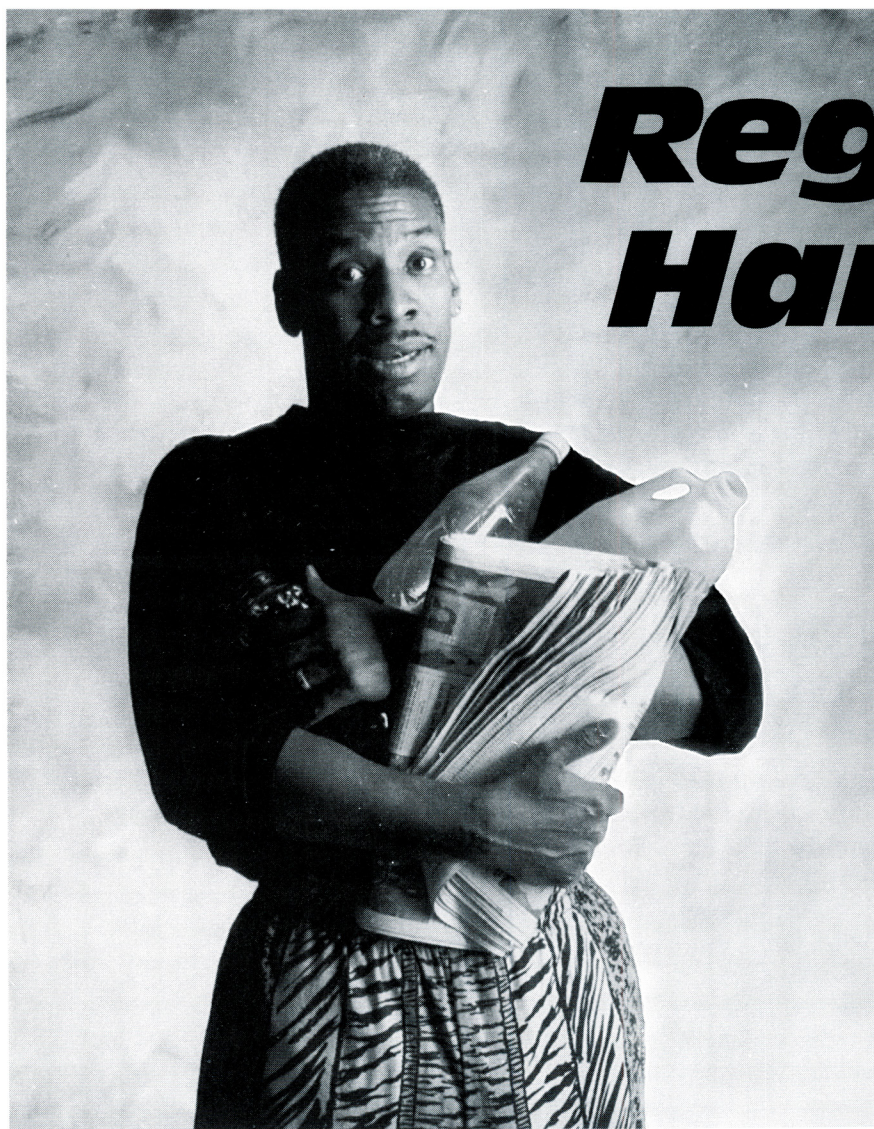

PASS IT ON!TM

The Journal of The Children's Music Network

ISSUE #29

Spring 1998



Reggie Harris

Inside...

- Getting to Know Our Pretty Planet through Music ■
 - Preview of the National Gathering ■
 - News from the Regions ■ Six Great Songs ■
-

Editorial Page

Introduction

by Bob Blue

When I let people know that "This Pretty Planet" would be the theme of this spring issue, several people expressed their eagerness to write about ways children and the adults who work with them can use music to focus on the earth. I hope the theme of our fall '98 issue—musical diversity—will likewise attract writers. Several writers in previous issues of *PIO!* have already asked us to think about what makes music children's music. I hope we can use *Pass It On!* to explore all kinds of music, especially types that don't necessarily fit whatever stereotypes have developed as people have used the phrase *children's music*.

Because it takes many people and much time to make *Pass It On!* grow, I have to ask that, except for regional reports, all contributors to the fall '98 issue have their materials to me by May 15th. Also, from now on, please send all photographs, artwork, and captions to Susan Keniston.

Speaking of Susan Keniston, we are amazingly lucky to have her taking on a bigger and bigger role in editing and producing *Pass It On!* I will continue to solicit and evaluate articles, and I'll also do a lot of preliminary editing, but I think you will notice that the quality of *Pass It On!* keeps improving, and we have Susan to thank for much of that improvement. Here are some words from her about the roles children can play in keeping our world going.

Bob Blue is a father; former elementary-school teacher; volunteer elementary-school teacher; and writer of songs, poems, plays, stories, and articles.



Editorial: Recognizing Children's Power as World Changers

by Susan Keniston

In these pages, you'll read that children who hear songs about the beauty of the earth resonate to them with a love born of their own experiences as humans privileged to live here. You'll read that children who are told about the threats to our beautiful planet show that they care a great deal about the earth and what happens to it. It's suggested that, when we choose songs to sing with children, we include ones that teach them about the important issues that face us today, including our environmental crisis. There is also concern expressed here that we may burden children with too much depressing information, perhaps scaring them and teaching despair, in our well-meant attempts to empower them. Yet, in these same pages, there are anecdotes about children who, when hearing songs and stories of the Underground Railroad, have felt energized, enthusiastic, and awakened to the possibilities for activism today.

This rich mix of ideas has caused me to reflect on the role children have historically played in the lives of the adults closest to them, as well as in the evolution of their larger societies.

Continued on page 23 ➤

Articles in this journal do not necessarily represent the views of The Children's Music Network. Members are invited to send songs and articles for publication directly to the appropriate editors, but we can not guarantee publication. It is helpful if you let an editor know in advance that you plan to submit an article. Published three times a year; deadlines are May 15, October 4, and February 15.

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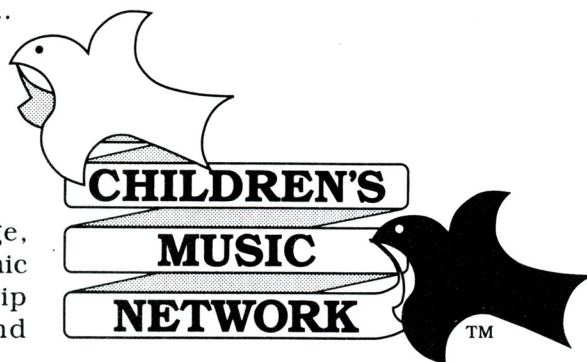
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WHY THERE IS A CMN...

In the 1980s, like-minded teachers, performers, songwriters, radio hosts and parents who cared about the quality and content of children's music found each other...and established a group of dedicated individuals that soon became The Children's Music Network—"CMN"—a nonprofit association that now has members across the United States, Canada, and elsewhere.

Our shared values bring us together. We believe that quality children's music strengthens an understanding of cooperation, of cultural diversity and of self-esteem...

and that it enhances children's thinking skills and feelings of empowerment.



WHO WE ARE...

We are diverse in age, ethnicity and geographic reach. Our membership includes full-time and part-time performers...professional and amateur songwriters...classroom teachers and music educators...record producers and distributors...broadcasters...parents, grandparents and children.

We believe in the power that songs and stories have to not only entertain, but also to inspire, inform and enlighten.

WHAT WE DO...

We meet and stay in touch to share songs and ideas about children's music...to inspire each other about the empowering ways adults and young people can communicate through music...and to be a positive catalyst for education and community-building through music.

Our members work to support the creation and dissemination of life-affirming, multicultural musical forms for, by, and with young people.

OUR PRINCIPLES...

We recognize children's music as a powerful means of encouraging cooperation...celebrating diversity...building self-esteem...promoting respect and responsibility for our environment...and cultivating an understanding of nonviolence and social justice.

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IF YOU'RE NOT A MEMBER...

...we'd love to have you join us! Please fill out the membership application on the back cover, or contact our business office (address just to the left) for more information.

An Interview with Reggie Harris

conducted by Bob Blue

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Kim and Reggie Harris were both exposed to a wide range of composers and musical styles from an early age. Their musical training was nurtured at home, in church, and in school. They met, by chance, at a summer camp in 1974, and while attending Temple University, and began to perform together in clubs and coffeehouses around Philadelphia.

In 1982, Kim and Reggie recorded and released *Music of the Underground Railroad*, an album of songs highlighting that great American story of slavery and freedom. This album opened the door for them to work in schools. They now live in Upstate New York, where they research, write, and record. They often work with adolescents in schools, bringing them the stories and music of the Underground Railroad.

Kim is in the middle of a Masters of Theology degree program and has chosen—through what Reggie calls “a mutual insanity pact” with him—to do a residency at the College of St. Rose in Albany, New York, this year, in addition to a somewhat abbreviated touring and recording schedule. Leading such a busy life, she could not find time to participate in this interview.

I interviewed Reggie by e-mail from October through December 1997. This gradual approach may have resulted in an interview that is less spontaneous than what you’re used to in *PIO!*, but it allowed me time to think about my questions and to use Reggie’s answers to formulate subsequent questions.

What helped even more was Reggie’s ability to be conversational via e-mail. He was quite willing and eager to transcend the medium and

send his personality to me and you through cyberspace.

PIO!: *I'd like to start out by giving readers a slice of your everyday life. Something that may or may not have anything to do with children or music. Could you just tell me about a day in the life of Reggie Harris?*

Reggie: Last week (or actually, two weeks ago) I found myself, on one day, painting and rehabilitating our mailbox, signpost, and front door; putting yet one more coat of roof sealer on the garage roof; eating lunch while watching part of a two-week-old tape of the fourth Philadelphia Eagles football game that my mother-in-law graciously sent me; then driving our cats to the vet for checkups, shots, and the removal of stitches from one paw on one very aggravated little tabby (don’t ask!).

PIO!: *Don't ask what?*

Reggie: Pumpkin, sweet little tabby that she is normally, becomes the *beast from hell* (literally!) when faced with anything out of the ordinary. To her, the vet is *way* out of the ordinary!

PIO!: *What happened the rest of the day?*

Reggie: I went shopping for birdseed and flower bulbs and then rushed home to get a quick bike ride in before driving into Albany (a one-hour drive) to meet my grad-student wife (who was trying to recover from a day of meetings, planning sessions, and interfaith liturgical reflections) for dinner and a movie. The day was hectic, though amazingly productive, and the “date” was *great!!*

PIO!: *So music doesn't take up every moment of your life?*

Reggie: Not one musical note or phrase passed our lips, though I did complete a verse to a new song while on the roof!

PIO!: *Are you writing a song about roofs that leak (smile)?*

Reggie: Not exactly, though I seemed, at one point, to be gathering more than enough info on the

subject. And as one who is not exactly knowledgeable about roofs and like household areas, the degree of exploration and frustration has been predictable. I hadn’t really thought about this before you asked, but the song I was working on is water related.

PIO!: *In what way?*

Reggie: It’s about “lives that leak,” or things that flood us to the point where we are overwhelmed by frustration, anger, or violence. The song, now completed, is called “Skeletons of Faith” and started coming out of me a few years ago when we flew into St. Louis, Missouri, over a very flooded Mississippi River. I was so struck by the devastation and by our arrogant attitudes (in general)—that we can control all of these forces of nature when we can’t even seem to control our own emotions, our own fears. The song starts out talking about the floods and the need to find a safe, solid place. It goes on to talk about the “flood” of violence, mistrust, ignorance, injustices, lies, and other issues that often make our lives such challenges, and how “we struggle through our anger to hold on/reaching out in freedom’s name...through illusion, doubt, and pain/we are skeletons of faith, yet we are strong!”

PIO!: *Sounds as if your muse climbed up on the roof to find you, and gave you some important work to do.*

Reggie: One of the fascinating things that surfaced in the writing process was that I found more of my childhood faith experience coming through my prism, but definitely in a way that reflects my years of travel on this journey. Even the original title and the basis for the chorus comes from the hymn “Rock of Ages,” which I sang in church a million times growing up. Nothing about leaky roofs, but my mind is definitely on the subject of finding ways to “survive the floods” and create places of safety in the world!

PIO!: To what degree did your church experience influence your religious thoughts, and to what degree did it influence your political thoughts?

Reggie: What an excellent question! Let's see if I can match it with an excellent answer. My church experience greatly influenced my thoughts, but not particularly in the way my mom and grandmom or the folks at church thought it would. Mostly, I believe, it grounded me in some very primary ways to believe that community was extremely important—that one needs to understand as much as possible about where you come from and the tradition of your people, whoever they are, in a rich, nurturing, and vibrant way. I didn't even realize that I was getting much of that until later in life, because, in the way that many oral cultures teach their young, many of the lessons or values were passed on in experiences or stories or in the songs that were used in certain situations, rather than in people telling us straight out. Like many children, once I saw that there were other traditions and ways of living one's life, I wanted to explore them.

PIO!: Were you encouraged to explore like that?

Reggie: Well, at first it caused great difficulty and pain for those who thought I was rejecting them and all they believed in. I think it is extremely difficult for adults to realize or remember that, once children have had an experience of the world, they usually look for ways to incorporate that as part of their ongoing "life party." Where has this all led me? Mostly to appreciate the richness of my African-American culture—the exuberance and the subtleties—and to appreciate the struggle of those whose efforts made it possible for me to ride in the front of the bus, go to the school



Kim and Reggie Harris teaching with music

of my choice, and participate in the struggle for freedom in this land. I know how integral their faith was to their success and survival. But I also know that in this multicultural, multifaith society, there are strains and difficult issues that my mentors did not recognize, embrace, or find easy to explore. I could not live within the constraints of a fundamental Baptist theology or philosophy and feel true to what my heart was calling me to be!

PIO!: Did you go far from what you were taught? Did it make trouble for you?

Reggie: It was a grave dilemma at ages 17 through 20. Eventually, I came to believe that I did not need to reject all that was my past or react to the rejection of those who thought I had. I try to take the passion, love, and commitment that they instilled in me to the another level, extending the boundaries in ways that my experience of the world makes me uniquely qualified to do. Kim and I just went back to the church where I grew up, to do a concert of songs of faith and freedom. We were very warmly received and celebrated for what we have become. I think that I, in some sense, have been accepted on the terms of my commitment and beliefs because I have been able to show that I have an appreciation for the foundation that led me to where I stand.

PIO!: Have you sung "Skeltons of Faith" for children?

Reggie: Not for very many, though not many people of *any* age have heard the song at this point. I did play it for a small group of high schoolers and for my niece (she is 13).

PIO!: How have they reacted or responded?

Reggie: They loved it—got caught up in the imagery and wanted to talk about the skeleton

reference. Also the idea that I get to, in the bridge, that you can be fed up and angry about all these issues, events, and attitudes and decide to take time off to restructure your approach or give yourself time to "recharge your batteries" before getting back to the struggle. I don't think young folks think about that a whole bunch. Energy is a different concept to them. It's sort of—more limitless. They also liked the "drive" of the song. It will be interesting, once we start performing it often, to get a wider range of reactions.

PIO!: When you perform for adolescents, is there much dialogue?

Reggie: It really depends. So much of what we do is in a straight stage-and-audience format, which doesn't, by its nature, leave much room for dialogue, although we have been known to "break the wall" on occasion and we have certainly never chosen *not* to respond when someone has called something out to us. We are, however, in that situation, more in control of where things go. Since our shows are usually so information driven (300 years of history in 50 minutes! Come on, kids! *Let's go!*), they tend to sweep folks along with the energy and define the interaction more along participatory singing or craziness. We do, in two of the

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IN THE SHELTER OF EACH OTHER

words & music by Reggie Harris & Kim Harris
©1994 Brooky Bear Music

To contact Reggie and Kim about their songs and recordings, write to them at R.D. 2 Box 147 A,
Middleburgh, NY 12122.

chorus:

C G C G D G

In the shel - ter of each o - ther

D C G C G D

In the shel - ter of our lives

Emin G Emin G C G

We are o - pen and we are dream - ing

C G Amin D Amin D G

We are hope - ful we are wise

G

verse:

Man - y times the weight of the world crash - es in. We

Emin C

feel an - gry and a - fraid. We start to lose our sense of hope,

D G

our sense of di - rec - tion. The i - so -

In the Shelter of Each Other

➡ continued from previous page

C D Emin Bmin

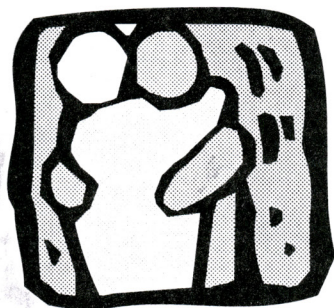
la - tion we have learned — will not bring much in re - turn — if we

Amin D

tru - ly can - not learn — to live as one. — Here in the

chorus:

In the shelter of each other,
In the shelter of our lives,
We are open, we are dreaming,
We are hopeful, we are wise!



1. Many times the weight of the world crashes in.
We feel angry and afraid.
We start to lose our sense of hope, our sense of direction.
The isolation we have learned
Will not bring much in return
If we truly cannot learn to live as one!
2. Many times the pain of the world crashes in.
We feel broken and betrayed.
We start to lose our sense of joy, our sense of connection.
And though our history remains,
It's our actions we must change
If we hope to heal the planet we must stand!

Interview: Harris

➡ continued from page 3

shows, bring young people up on stage; and we talk and do role-play activities that leave some openings for their input. But that is pretty much defined by us as well. Which is why we love to get into classroom, camp, or seminar activities, where the interactions are more unpredictable. That's where we learn more about what they're thinking and where we can throw things out there and try them.

PIO!: Is there one conversation that sticks out in your mind?

Reggie: The first that comes to mind was from a school outside of Philly, where we had been talking to this group of students for a half hour or so, telling stories about the Underground Railroad and why it was important to learn about history—how it might help us to change things in our present world. A second- or third-grade girl raised her hand and asked, “Are these stories *really* true?” It hit me in that moment that we tell children so many

things that, for one reason or another, seem like fantasy or in fact may be, or that might be the “truth” from our perspective. I realized that, in one sense, this was a very innocent question, but, in another way, it was a statement of profound challenge from one so young, who was being told some remarkable “tales” by people she didn’t really know anything about. It led to a really cool discussion on how we get information and how to check

continued on page 26 ➡

Children View Nature through Music

by Candy Kreitlow

What a joy it is to have a passion for music—a medium through which one can speak to all ages about a wide spectrum of issues. As a mom-and-daughter musical duo, Holly and I share a common connection that spans our large generation gap. (Unlike the Judds' 16 years' difference, there are 36 years between my daughter and me.) Despite this considerable age disparity, we share a growing concern for the world's dwindling natural habitats and for the wildlife that depend on stable ecosystems. Holly and I have been performing together for more than four years, and while our repertoire expands and evolves to reflect Holly's continuing maturation, a common thread continues to be the inclusion of songs depicting the grand mystery of nature and those expressing concerns for the earth's fragile environment.

It has been suggested that music takes a direct path into the hearts and minds of children. As Patricia Shih, a musician and performer, said so well in a recent issue of *Pass It On!*, "Music is such a great vehicle for teaching anything....If you can touch their hearts, you've got a direct link to their minds. Getting kids singing about an issue gets them feeling and thinking about it." We often notice, during a performance, that just the mention of the children's favorite animals gets their undivided attention. Once we have piqued their curiosity (and Holly is a master at doing this), we regularly add facts or anecdotes that describe interesting critter behaviors. Through this technique, children are encouraged to visualize specific wildlife within natural habitats, and, we hope, realize the respect that each deserves.

Because kids naturally tune in to music that it is beautiful, fun, and full of variety, we fill our repertoire with a rich diversity of tunes and topics. Our nature songs may focus in detail on animals ranging from the mighty whales to the humble banana slug, and they may expand upon subjects as big as the sky itself.



Holly and Candy Kreitlow celebrate earth

When performing earthy songs for kids, it's helpful to try and remember what it was like to be one. My own childhood included an intense interest in a variety of animals, from tadpoles to ptarmigans. As a mom, I have observed my two daughters' keen curiosity about the natural world around them—at least up until the time when they trade their interest in wild animals for a fixation on wildlife of their own species! My children's first toys were soft, cuddly little animals. Holly's first word was *birdie*. Her first piano composition was written for her favorite animal and was entitled "Lullaby of the Whale." This charming little instrumental shows

up on our first recording as an introduction to Steve Grimes' "Whale Song." When we perform Steve's tune live, we first dramatize the scientifically observed behaviors of a mother whale as she disciplines her feisty baby. Our portrayal of animal antics not only elicits giggles and looks of amazement, but also illustrates to the audience that these creatures are not so very different from us!

The traditional old English ballad, "The Fox Went Out on a Chilly Night," while a bit brutal, demonstrates with humor the natural order of life and shows what the predator fox needs to do in order to feed his family. He boldly steals a goose and a duck out of a farmer's barnyard. Then the chase is on! Not surprisingly, the audience cheers for the fox. (In many ways, as wild as this tale may be, it is nothing compared to what humans do to each other. While many animals may fight one another for territorial rights, rarely do they kill one of their own species with malicious intent. Unfortunately,

the same cannot be said of human behavior.)

Sometimes we choose songs that simply express awe and reverence for the natural world around us. An enchanting new narration/song by Katie LaRaye Waldren is set to the traditional Irish slip jig, "The Butterfly." With voice, Celtic harp, and hammered dulcimer, it eloquently reveals, with wonderment, the metamorphosis and emergence of a butterfly from its chrysalis. It's an "art song," as moving for adults as it is fascinating for children; and it entices audiences to find out more about the mysterious butterfly and its habitat.



BUTTERFLY

(lyrics and counter melody by LaRaye K. Waldren; music, traditional; © 1996)

Narration:

I awoken from a long sleep;
what I was I am no more.
And what I have become is
truly remarkable. Light
pours through the webbed
walls that have enclosed and
protected me; I long to bathe
my new form in this warm
light and feel the gentle mo-
tion that rocks the meadow
grasses to and fro. I begin
to free myself from my silken
home and venture out into
the world unknown....My
wings expand and in time I
flutter them with delight,
and then a song emerges
from within me. Its familiar
melody echoes true, like an
old friend. At first with clum-
siness, I decipher its notes.
Then I sing it proudly for all.

Song:

As a butterfly awakened, only I
can know for sure
Visions of my transformation
through misfortune, I endure.
I'm flying, I'm flying!
Like a flower in the spring,
See my petals fluttering.
Holding to each task I try,
You may ask me what am I:
Butterfly! Butterfly!

While performing or conducting workshops, we tend to shy away from those environmental songs that either are too preachy or may be too sad or morose (the "Bambi syndrome"). We find that such songs tend to cause older children or adults to tune out and to leave younger children feeling powerless or, even worse, hopeless. However, positive concepts and messages can be relayed if they are done with

humor, wit, and audience involve-
ment. Here's an example in an
excerpt from Ken Lonnquist's song
about bat love:

BAT

(lyrics and music by Ken Lonnquist;
© 1996)

You know how to find me: just
echo locate.
Let's be nocturnal, let's go out
for bugs,
We could gobble a thousand,
in between hugs!
Bat! Bat! My beautiful, beauti-
ful Bat!
Bat! Since I met you
My heart just goes pitter-pat,
Bat!



We also encourage kids to partici-
pate by engaging them in sing-
alongs, signing, and lyric writing.
In the latter case, for example, we
have used John McCutcheon's and
Si Kahn's "Right in Our Own Back
Yard," asking kids to work in small
groups to create their own ideas.
They've come up with some terrific
verses and have begun thinking
that, even as individuals, they can
make an impact. We tell them
about my husband's belief that a
child's home is the first place to
start sound environmental man-
agement, beginning with the child's
own room, then the backyard, and
on to the larger environment. This
is wonderfully consistent with the
advice, "Think Globally, Act Lo-
cally!" (I'm waiting for him to write
a song about that idea.)

Children are particularly drawn in
by Holly's performance, because,
let's face it, as an 11 year old, she's
one of them. And, because she has
a friendly, dynamic delivery, *they*
listen! But we perform for as many
adults as we do for children; while
we alter our set lists a bit for each

audience, we include many of our
nature songs for the more mature
audiences. Some of these songs
have universal appeal and can en-
courage anyone to think more
about the planet. For example,
"Generations," by Si Kahn (espe-
cially when sung by a mother and
daughter), promotes the farsighted
perspective necessary to address
environmental issues that have
long-range implications. With its
beautiful melody and lyrics, "Clear
Water," by Phil Grimes, inspires
and reinforces commitment to
clean water. "Colors of the Wind"—
yes, the Disney song nearly
everyone knows—can make people
stop and ponder when sung with
true conviction by an 11 year old,
accompanied by Celtic harp. Holly's
"The Same Sky" (see below) tells
adults that children care *plenty*
about our planet—in this case, the
sky that surrounds us.

As true-blue folkies, we have
performed these songs at environ-
mental meetings in Wisconsin
aimed at trying to prevent a mining
interest from polluting a pristine
water resource and ruining the
surrounding air quality. Holly's

***We often notice that
just the mention of
the children's favorite
animals gets their
undivided attention.***

enthusiasm for this issue didn't
stop here: Having researched the
mining controversy, she presented
a speech to her class, circulated a
petition, and sent letters to her
state officials, including the gover-
nor (whom she had recently met
following a performance at the
governor's mansion). *Go, Holly!* Al-
though we are still dealing with this
issue, Holly and her classmates

continued on next page ➡



THE SAME SKY

(lyrics by Holly Hafermann; music by H. Hafermann & Candace Kreitlow; ©1995)

Is this the same sky that
hangs over the ocean
Is this the same sky that's over
Wisconsin?
Is this the same sky that
hangs over me?
Is it the same sky that's over
the world—and my family?
If I should travel far from my
home,
Will I see the same friendly
clouds I have known?
Will I see the moon, can I wish
on a star,
So I can send my love on
home, from afar?

Chorus:

Rainbows and starshine,
moonbeams and sun
Are part of the same sky,
they're for everyone.
Let's sing together and let us
take care
So our beautiful sky will
always be there.
Soft watercolors like oceans in
air,
Billowing animals playing up
there,
Sky, hanging 'round me by
night and by day,
Please, be my friend when I'm
far, far away.

(Chorus)

This is the sky for the whales
and the birds,
It is the same sky all over the
world,
It's the same for the trees and
for all of the flowers,
It is my sky, it is yours—this
sky is ours.

(Chorus)

As a duo, Candy Kreitlow and her daughter Holly have been collecting songs, composing, and performing professionally since 1994. They have produced two recordings together.

Earthsinging in Your Own Backyard

by Dave Orleans

Sometimes it's awfully hard to find Mother Nature after the make-over we humans have given her over the years. In any given urban center, the search for a single healthy tree, let alone any substantial evidence of our natural heritage, can be a long, frustrating experience. When you walk down a suburban street in New Jersey and can't tell when you are leaving one town and entering another, except for the sign that tells you so, it can prove difficult for young people to realize that they are part of a natural place of any uniqueness or importance.

I've worked for over 20 years as a park naturalist for a county parks system in the most urbanized county in southern New Jersey. During that time I have used all the tried-and-true methods for educating people about the natural features of the park. (In naturalist lingo, this is called *interpretation*.) Most important, I go to schools and interpret the neighborhoods surrounding them, because I feel that challenging kids, teachers, and parents to find some exciting connection to the natural world right in their own backyards can be even more effective than taking a field trip to the county park, where everything is supposed to be more natural.

It was in 1981 that I began to notice some exciting new environmental music at folk festivals, which seemed to touch a responsive chord. I heard Pete Seeger, Bill Staines, and David Mallett at the Philadelphia Folk Fest (all in the same year, I think), and realized that there was a great body of environmental music being sung. Songs like "The Garden Song"

learned that they can make valuable contributions.

We're convinced that music is definitely a direct path into the minds and hearts of kids and adults alike. Children coo, babble, and bounce to music long before they can carry on a conversation; in time, music naturally grows to be a lifelong companion for most everyone, whether one plays it or simply appreciates it. We have found that music can stimulate an audience to think about environmental issues. With any luck, our music may even encourage active involvement in specific environmental causes.

Children are encouraged to visualize specific wildlife within natural habitats, and, we hope, realize the respect that each deserves.

This music can help cultivate youngsters' own individual values and outlooks. Holly's exposure to music as a preschooler, with the songs of many of CMN's members, exposed her to concepts on a variety of issues that might be considered beyond her years. Holly composed her first song with lyrics at the age of eight. One night, while visiting her grandparents in Hawaii, she looked up at the big, starlit sky and wondered if it was the same sky that hung over her hometown in Wisconsin. In her song, she innocently captured the essence of how connected we all are to each other on this Earth we share.

(Mallett), "A Place in the Choir" (Staines), "Garbage" (Bill Steele), and "Sailin' Up, Sailin' Down" (Lorre Wyatt and Jimmy Reed) became the roots for my growing interest in merging songs with the traditional nature programs I'd already been conducting for 10 years.

As a folk musician and songwriter, I began to observe, collect, create, and perform music that touched upon or taught about environmental concepts and issues, hoping some day to compile a database of environmental songs and teaching ideas that would be of value to educators in bringing the arts—especially music—into the more complete exploration of environmental concerns.

Since then, collecting songs and activity ideas has become my hobby and compulsion. Of the 1,900 songs collected and categorized so far, I find that environmental songs have been written that are appropriate for every age, that are in every musical genre, and that cover every subject matter and region of the world.

***Of course, when we
are finished exploring
the song, we make
sure that we fill up
that hole so no one
falls in, or maybe even
plant a tree in it so
all that digging won't
go to waste.***

However, the songs that I gravitate toward tend to be simple without being simplistic and direct without being preachy, and they're about things that children can connect to easily in their own experiences. Also, the songs that are the most fun to play with and add to, with an audience, will continue to be

fresh and enjoyable, for them and for me.

I often encourage children to think about a friendly tree that they know—one that makes them feel good because it has beautiful flowers in the spring or colorful fall leaves, or it has its branches in just the right places for climbing, or for any other reason. Then, if they know the name of their tree friends, we can make up new verses to Sarah Pirtle's "My Roots Go Down," and we get to sing a completely different version each time.

Many people forget that there is a lot of unseen life, way under the ground. I have created some extra verses for Patty Zeitlin's "Lots of Worms," to explore further the variety of critters kids may find if they dig a hole in the ground. Here are couple of examples:

I dug my hole a little more
down;
That's when I came to a little
ant town;
But I left them alone, 'cause
they liked their home,
Way under the ground. (Sung
all together)

Then I spied a little gray mole.
He stuck his head out of his
little mole hole,
But I left him alone, cause he
liked his home,
Way under the ground.

Of course, when we are finished exploring the song, we make sure that we fill up that hole so no one falls in, or maybe even plant a tree in it so all that digging won't go to waste.

We might try to sing the traditional round, "Bottle of Pop," followed by Jay Mankita's great song, "Litterbug, Litterbug." (I don't know whether it has been recorded, but I heard him sing it at an environmental song swap years ago.) But my favorite little song about litter



is Ruth Pelham's song to the tune of "Frère Jacques":

I saw a paper wrapper, litter-
ing the sidewalk.
Picked it up. Picked it up.
Put it in my pocket, threw it in
the garbage.
All cleaned up. All cleaned up.

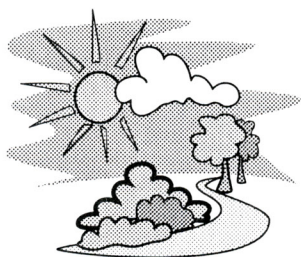
I believe she and Sarah Pirtle put hand motions to it as well.

I love to sing outdoors, so that the natural sights and sounds of the environment can creep into the experience, becoming a springboard for other songs and conversation about how our world works. And while we're at it, we might try to make some music with a piece of grass or an acorn top, or listen to the wind through the leaves.

I am convinced that well-chosen songs can be effectively used in an educational context to reinforce the notion that, when we can understand and appreciate the natural worth of our own backyards and neighborhoods, it can motivate us to be concerned and committed to helping to protect the health of the larger environment. **YIP!**

[Note: There is a fairly new e-mail list with a focus on environmental songs. If you are interested in subscribing, look up the "Songs for EE" website at <http://www.yukon.net/community/songforEE/>.]

Dave Orleans lives with his wife, Sarah, and their children, Danielle and Mark, in Somerdale, New Jersey. He has been a park naturalist since 1973, was a folksinger long before that, and has been an earthsinger since 1981.



DREAMIN'

words & music by Talia Hirschhorn Cooper
©1998 Talia Hirschhorn Cooper

Talia is twelve years old. She wrote this song as part of a writing exercise for her English class.



swing feel

Bb **Eb** **Bb**

Look - in' at flo- wers, star - in' for ho - urs,

F **Eb** **Bb** **Eb**

dream-in' as the days go by.— I just sit there and sigh— oh yeah—

Bb **Eb**

dream - in'.— Dream - in' of the days when the bluebirds sing - in',

Bb **F** **Eb** **Bb**

singin' all day— long while they're wing - ing, wing - ing through the trees'

Eb **F** **Cmin7**

green— leaves, oh yeah. I dream of see - ing e-v'ry

F7 **Dmin7** **G7**

cloud in the sky,— jump to touch them but they're much too high,—

Cmin **F** **Bb**

ooh, too high.— Look - in' at flo- wers

Eb **Bb** **F** **Bb**

star - in' for ho - urs and— dream - in'.—

Children Music Earth

by MaryLee Sunseri

Topanga Canyon, April 1968: a memory of music and earth. My 17th birthday. A gathering of girlfriends 'round a campfire by the spring river. Night and song. My best friend, Nancy, playing her guitar and singing, "You'll Know Me by No Other Name" and "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face." Songs of love and loss sung at the end of childhood.

Now, when I sing with children, I want to recreate that moment of listening, of understanding and sharing. Songs spirited by the clear air of the California coast. Songs by a bubbling river, by a wild, white crest of waves, under serene, elderly trees.

Planning a music curriculum for very young children is always a challenge. Yes, I have a theme in mind: the earth. But no one will be asked to report on this theme or recognize it in a test.

But the reality is, we're in a classroom, on a rug. We can smell "snack" in the oven. Most of us are three or perhaps four years old, with an occasional six month old or thirty or forty-six year old thrown in. Our vocabularies are simple. Our energy is great. We are singing "Follow Me to Stamping Land" with gusto. And I have a plan.

Planning a music curriculum for very young children is always a

challenge. Yes, I have a theme in mind: the earth. But no one will be asked to report on this theme or recognize it in a test. Themes are far more subtle at this age. Yes, we will sing about the environment. But there will be no preaching on garbage or recycling. What we will sing will be fun, repetitive, and, we hope, familiar to the parents and caregivers present, so that they may repeat these songs frequently throughout the days of spring. We will sing the "Navajo Night Chant":

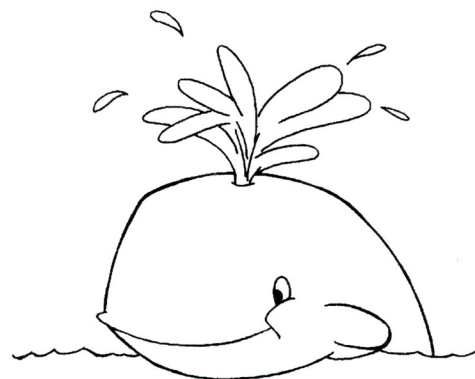
May it be beautiful before me
May it be beautiful behind me
May it be beautiful below me
May it be beautiful all around me

Sung with gestures and a drum. Musical reverence for earth gives way to musical mayhem. Gotta move when we're three. Hop in a boat and start to row. Sing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," faster, faster, slower, stop where the boat enters the sea. Shall we row out to the lighthouse and sing "This Little Light of Mine" and "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean"?

Let's leave the boat here on the shore and turn into baby otters. Floating on our backs, rocks in our paws to crack open a nice abalone dinner. Calling our mothers while we rest in the kelp. We sing "The Otter Lullaby."

Let's dive and swim and turn into "Baby Beluga," and leap out of the water, turning into butterflies flying o'er the sea, o'er the land, right into a tree. Now I get out the visual aids: feltboard and apple tree and five apples for "The Farmer's Apple Tree," with plenty of rhythmic clapping. Someone hollers out "The Wheels on the Bus," and that seems somehow just right, ride sharing being a great way to save earth's resources.

Now we "Plant a Little Seed" and watch it grow vegetables. And "Here Is the Beehive," as the bees help the farmers to pollinate. And yes, this somehow leads to "I Know an



Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly."
Have I stayed true to my theme?

Our hands and feet have been very busy. It's hard to sing and move at the same time. So I pick a story. Gather close so you can see. Listen well. There's only one picture in this book. The rest of the pictures are in your imagination. "The Old Woman Who Lived in a Vinegar Bottle." Told in snippets of song and words alone. Listening is a wonderful gift. And short musical phrases are quickly learned and sung by all.

And since we've slowed down, let's stretch out, find a cozy spot all your own or cuddle with someone special if you like. Time for a lullaby. "Colors of the Wind."

I hope I've given them songs to comfort and songs to be joyful, songs to share with family and friends. Songs to use in a life on earth. Many songs. Many reasons to sing.



[Note: The songs mentioned in this article are credited as follows: "You'll Know Me by No Other Name" (N.P. Stookey); "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" (Ewan MacColl); "The Otter Lullaby" (M. Sunseri); "Baby Beluga" (Raffi & D. Pike); "The Farmer's Apple Tree" and "Plant a Little Seed" (Nancy Stewart); "I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly" (R. Bonne & A. Mills); "The Old Woman Who Lived in a Vinegar Bottle" (Abbie G. MacKinney); "Colors of the Wind" (A. Menken & S. Schwartz). All others are traditional.]

MaryLee Sunseri was raised in Marblehead, Massachusetts, and now lives in Monterey, California. She sings with and for little kids and big ones (a.k.a. adults).

Learning through Song

by Harry Lowenthal

When our children were pre-schoolers and we wanted them to do certain chores, such as brushing teeth or taking baths, communicating to them through the vehicle of song often turned a potential conflict into fun. I've often reflected on why this should be so. It seems that song holds an inherent pleasure, one that I believe is universal and has its roots deep in our biology.

We are truly singing beings. Not only is song a universal part of the many different human cultures of our planet, I think we human beings are more like whales than we realize. Like whales and other vocalizing creatures, we use song to transmit knowledge needed for survival. We use it to soothe our young ones. Beyond that, we use it to teach values and morals and to transmit our history and culture.

Music adds emotional and spiritual elements to the intellectual messages in a song. Our deep-rooted emotional connection with song leads to a natural emotional connection to what we are singing about.

Speech itself has some of the components of song; its rhythm and melody are what we attend to when we are first learning a language, whether as infants or as adults. From the very beginning of life, we absorb information through speech-as-song. Learning through song is thus one of our earliest learning styles. It is clearly one that continues to be powerful throughout life.

What we actually refer to as a song, however, is speech connected to



Harry Lowenthal with the tools of his trade

music. Speech alone was not enough to turn my preschoolers' tasks into fun. Music adds emotional and spiritual elements to the intellectual messages in a song. Our deep-rooted emotional connection with song leads to a natural emotional connection to what we are singing about. When we feel emotionally connected to something, it is more likely to stay in our consciousness and we are more likely to respond to it in caring ways. If action is needed, we are more inclined to take action for the benefit of what we own emotionally. What we grow to own is what we are most likely to grow to love and protect.

When we sing for children, whether as performers, as teachers, or as parents or other adults in their lives, we have the opportunity to teach as well as to entertain. Drawing on singing as a primary learning style, we can choose songs that cultivate children's awareness of who we are as human beings and what the crucial issues are that we need to address. Using the power of song to create strong emotional connections, we can guide our children to love the world we live in and to become active participants in preserving it and in creating a better future. **YIP!**

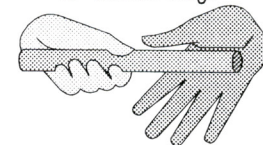
Harry Lowenthal was born in Santiago, Chile, and grew up in both North and South America. Harry has always loved making music.



Announcements

Mark your calendar now!
CMN National Gathering
October 16-18, 1998
at
Bank Street
College of Education
New York, New York

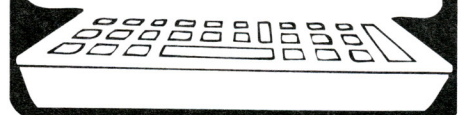
The
Hand to Hand Program
is underway!



This is a CMN outreach program, in which CMN veterans recruit new members through personal contact, with the aid of "Hand to Hand Kits." These kits include membership forms, flyers and an issue of *Pass It On!* If you want kits, contact Caroline Presnell at our national office at 847/733-8003. In this way, we'll be a-doubling soon!

CMN now has a Website, thanks to Monty Harper and PJ Swift. The address is: <http://www.cowboy.net/~mharper/CMN.html>

If you are a CMN member and would like to link your site to ours, please contact Sally Rogers (salrog@neca.com) or PJ Swift (pickle@well.com) to find out how.





YOU CAN DANCE

based on a proverb from Zimbabwe
words & music by Lisa Atkinson
©1991 Loose Gravel Music

This on-the-spot harmony piece has graced several CMN gathering closings. It's always an eloquent expression of the power and joy of our communal singing. Lisa originally wrote the song as a rhythm exercise for the San Jose Peace Chorale. Folks have told her about adapting the song for all ages of singers, from kindergartners on up. Lisa explains how she teaches the song to groups: "I start with the bass line. When that's established, add your angels (that's the high part). I use my fists to help get this rhythm across. People tend to hesitate on the first three notes and if it drags, you lose your beat. As I bring in the third part (away, away) I tell them 'Just keep singing till you see my hands come up and tell you to stop.' When the room is going strong, I bring in the lead vocal. I sing it twice with a bit of improvisation between the verses." You can hear Lisa's arrangement on her recording *Something to Sing About*. You can write to her about this and her other songs and recordings at 317 W. 41st Ave., San Mateo, CA 94403.

HARMONY PARTS

Musical notation for the Harmony Parts, featuring three staves: HIGH, MIDDLE, and LOW. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C).

HIGH
bring this in second dee tee deede dee dee dee dee tee dee dee dee dee dee dee tee dee dee

MIDDLE
bring this in third A way a - way, a - way a - way. A -

LOW
start with this part Bum ba dumbum, bum bum bum bum.

LEAD VOCAL

Musical notation for the Lead Vocal, featuring a single staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C).

If you can walk, you can dance, if you can talk, you can sing.

1. If you can 2. 7 If there's a

song, we've got to sing it, a chance for peace, we've got to bring it. A brand new

world, we've got to chance it, if you can sing then you can dance it.

Lead singer rests here while harmony parts continue

Radio Waves

by PJ Swift

Fanning the Green Fire

This is a story about how little ideas become big ideas, and how little projects become big projects. I'm sure it will ring true for many of you. After all, isn't that the story of each of us?

Several years ago, radio broadcaster Dennis Hendricks and his partner Traci Hickson set out to present an environmentally friendly point of view through a small radio program called "Stump Creek Radio." The program was a success, so much so that Traci soon branched out with her own program, "Green Fire," and later, "Every Living Thing." The programs, all aimed at adult audiences, featured information and music—especially music—because, according to Dennis, "musicians are the forgotten educators."

But one or two programs on ecology for a few hours a week, although laudable, couldn't possibly bring about the kind of changes that Dennis and Traci were hoping to effect. The programmers came to feel that their programs were providing a false sense of closure for some very complex and ongoing issues. Ecology isn't just about

wetlands and endangered lizards; the very word *ecology* points to the *relationship* between every living and nonliving thing. What matters for one species matters for the others, and what impacts a society in one place impacts it in all other areas, too. Rather than centering on a weekly dose of nature-oriented information, Dennis and Traci wanted to show how earth-friendly lifestyles and attitudes can address social issues—such as homelessness and racism—as well.

Thus, the little idea became a big idea.

What a radical idea— a radio station truly of and for the community!

Dennis and Traci changed their focus and founded the Earth Day Every Day Radio Project. They formed a nonprofit corporation and added an advisory board. They began to develop a coalition of individuals, organizations, publications, and businesses committed to a new idea: ecological broadcasting. They embraced a plan to purchase a radio station in a major metropolitan area of the United States and to devote 24 hours daily of airtime to fully integrated, socio-environmental programming. The

pilot project would "initiate positive changes within the listening area and influence sources of mainstream media by providing a clear example of ecological broadcasting."

They weren't sure whether a commercial or public station would best meet their needs. What was certain, however, was that the station would relate to the community and not just be based on segmented programs and "sound bites." It would center primarily on talk shows, because, as Dennis notes, "in order to truly effect change, a station must be interactive with its audience." Listeners would be encouraged to discuss issues and their implications. Programming would "stress solutions, coalitions, responsibility, and human connections." For instance, instead of just talking about the idea of organic farming, listeners would be told about actual organic farms in the community, along with ways that they could participate in those farms. People would be encouraged to share information and resources, enhancing their community connections.

What a radical idea—a radio station truly *of* and *for* the community!

The station would have other programming as well, ranging from local and global news to the spoken word and indigenous music. Existing syndicated programming would also be used. Sundays would be devoted to community religious groups and ethical discussions. While still aimed primarily at an adult audience, a special section of every Saturday would be devoted to children's programming.

Then the big idea became even bigger.



..... ANNOUNCEMENT

The newly revised and expanded *Children's Radio International 1998* is now available! This is a comprehensive list of every children's and family radio program in the world that is known to the authors, PJ Swift and Rachel Sumner. It includes program titles, stations, programming descriptions, and contact numbers.

By going to the following website, it's possible to print the list right off the Internet, for free: <http://www.childrensmusic.org/radiomenu.html>

CMNers who don't have electrons surging through their fingers may care to wait for the digest version, which will be mailed to members (on real paper!) sometime later this year.



The coalition decided that the pilot project should eventually be made available by satellite to interested stations across the United States. And they decided that the station should be "netcast" too, that is, able to be heard on home computers around the world via the Internet. The local-community orientation of the station would be problematic, of course, but the coalition hoped to involve wider communities as well.

From a single small program to a 24-hour station in a major metropolitan area to worldwide "netcasting"—that's quite a jump (or two)!

Right now, the project is still in the planning and funding stages. But Dennis and Traci are eager to develop the "eco-audio inventory" on their website and would like to hear from artists whose songs would be particularly appropriate for the station. The project currently has over 100 participating artists, including numerous CMNers. Each artist's name, address, and album, plus a few selected song titles, are listed on the Earth Day Every Day website.

You can contact Dennis and Traci at the Earth Day Every Day Radio Station Project, R.R. 2 Box 36, Bar Harbor, Maine 04609. You can phone them at 207/288-5061 or e-mail them at earthday@downeast.net; their website is at <http://www.downeast.net/com/earthday>. **PIIO!**

[Note: Another environmentally oriented program, out of Alaska, is "My Green Earth." Aired weekly, this is a children's program featuring music and information with ecology themes. The producers are also interested in receiving music and stories from CMNers. You can contact Mike Wall and Dave Perkins by mail at 620 Egan Way, Kodiak, Alaska 99615, or by phone at 907/486-3181.]

PJ Swift is a carbon-based life form who produces a weekly radio series that is based on imaginary fruit/vegetable hybrids.

Plans for CMN's 1998 National Gathering

by Nancy Hershatter

On the weekend of October 16th through 18th, for the first time, we will be leaving behind the bucolic rural settings of our previous national gatherings and venturing into the concrete canyons of Manhattan's Upper West Side. We are excited that Bank Street College of Education will be our host and cosponsor; this partnership will connect us to a vibrant and diverse community of educators and families.

The Bank Street building, which houses both the college and the Bank Street Children's School, is on West 112th Street, just off Broadway. The classrooms (including two wonderful music rooms), the auditorium, the cafeteria, and the lobby will be available to us. Their Family Center will make an excellent location for child care. The Bank Street Bookstore, an exhaustive collection of titles in education, psychology, and the arts, is right next door, and you may want to make time to browse there.

Since planning an urban event requires us to be precise about numbers, we plan to get registration materials to you earlier than we have in other years. It is important that you send us back the housing questionnaire very soon after you receive it.

You may want to arrive on Thursday or stay on through Monday, in order to have time to see New York City without feeling wanderlust during the gathering. We encourage you to find ways to get to the gathering without driving, as parking is expensive. There are shuttle buses from the airports, as well as trains, subways, and buses to get you around the city. New York City is a great place *not* to have a car.

We have reserved 100 beds at the American Youth Hostel (a 674-bed hostel, the largest in the U.S.), housed in a turn-of-the-century landmark building, a former seminary. These beds are arranged 4, 6, 10, or 12 per room. The rooms are spacious and comfortable and the hostel is an easy 8-block walk from the Bank Street School. You really won't need a car. Besides, who wants to leave workshops to run out and put quarters in meters?

We are excited about the way things are coming together, and we hope you are, too. **PIIO!**

Nancy Hershatter is a music consultant to preschool programs and teaches a weekly in-school program called Music in Early Childhood.



On the weekend of October 16th through 18th, for the first time, we will be leaving behind the bucolic rural settings of our previous national gatherings and venturing into the concrete canyons of Manhattan's Upper West Side.



LA BELLA HORTELANA

Traditional, Mexico

This lively song integrates well into spring planting and gardening activities. Its cumulative repetitions make it useful to Spanish learners. It invites motions and dramatization. And it features a female farmer. This version comes from families at Compañeros, a preschool in San Francisco, California.

Cuan-do si-em-bra la bella hor-te-la-na, cuan-do si-em-bra si-em-bra a-sí. Sí, si-em-bra po-co a po-co, lue-go po-ne las ma-nos a-sí, si-em-bra a-sí. lue-go po-ne las ma-nos a-sí.

(add this phrase as many times as needed to accommodate verses as they accumulate)

Literal (not singable) translation

1. Cuando siembra la bella hortelana,
Cuando siembra, siembra así.
Sí, siembra poco a poco,
Luego pone las manos así,
Siembra así, luego pone las manos así.
2. Cuando riega la bella hortelana,
Cuando riega, riega así.
Sí, riega poco a poco,
Luego pone las manos así,
Riega así, siembra así, luego pone las manos así.
3. Cuando corta la bella hortelana,
Cuando corta, corta así.
Sí, corta poco a poco,
Luego pone las manos así,
Corta así, riega así, siembra así,
luego pone las manos así.
4. Cuando muele...
5. Cuando tortea...
6. Cuando come...

1. When the pretty farmer sows the seeds,
When she sows, she sows like this.
Yes, she sows little by little,
Then she places her hands like this.
She sows like this,
then she places her hands like this.
2. When the pretty farmer waters,
When she waters, she waters like this.
Yes, she waters little by little,
Then she places her hands like this.
She waters like this, she sows like this,
then she places her hands like this.
3. When the pretty farmer cuts,
When she cuts, she cuts like this.
Yes, she cuts little by little,
Then she places her hands like this.
She cuts like this, she waters like this,
she sows like this,
then she places her hands like this.
4. When she grinds...
5. When she makes tortillas...
6. When she eats...

Curriculi! Curricula!

by Bob Blue

This is a great planet we live on. What I've learned so far about other planets has not made me wish I lived there instead of here. We hope future generations will still be able to see the beauty we can see now. I think one way we can help preserve it is to make sure children realize how lucky we all are to live here. That's not a difficult job; the beauty of Earth is all around, and children love seeing it. They love hearing it, too: Earth makes beautiful music—the sounds of birds, insects, leaves, and many of the sounds made by people.

As we choose songs to teach to young children, I hope some will be ones that celebrate Earth's beauty. I remember a song my second-grade teacher, Mrs. Keedle, taught us. It was a simple celebration of autumn:

Gently, the trees are swaying.
Softly the leaves tumble down,
Cover the ground with a carpet,
Red, yellow, orange, and brown.

That was in 1955. Back then, I don't remember there being much emphasis, in school or anywhere else, on threats to the environment, though the threats, of course, were there. Mrs. Keedle just thought autumn was beautiful, and she had us sing about how beautiful it was. That's all.

About 10 years later, when I was in high school, I started learning about the threats, and I remember being impressed by Tom Lehrer's song, "Pollution." As time went on, I learned more songs about what humans were doing to the natural environment. As a young adult, this seemed like important information to have.

Yet I wonder what I would have thought and how I would have felt if I'd learned such songs in second

grade. I now hear young children talk about the damage humans do to Earth, and I believe that many children are concerned. I wonder what it feels like to know about all that and be that concerned at the beginning of life. Does giving children this knowledge enhance our efforts to empower them? How much does it scare them? To what degree does their knowledge and consequent fear lead to despair? It's a delicate balance—making sure we don't make light of a subject that's so important, and yet making sure we don't teach desperation.

***Earth makes
beautiful music—
the sounds of birds,
insects, leaves, and
many of the sounds
made by people.***

Tom Lehrer's song helped me. It was funny, and humor can be a way to deal with material that can otherwise be too heavy. The advice about how to enjoy New York City ("Don't drink the water and don't breathe the air") made my friends and me laugh, but it also got us focusing on a real problem. Songs have the power to do that, and we choose them for that reason.

"This Pretty Planet" (by Tom Chapin and John Forster) is a gentle celebration of the beauty of Earth. It doesn't tell us that we're ruining the planet; it just reminds us that we're lucky to live on it. I guess the song Mrs. Keedle taught us delivered that message, too.

In selecting songs, as in teaching, I think we ought to make sure children know what a gorgeous planet Earth is, and then, when they're ready, make sure they also know that the planet's environment is fragile and in danger. And rather than being content simply to point



out problems, let's not forget to help children to come up with strategies for solving them. It's not an easy job, empowering children to deal with problems we ourselves can find overwhelming. We need songs like "This Pretty Planet" and Bill Steele's "Garbage," and ultimately we have to ask and answer Sally Rogers' musical question, "What Can One Little Person Do?"



Bob Blue is a father; former elementary-school teacher; volunteer elementary-school teacher; and writer of songs, poems, plays, stories, and articles.

**Is this your last
issue of
Pass It On!?**

**Check your
membership
expiration date on
the mailing label.
The next issue,
to be mailed
in September,
will go to current
members only.**



GONNA KEEP A PLACE

Dedicated to Stockton Public School Children

words & music by Nancy Raven
©1992 Nancy Raven



Chorus

Gon- na keep a place in my heart for my friends-
who can't be here, Gon- na keep a space in my mind,-
keep them close, keep them clear. 1. I re -
mem - ber how they smiled, how they ran like some - thing wild,-
How we fought, how we played, We were
friends, and stayed that way Gon- na keep a
place in my heart, Space in my mind

Verse

1. I re -

Coda

Gon- na keep a

place in my heart, Space in my mind

Gonna Keep a Place

➡ continued from previous page

Nancy wrote this song in response to two separate tragedies in the Stockton School District in California. She tells this story about writing it: "When asked if I could sing a song appropriate to the deaths of several school children for an assembly I was doing, I came up at a loss to address or sing to such a situation. Driving home that day, I set about writing 'Gonna Keep a Place,' a song that would be appropriate and would speak to death and dying issues that face children and adults everywhere today. I hope you will make use of it if the need arises."

Nancy has recorded "Gonna Keep a Place" on her cassette, *Friends and Family*. You can contact her about this and her other songs and recordings at Lizard's Rock Music, 142 Spray Avenue, Monterey, CA 93940.



chorus:

Gonna keep a place in my heart for my friends who can't be here.
Gonna keep a space in my mind, keep them close, keep them clear.

1. I remember how they smiled,
How they ran like something wild,
How we fought, how we played,
We were friends, and stayed that way.
2. And when I think that I won't see
Their shining faces again,
I reach back in my mind and find
The memories of when they were here.
3. Don't let your feelings turn to fear,
You can cry if you feel low,
And treat the friends who are still here,
With more kindness, make the friendship grow.
4. When someone dies they've gone away,
Tuck their memory in tight.
The loss can make a chilly day,
Unless you keep their memory bright.



Bonnie Lockhart is the Songs Editor for Pass It On! She solicits, edits, researches, and computer engraves the songs. She is an educator, performer, and songwriter, and is a board member of CMN.

New Sounds

by Sandy Byer

Note: These descriptions of new releases are sent in by the CMN member(s) mentioned, but they may have been edited by Pass It On! staff for style consistency or length. The materials have not been reviewed.

MEGHAN COLLINS

Chocolate

This first collection of original songs by storyteller and author Meghan Collins has been kid-tested in the classroom. "Mrs. Pig" and "Drum Band" can be used as call-and-response songs with movement, while "Jumpin' on the Bed" and "Don't Do That" are sure to be car-ride or campfire favorites. Linda Shrader adds vocals, Paul Strausman plays guitar and adds vocals, and Bob Van Detta adds vocals, swing guitar, and bass.

Cassettes are \$9.95 each (plus \$3 s+h) and are available from Meghan at 1749 Valerie Ct., Benicia, CA 94510; or from A Gentle Wind at 888/FUN SONG (toll free).

KATHLEEN GIBSON

Anna Banana

This 1995 Parents' Choice Honor Winner has just been released on CD. Exuberant, danceable, and filled with the joy of childhood, this is kids' music at its best. Songs include "One Big Family," "Ooey Moey Oh Ga La Le," "How Do Elephants Kiss?" "This Little Light of Mine," "Being Different's OK with Me," and many more. CD includes lyrics.

Cassettes are \$10, CDs are \$15 (plus s+h) and are available from Whirling Rainbow Productions at 888/280-4JOY.

JOHN "LUKAS" MILLER

I Clap When I See Bats!

This recording, subtitled *The Songs and Stories of Schoolhouse Safaris*,

features 11 original interactive songs and stories that are designed to teach preschool and elementary-school children about the importance of all animals (from the adorable to the downright scary). Titles include "Laugh Ourselves Silly," "Wah Wah-Wah Wildlife," "Shrinking Habitat Blues," "Earthworm's Lesson," and more.

Cassettes are \$7.95 each and can be ordered from Schoolhouse Safaris at 800/755-4415.

RAS RECORDS

More Reggae for Kids

This recording includes fun sing-along songs with infectious rhythms the whole family can enjoy, songs that also teach important lessons. Many address social and environmental issues. J.C. Lodge's "What about the Children?" urges us to consider thoughtful use of the earth's limited natural resources, while Yvad's "Children of the World" celebrates the miracle of every child. A portion of the proceeds goes to the Area Boy Project, an arts, education, and inner-city community project in Kingston, Jamaica.

CDs and cassettes with full song lyrics are available from RAS Records, PO Box 42517, Washington, DC 20015.

PETER & ELLEN ALLARD

Sing Shalom: Songs for the Jewish Holidays

These 14 infectious songs, written by Ellen, cover Rosh Hashonah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Simhat Torah, Hanukah, Tu B'Shevat, Purim, Passover, Shabbat, and Havdalah, plus a general thank-you song. Recorded and produced with Peter and other fine musicians, this recording is a "must have" in Jewish homes, schools, and educational settings. Playful, insightful, lyrical, and melodically memorable, this is

one for all ages. Lyrics included.

Cassettes are \$10 and CDs are \$15 each (plus \$3 s+h) and are available online at www.PeterandEllen.com or by writing to 80Z Music, PO Box 127, Worcester, MA 01602.

LISA MICHAELS

Tempo, Level, Energy and Shapes: Vols. 1 & 2

Developed by a professional ballet teacher for children ages three and up, these recordings provide teachers and parents with a fun and simple way to introduce young children to the joys of movement, music, and dance. Children delight in exploring the ideas of tempo, level, energy, shape, place, direction, locomotion, colors, emotions, the seasons and times of day, and more, through a series of exercises set to music specially composed for this purpose.

For each volume, cassettes are \$12 and CDs are \$16.50 each (plus \$4 s+h) and can be ordered by calling 888/211-5180.



RE-BOP RECORDS

Motor City Music for Minors

This brand-new addition to the Re-Bop's Oldies and Other Goodies Library celebrates through music and humor the soulful Motown sound of the sixties and weaves a loose and lovable storyline around 11 Motown classics. Join Sandra Wright, the singing postwoman, as she guides the kids she meets on her mail route with warmth, wit, and wisdom through the ups and

downs of relating—to a parent, a pet, a teacher, and especially to each other. Adults and children are featured as lead vocalists on such classics as "Please Mr. Postman" and "ABC."

Cassettes and CDs are available by calling 800/541-9904 or 800/443-4727.

PETE SEEGER

Birds, Beasts, Bugs & Fishes (Little & Big)

To celebrate 50 years of Folkways Recordings, these two Pete Seeger classics, originally recorded in 1955, are available on CD for the first time. Energetically performed with banjo accompaniment, these 28 wonderful, endearing animal songs encourage singing along, drawing pictures, and playing hand games. Songs include "Frog Went A-Courting," "Mister Rabbit," "The Foolish Frog," and more.

CDs and cassettes are available from Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 955 L'Enfant Plaza, Suite 7300, Washington, DC 20560 and by e-mail at folkways@aol.com.

PETE SEEGER, SUNI PAZ, ELLA JENKINS, & MORE

Smithsonian Folkways Children's Music Collection

Again, to commemorate the 50th year of Folkways Recordings, this compilation CD has been assembled from a vast collection of well-loved songs and unexpected treasures from Smithsonian Folkways' vast collection of music for children. This recording features counting and activity games and songs from different cultural traditions, performed by artists Langston Hughes, Woody Guthrie, Ella Jenkins, Leadbelly, Larry Long, Suni Paz, Pete Seeger, and others and includes a 28-page booklet with lyrics and song descriptions.

CDs and cassettes are available from Smithsonian Folkways at the

addresses given previously.

ROUNDER RECORDS

The Land of Yahoe: Children's Entertainments from the Days before TV

From Rounder Records' 25-year archives comes this fine collection of more than 30 authentic Anglo-American folk songs and tunes. Traditional musicians such as Ola Belle Reed, E.C. Ball, Asa Martin, and J.P. and Annadeene Fraley perform their favorite childhood songs and stories, including "Little Birdie," "Bile Them Cabbage Down," "The Fox," and "Old Shoe Boots and Leggings." Includes excellent liner notes with photos and historical information.

Available on cassette and CD from Rounder Records by calling 800/443-4727 or online at www.rounder.com.

GENERATIONS—CANDACE & HOLLY KREITLOW

Lift Me

Generations' second recording of music for the family is an uplifting collection celebrating nature, family, and the connections we share. Weaving an enchanting variety of songs, ranging from outrageously humorous to artistically stunning, the recording includes traditional, original, and contemporary folk music. The CD offers 18 titles, including "Tobacco" and "I Will." It totals 70 minutes of vocal harmonies accompanied by guitar, Celtic harp, dulcimer, and fiddle.

CDs are \$15 each (plus \$2 s+h) and are available from Generations, PO Box 113, Mazomanie, WI 53560.



Minutes of national
CMN board meetings
are available to be read
by CMN members
upon request.

Regional Reports

compiled by Katherine Dines

NEW YORK METRO

Nancy Hershatter
760 Bronx River Road
Bronxville, NY 10708
914/237-4010

or

Barbara Wright
116 Westchester Avenue
Pound Ridge, NY 10576
Day: 914/764-5484
Eve: 914/764-7613

A meeting was held on Saturday, March 13th at Bank Street School, to begin to set up committees for the 1998 National Gathering, to be held there in October. Plans are coming along nicely, and we are very excited about it. Contact Nancy for more information.

On March 28th CMNers led a song swap at the New York State Association for the Education of Young Children in Saratoga Springs.



MID-ATLANTIC

Dave Orleans
999 Sherbrook Circle
Somerdale, NJ 08083-2221
Day: 609/768-1598
Eve.: 609/435-4229

This region finally raised its head to survey the terrain at the Great Groundhog Revival, two simultaneous get-togethers on Sunday, February 8th. Folks from the

continued on next page ➡

Regional Reports

➔ continued from previous page

Philadelphia/New Jersey area gathered at College Settlement Camp in Horsham, Pennsylvania, and folks from the Baltimore/Washington area met at Sue Ribaud's home. The small gatherings gave everyone the opportunity to catch up with each other and share songs, ideas, and good company.

The region will hold a gathering May 9th-10th: the Mid-Atlantic Region Sleep-Over at the Garden State Discovery Museum in Cherry Hill. Call Dave for further information.

MIDWEST

Bruce O'Brien
604 Newton Street
Eau Claire, WI 54701
715/832-0721

At press time, plans for a wonderful and unique gathering are well underway for Friday, May 1st through Sunday, May 3rd, 1998, in Minneapolis. This year's get-together promises to have all the musical richness you've come to expect of CMN weekends, combined with the larger-than-life pageantry and celebration of the May Day Parade and Festival. On Sunday our event will flow into one of Minneapolis' most colorful and amazing grassroots festivals: In the Heart of the Beast Puppet & Mask Theatre's (HOBT) Annual May Day Parade & Festival.

HOBT is very supportive of building a relationship between the festival and our gathering. Inspired by our gathering, the theater and community decided that *music* will be the parade's theme this year.

CMN will host one of the festival stages during the later afternoon on Sunday. This is an outdoor festival, so if there is inclement weather, May Day will be postponed until the following weekend.

SOUTHEAST

Katherine Dines
P.O. Box 121722
Nashville, TN 37212
615/297-4286
E-mail: kdines@mindspring.com
or
Rachel Sumner
217 Silo Court
Nashville, TN 37221
615/646-3220
E-mail:
rachel@jackatak.theporch.com

Our regular meetings are really fun, even when there are few people. We share a lot of ideas, information, and support. Any and all travelers are invited to join us at noon the first Wednesday of every month, at a toy store called Imagination Crossroads (behind the Donut Den in Green Hills). We're planning to have a song swap in the middle of May. Please call either Rachel or Katherine for more information.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Lisa Atkinson
317 West 41st Avenue
San Mateo, CA 94403
650/574-2709

Northern California had a fabulous song swap in Sebastopol in February. We hosted song swaps at the statewide convention of the California Association for the Education of Young Children, held in San Jose on March 14th, and at the Sonoma County Folk Festival in Sebastopol on March 22nd. On Sunday, May 10th, from 4 to 5 PM, CMN will be part of the Berkeley Free Folk Festival. Call Lisa for details.



NORTHWEST (Forming)

Bonnie Messinger
11790 SW Belmont Terrace
Beaverton, OR 97008
503/641-8580
E-mail:
steve.mullinax@worldnet.att.net
or
Greta Pedersen
19363 Willamette Dr. #252
West Linn, OR 97068
503/699-0234
Fax: 503/699-1813
E-mail: accentm@teleport.com

We are still in the process of exploring the possibility of becoming an official CMN region. If you have ideas to contribute, or would be interested in working on this, please contact Greta.

For activities in the Southern Oregon sub-region, contact:

Denise Friedl Johnson
709 Faith Avenue
Ashland, OR 97520
541/482-4610

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Dave Kinnoin
P.O. Box 3890
South Pasadena, CA 91031
626/441-6024
Fax: 626/652-1024

We had a lively and well-attended steering committee meeting in January, where we discussed outreach possibilities for our region and ways to involve more of our members. There are so many of our members whom we have never met!

The next song swap will be co-sponsored by the Isabel Patterson Child Development Center at California State University at Long Beach. It will be held at their facility on Sunday, April 19th, from 1 to 3 PM. We hope to involve teachers and families in the Long Beach and South Bay areas as well as from the entire region, and to gear the content to the activities of the Week of the Young Child. We welcomed two new volunteers who will help with issuing periodic newsletter.

ters and outreach material. For more information, contact Dave Kinnoin, and note his new area code is 626!

CANADA

Sandy Byer
26 Bain Avenue
Toronto, Ontario M4K 1E6
Canada
416/465-2741

We continue to meet three times a year. On February 5th we met for a potluck lunch and full afternoon of swapping great songs, singing games, and rhymes. We will be gathering again on Tuesday evening, May 26th, at 7 PM. Call Sandy for venue information. We have also applied to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, to hold a preconference afternoon CMN song swap during their national convention, to be held in Toronto in mid-November 1998. If we are accepted, we'll let you know in the next *PIO!* so that we can include out-of-town as well as local CMN members.

NEW ENGLAND

Nina Fischer
35 Gardner Street
Arlington, MA 02174
781/648-8533
Fax: 781/648-2824
E-mail: Nina@matchups.com
or
Cindy Mapes
108 Adena Road
West Newton, MA 02165-1620
617/527-1666

The New England region held a very successful gathering on April 4th at the Clark Street School in Worcester, Massachusetts. About 40 people participated and created a genuine spirit of community. There were nine workshops on a variety of topics. John Riccio, representing Clark Street School, told us in his welcome how important it is to know that there is music in the school on the weekend.

Nina Fischer and Cindy Mapes are

stepping down as regional co-representatives. Four persons volunteered to serve as rep! A mail ballot will be conducted. Nina and Cindy will continue with their duties until the vote is completed.

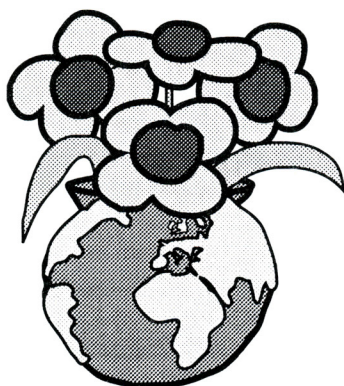
GEORGIA REGION (FORMING)

Elise Witt
P.O. Box 116
Decatur, GA 30031
404/377-3102
or
Holley Howard
2000 Azalea Circle
Decatur, GA 30033
404/320-0355

In January, Atlanta CMN members Holley Howard and Elise Witt gathered 17 people interested in children's music for a potluck, song swap, and idea sharing. Present were teachers, performers, parents, kids, videographers, and others. The food was delicious and the songs really raised the roof! Another 20 or so folks have expressed interest in CMN, but were unable to attend that first meeting.

Some possibilities for the future include: a children's radio show on WRFG (Radio Free Georgia), our community station, or Peach State Public Radio, and a public event at Fernbank science museum

A second, smaller gathering happened in February. Monthly get-togethers will continue as we develop ideas on what this potential new CMN region might be about. **PIO!**



Editorial: Children's Power

➤ continued from inside cover

I, too, have always been inspired by the songs and stories of the Freedom Train. As a young child, growing up in Vermont, I had a friend who lived in a house that had once been a stop on the Underground Railroad. She showed me the old fieldstone-lined tunnel that led out of their basement and ran underground all the way to a wooded riverbank. Escaped slaves could be brought in and out of the house unseen, via that tunnel. I often imagined myself, a white child, helping to hide these brown-skinned sisters and brothers, running through the tunnel with them, holding the lantern, showing them the way to freedom.

Later I learned about the many children—mostly white Quaker children—who actually performed such acts of bravery in the 1800s. While the bounty hunters' eyes were watching the Quaker parents, the children slipped away, spiriting fugitives from one station to the next, hidden perhaps in the hay wagon a child drove on the pretext of making a nighttime delivery.

Did these stories frighten me? I understood well that the struggle was over human slavery versus human freedom, and I knew that the bounty hunters carried guns and might kill the escaped slaves and perhaps those who helped them. Yes, it was scary to contemplate. Did the stories immobilize me? I don't believe so. Instead they taught me the connection between risk and living a life of conscience. I knew, with a child's simplicity of heart, that a life lived according to one's conscience, while dangerous, was a thing of beauty—inner beauty—and wholeness. Somehow, though I had never been called to do these dangerous things that other children and adults before me had done, I could sense that doing them would bring a most

continued on next page ➤

Editorial: Children's Power

➔ continued from previous page

precious kind of clarity. It's what I think of whenever I sing the song, "Amazing Grace." It's the kind of inner clarity that's needed to turn the slave ship around and set the captives free.

When, in my own time, I *was* called—called to help with the "New" Underground Railroad, bringing refugees from wars in Central America to sanctuary in churches in the United States—there was never any question in my heart. If children of the mid-1800s could help oppressed people find their way to freedom, certainly an adult of the 1980s could do the same.

An example of children's role in social change from more recent times comes from the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. The African-American children of the South, as much as the adults, were part of the story of the struggle to end racial segregation through nonviolent resistance. Black children sat in, were attacked by police dogs, were beaten and tear gassed, were carried off in large numbers to jail. Many adult leaders of the movement no doubt were in great anguish over this, but when the rest of the country and the world saw this happening, something snapped—and great numbers of people, white and black, knew the system had to change. The tide was turned, and I believe that children played a crucial role in that. We witnessed a similar thing happen in South African blacks' struggle to end apartheid. There are countless other examples, large and small, of children's participation in and influence on world-changing movements.

What I learn from these stories is that it's a mistake to think of children only as "potential," only as people who may become powerful as adults. It's also true that children can be powerful now, as

children. The history of children's role in society, passed down to us in the stories and songs we love to tell and sing, shows us that children can have an enormous influence on adults. We should be careful not to minimize this. Their influence resides in our love for them, which is huge, at least in part because they are the embodiment of our hope for the future. Children can be a catalyst that clarifies the conscience of adults; they can be the lens through which we more vividly see what Alice Walker refers to as "the world to come," the world we wish to create. And they are capable of acts of bravery and conscience that inspire others and change the world.

As these stories also make clear, not all children grow up sheltered from the harsh realities of life; probably *most* do not. Many are thrust into the midst of turmoil whether they—or we—wish it or not. It's hard to watch anyone suffer, and it's particularly hard for adults to watch children suffer. We want to preserve their innocence and protect them from danger, anxiety, insult, and injury. Yet there are times when the cost of preserving their naïveté may be that we all—children and adults—*forfeit* an opportunity to live according to our consciences and to help the world move toward greater wholeness.

The question of how best to tell children about the difficult truths of their time may not have a clear-cut answer, partly because each child is different. Knowing how much, when, and how to tell requires sensitivity. Our fear is that we may end up teaching despair. We need to remember that one of the best antidotes to despair is knowing that there's something we can do and that we don't have to do it alone. While we are teaching children about the threats to our environment, we need to give them opportunities for collective action, and we need to listen to their ideas,

too. It's not enough to give children information about the world; we must teach them empowerment as well. Empowerment isn't just about *thinking* that you're powerful, it's about putting your power into appropriate *action*. We can model this for them, through our own example; we can teach them the songs and stories of other acts of empowerment by children and adults; and we can help them to discover their own clear conscience and the actions that flow naturally from the heart.

While each child is unique, what they all have in common is that the earth, "this pretty planet," is their inheritance. The youngest among us have the most to lose if we go on collectively destroying the very source of life. It may be that the most disempowering thing we can do with children is to tiptoe around the "heavy" stuff, in hopes of giving them a carefree childhood. Humans have already done so much damage to the earth, nobody really knows if it can ever be repaired and returned to good health. This is the reality that children are growing up with today. The human race now stands on the brink of the very likely end of its own history, if we don't change. Can we justify shielding our children from this truth? Who knows what powers might be discovered among our children, if they understood that they are living at a crossroads for our species and perhaps for our planet? We're going to need a lot of energy and support as we work together to envision and create a sustainable future for human beings on Earth. If we tell our children the truth, maybe it is *they* who will help *us* to find the strength and clarity we need, finally, to turn the ship around. **🚢!**

Susan Keniston lives in Santa Cruz, California. She gives concerts for children and adults and teaches singing, songwriting, and Orff-Schulwerk-based music residencies in schools in the Bay Area.



OOPS!

words & music by Dan Crow
©1992 Allshouse Music ASCAP

Dan wrote this "Sound Song" as a phonics lesson for the consonant "p" letter sound. He wrote dozens of these "Sound Songs" when he was a practicing speech therapist and elementary school teacher. His favorite recording of the song is by Anne Lief Barlin's six-year-old grandson on Anne's and Marcia Berman's album, *Cloud Journeys*. Anne had all of us dropping, spilling, and moving to a plethora of playful possibilities with this song at the CMN National Gathering in Nashville. To contact Dan about his songs and recordings write him at P. O. Box 5914, Santa Monica, CA 90409.

chorus: C



Oops! Oops! Oops! I'm al-ways spill-ing. Oops! Oops!

G



Oops! I'm al-ways drop-ping. Oops! Oops! Oops! Do I have to pick it

C

G

to Coda for last chorus

C

verse:

F



up? I don't wan-na pick it up! I dropped a can of pop, and

C

G

F



then I popped the top. The pop it sprayed in - to my face. The

C

G

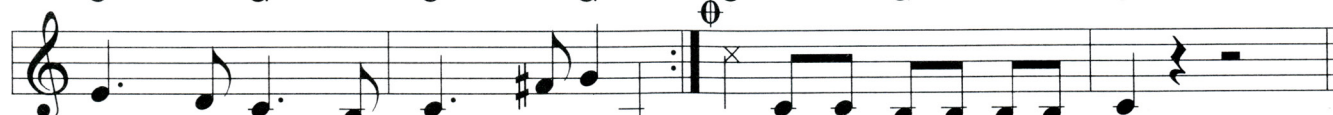
C

G

C

G

C



pop I had to drop. And I said: up! But you have to pick it up!

chorus:

Oops! Oops! Oops! I'm always spilling.
Oops! Oops! Oops! I'm always dropping.
Oops! Oops! Oops! Do I have to pick it up?
I don't want to pick it up!

1. I dropped a can of pop,
And then I popped the top.
The pop it sprayed into my face.
The pop I had to drop. And I said:

2. I had a piece of pie.
A piece of pumpkin pie.
I stood up straight and tipped the plate
And then I had no pie. And I said:

3. I had some paint to pour
For Pop to paint the door.
I tipped the can, it slipped my hand.
The paint fell on the floor. And I said:

things out to clarify or validate what we are being told or sold. It was a moment of learning for us all and certainly one that required us to be open to having our “position or purpose” questioned!

PIO!: What other kinds of questions do kids ask you?

Reggie: Aside from How much do you make? (always a favorite!) and Have you ever met anyone *really* famous? we get a lot of questions on how we started doing music and what it's like to work together. The most interesting dialogues about that tend to be exchanging views on how to match what you do with your passion or interests in life, and how to work creatively with someone (particularly someone you *love!*) in a way that is *real*. They want to know if we fight and disagree with each other and what we do about it (Who wins?). So we tell them what our process is. They tell us what their parents' relationships look and sound like. They always seem to be amazed and pleased to know that we have been married for 20 years—and that we *still like each other!* One seventh or eighth grader once said, “So you get to travel all around the place with each other and do and sing about stuff you're interested in—and they *pay you?*” We looked at each other and said, “Uh-huh!” To which he replied, “Sign me up!” We have also had sessions with young people, up to college age, where we talk about the pain and difficulty that racism has caused, not only in the world, but in our lives. And they have told us the most wrenching stories of their own—of what their peers or adults have done or said to them and how they have tried to live with it. We discuss how important it is to talk about that kind of experience, both to get it out and to let other people know that it's all

around us every day. Then we discuss and brainstorm ideas that might make a difference in our own situations.

PIO!: For example?

Reggie: One of our favorite stories happened in a middle school in Philly. Kim was telling a story, “The People Could Fly,” and there was a commotion over in one section of the audience. A teacher and the principal grabbed four boys and stood them by the wall. As we often do, at program's end we asked what they had done and if we could talk to them. Kim asked them a

thinking about how astounding a moment that was!

PIO!: The Underground Railroad is clearly an important subject in your work. Do you remember how and when you first learned what the Underground Railroad was?

Reggie: Yes, I believe it was in church, when I was about 9 or 10 years old. In those days, they didn't talk much about anything that had to do with black folks—in school or anywhere in the “outside world”—so my church would have these little programs from time to time, to read the work of people like Paul Lawrence Dunbar and maybe

***We love to get into classroom, camp,
or seminar activities, where the
interactions are more unpredictable.
That's where we learn more about what
the children are thinking and where we
can throw things out there and try them.***

question about the disturbance, and they all began to proclaim their innocence. She asked if they were the type of students that, when a problem arose, people would say “Oh, but it couldn't have been ____!” They all sheepishly said no. When she asked if they had enjoyed our show, they said yes, so she asked what they had learned from the story she was telling when the commotion took place. Not expecting much and willing to settle for a small general answer, we were shocked to hear, from these rather reluctant scholars, a most perfect extraction of meaning from “The People Could Fly.” The first student said, “Seek freedom?” The second offered, “Remember who you are!” The third, pressed for an answer, replied, “Pay attention!” Thoroughly happy with the results, we turned to boy number four, who looked at us and said, “And when you seek freedom, always remember to take someone with you!” I *still* get goose bumps and come close to tears

Langston Hughes and tell stories that related to some part of our history. They were never very involved and they centered mostly around religious issues, but I think it was at one of those programs that someone talked about Harriet Tubman leading slaves to freedom. And then we would all sing “Go Down, Moses.” Most of my further knowledge of the Underground Railroad came after Kim and I started to do our research in 1982. Remarkable, eh? Kim remembers an assembly program when she was in the fifth grade, where someone talked briefly about the fact that songs were used as secret codes. She thought that was the coolest thing, and she held on to that tidbit until we were offered the opportunity to develop the short presentation for the Odyssey Program of the Philly Folksong Society. Once we began to collect info, we couldn't get enough! We had no idea it would take up so much space in our lives and being! It

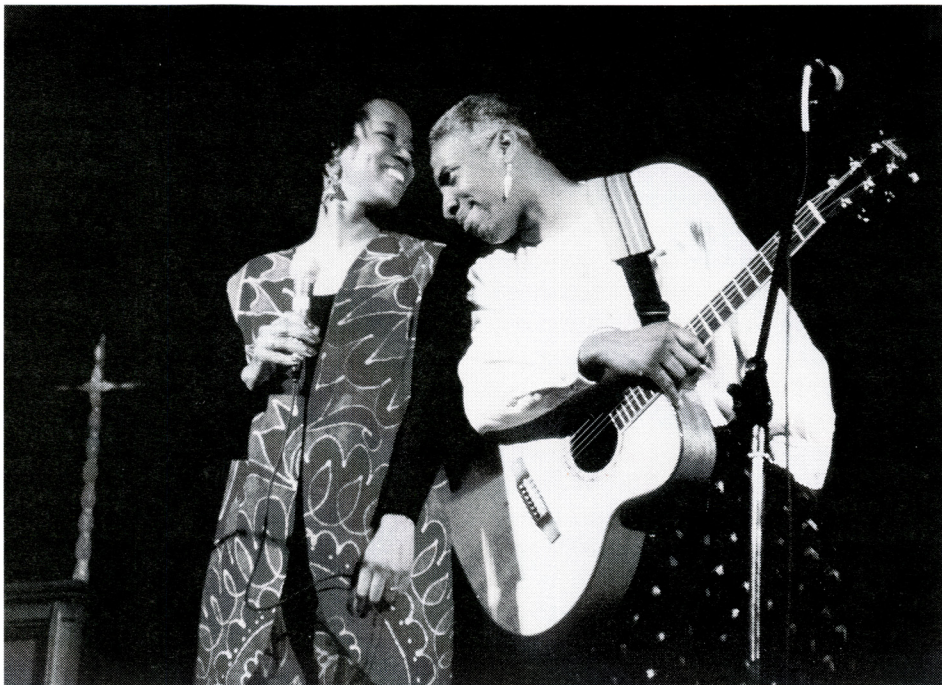
changed our concept of self and community and our attitudes about communal responsibility!

PIO!: *Could you say more about your reasons for focusing on the Underground Railroad?*

Reggie: I love the stories and lessons of the Underground Railroad because they provide a truly marvelous perspective on how difficult and yet how possible it is for people to take on a cause or an issue (freedom, equality, greed, prejudice, fear, laziness, lack of respect for diverse views or cultural differences) and work to find solutions. The story of the Underground Railroad is one of complexity and struggle, but it is also one of humanity, compassion, and purpose. Different people take different things away from it, just as people, in that time, chose to get involved for a number of reasons. Yet there are valuable lessons in there for all. For young people, one of the strongest messages is that you can work for freedom, equality, and justice at *any* age, because many of the folks who were part of the Freedom Train—whether slave or free—were young folks, just as they were in the modern Civil Rights Movement. I think it is also of paramount importance, in this age of racial tension and mistrust, to be able to point to a movement in our history where people worked together across racial and ethnic (as well as social and religious) barriers to bring an end to an oppressive situation. It is also part of my personal history and one that has framed part of the consciousness and condition of my people from their earliest time in America. Many lessons to learn, many rivers to cross!

PIO!: *When you teach them about the Underground Railroad, how much of what you do is talking and how much is singing?*

Reggie: In a typical one-hour show, we tend to perform five or six songs. The rest is talking or storytelling or giving our nine-minute slide presentation. In classrooms, we would



do three or four songs and then ask questions to engage them in a dialogue about the subject and find out what they think about the various issues. Most often, we give a lot of background info, but sometimes we find that the students have researched the subject pretty well, which frees us to do more “exploring!”

PIO!: *What kind of exploring?*

Reggie: We love to try to “get into the heads” of the historical figures we’re talking about—discuss their places in time, backgrounds, belief systems, and so on—to see how they came to do the things that made them bold or courageous enough to make a difference in their times. Then we find links to our own time: How can their examples help us in our efforts to deal with our present-day issues? So I suppose you could say we like to explore the links between historical figures and ourselves, and we also love to see how events and issues resonate with young people on a personal level.

PIO!: *Can you and/or other adults see the effects of what you do in the schools?*

Reggie: Oh, yeah! The first thing we

notice is that the excitement level goes *way up!* Teachers mention this all the time to us. Our classroom work engages children who, they say, are usually not involved actively in discussions. When we are in a classroom, we are *looking* for those kids. If we see someone’s hand too many times, we know that we can always get back to them, but we start moving around the room, trying to give the shy or less-confident students an access point into the discussion. We say, “No wrong answers here! What do you think? What do you think Harriet Tubman felt when she was in the woods? Where would you hide some slaves in *your* house? Wouldn’t somebody look there? Sing this phrase with us! What if you had been on that bus? Do you think you would have stood up to that driver? I’m not so sure I would have the courage some days!” We also hear classes leaving our assemblies singing their favorite songs, or parents will actually come to a later show in that town and say their child came home from school and told them *everything* we said. (Then we go, “Oh my God!

continued on next page ➤

Interview: Harris

➡ continued from previous page

What all did we say?") We get letters from teachers and students that say they are still singing a certain song months later. "Wade in the Water" is always a *big* favorite, or children will walk up to us and do the signs we've taught them. Or they say that they are telling a story we told, or they will send us pictures of us telling the Rosa Parks story (they call it "The Bus Act"). Often they will say that it made them think of some situation where they or someone they know was treated unfairly or not given respect. Teachers tell us that our visits and our materials have served as a doorway to other curriculum connections they need to make. We had no idea, when we started out, that it would be this fulfilling!

PIO!: You're talking like a new teacher. Or a veteran teacher who never lost interest.

Reggie: The one thing I have almost always known in my life is that when I lose interest it is definitely time to move on! I find it very difficult to do *anything* that does not touch me, affect me in some profoundly personal way.

PIO!: I think I'd better switch gears, although I could go on and on listening to what you have to say about your work in schools. But we've done most of this interview without much mention of the rest of your musical life. How much of your work is done at coffeehouses, folk festivals, and other places that aren't schools?

Reggie: More and more all the time. Throughout the performing year, probably one-quarter to one-third of our schedule takes us to coffeehouses or small concert venues. We also do about five to ten festivals in a given year. We have always found it hard to get some of the concert folks to take us seriously or give us a chance. I think in part it's because they see all of the things we do (music for young people, educational materials,

spiritual and faith-connected concerts, and whatever else we find to explore) and it makes them a little nervous or confused about how we fit in their "genre." We have encountered a bit less of that "labeling" in the last two or three years and have gotten more opportunities to play singer/songwriter venues.

PIO!: What have you been doing differently?


Reggie: The irony is that we have made less of an effort, during that time, to convince people or justify what we do to all of the various people and marketplaces. As we have gotten older, our general attitude has been more, This is what we do, and this is who we are, and if you give us a chance you'll get one of the best shows you could possibly want. A typical Kim and Reggie concert will contain songs of passion, history, love, and humor and a general element of community. We love getting people to sing, but we also appreciate the fact that most people have come to hear us do something truly creative and interesting with these voices we've been blessed with. We are interested in entertaining people in an inclusive and positive way. Audiences will hear more original songs than people generally think we write (we admit to being "under recorded"), and the message of any of our concerts reflects our sense of hope in the face of some overwhelming evidence to the contrary. In other words, we want to be empowering rather than paralyzing, whenever possible.

PIO!: Could you describe a Kim and Reggie concert?

Reggie: Our musical interests range from Bach to folk to rock to spirituals to jazz. So we try to bring all of that into our choice of material and into our harmonies and arrangements. So you get some scat and you get some sweet. You get lots of rhythm and syncopation. You get a story about someone who

made a difference. You get a little political reflection. You hear some love songs. You get to snap your fingers, clap your hands, and groove to the beat. You get challenged to do and not just *be*—feel validated for who you are and what you *are* doing. We sing, we laugh, we cry, we shout—we leave! All in all, we are happy to be able to do exactly what we feel and to represent onstage exactly who we are in life, maybe just a bit *bigger* and more dramatic! Need some more? Come back!

PIO!: What does Kim's new direction mean in terms of the musical career of Kim and Reggie? Will she be a performing clergywoman?

Reggie: Well, at this point we really don't know *what* it means. She has always wanted to study theology, and, as I've mentioned, we do lots of performances about or around issues of faith and spirituality, so theology will come in and out of what we do, as those things tend to do. Kim has been very clear that music, and our performance life together, provide her with a connection and a process of living that she does not find elsewhere, and that she is not looking to replace or redesign that, as far as she knows. Of course life has a funny way of throwing little or large curves into the path, so we don't make more of that than we have to. At this point, she is very happy to have the opportunity to pursue the knowledge and the experience, and we both realize that it is making us more compassionate, caring, and thoughtful people who have, perhaps, a deeper base from which to draw from as we continue to take up our share of the burden and look for other ways to celebrate the joy in this life! 

Bob Blue is a father; former elementary-school teacher; volunteer elementary-school teacher; and writer of songs, poems, plays, stories, and articles.

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