

“*Pit, pit-a-pat*” follows on nicely from “*Bluebells*”, and everyone really enjoys doing the complete circle (“over just like that!”). It's in a clear 3 beats to the bar, with actions: knees, clap, clap partner. Then these are good to transfer to instruments: drum, tambourine, triangle. Much more difficult than it would seem! A challenge for most 7-8 year olds.

“*Rocky Mountain*”: I find this a really good song for 7-8 year olds. The challenge of the (pentatonic) handsigns is good for 8-9 year olds.

Circle games to finish a lesson:

“Lucy Locket” is so simple, yet always such a hit even with quite sophisticated young children. The game is a version of ‘Drop the Hanky’ (I use a piece of ribbon), and the song is a valuable ‘so-me-la’ pattern which is ideal for learning handsigns and using with staff notation. Then a year or two later, play the song on the recorder – firstly on D’ – C’ – A, then with the right hand fingers, on A – G – E. Play the game with 3-7 year olds, use it for rhythm activities with 5-6 year olds (it’s all ta and ti-ti), learn the handsigns with 6-7 year olds, do the staff notation with 7-9 year olds, and play it on recorder with 8-10 year olds.

“Kangaroo, Skippy Roo”: a perfect singing game for getting children singing on their own, and assessing their pitch development! Even children who are normally shy, or who are in the early stages with English, will be bursting to have a turn. Great for 4-7 year olds.

“Little Mouse be Careful”: Another nice chasing game. I have three children at a time have a turn – one to be the mouse on the outside of the circle, one to be the cat inside (until the song finishes), and one to play the glockenspiel (ti-ti ti-ti on D-A-D-A) . Lots of turns quickly for lots of kids.

The instrumental accompaniment is on the CD *“Catch Another Little Song”* (All of the above songs except “Left, Right” and “Pit, Pit-a-pat” are on the CD)

The book “Catch a Song” is available through NSW O&E Resources or from VOSA sales.

The CDs “Catch a Little Song” and “Catch Another Little Song” are available from VOSA Sales – www.vosa.org

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