



# MUSIC TOGETHER<sup>®</sup>

## Parent Notes



### CHILDREN TEACH THEMSELVES THROUGH PLAY

Children can develop basic music competence (singing in tune and physically keeping beat) most easily during the birth-to-preschool years. This is also the time when they develop themselves and learn about their world primarily through the magical process of play.

The especially unique thing about play is that children are born experts in it. It is not necessary to teach them how to play. In fact, they use play to teach themselves the things they need to learn.

There are several important characteristics that qualify an activity as “play:”

- The activity is freely chosen.
- The child controls its flow and duration.
- It is intrinsically rewarding or done for its own sake.
- The activity is relatively free of externally imposed rules (in contrast to games).
- It needs to be moderately challenging in order to sustain interest, but not so hard as to cause frustration.
- It thrives best when undertaken in a relaxed setting.
- Most important of all, the activity must be fun.



#### Characteristics of Music Play

The substance of play in very young children is usually made up of the environmental objects and experiences to which they have been exposed. In music play, the child teaches herself about the music of her culture by experimenting with the information she has gathered from her music environment. Her music play may take place simultaneously with motor or other forms of play, or it may take place alone. She may sing parts of familiar songs or create her own short songs; she may recite familiar chants or make up new ones about her play objects or experiences; and she may also experiment with different kinds of rhythmic movement.

If the environment is sufficiently rich throughout the primary music development years, there will be a continuous and even richer spiral of exposure to new musical elements, followed by playful experimentation with these elements. In fact, research has shown a direct correspondence between the quality, quantity, and diversity of musical stimulation and the extent to which a child’s developmental aptitude can be sustained or enhanced.

#### TRY THIS AT HOME!

Music Together songs are a starting point for your musical play with your child. Play and improvise with them—it’s easy and fun to make up new verses as we do in class. For example, to the tune of “She’ll Be Comin’ ‘Round the Mountain,” you might sing, “We’ll be munchin’ on some Cheerios when she comes!” You can also play vocally with different voices, like an elf voice, big spider voice, grandpa voice, or make train whistle, siren, or animal sounds. By modeling the exploration of the upper register of your voice you can help your child find his “singing voice.” Remember, you are your child’s most important model, so in class and at home let your own “child” come out and play!