

Our Music Garden

# *Sprouts*

Music for Early Childhood at Home & School

Kimberly Parsons

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ISBN 978-0-359-67594-4

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## *About Our Music Garden*

*Our Music Garden* is a series designed for homeschool families, classroom teachers, and small group leaders to teach singing and musicianship skills. It emphasizes folk songs, movement, stories, and activities introducing concepts, skills, terms, and symbols gently and gradually. Woven throughout is a love for nature. Six volumes are planned to help you teach early childhood through fourth grade. *Sprouts* is the second to be published, but the *first* in the series. *Seedlings* is the next volume in the series and is for kindergarten-age students.

Musicianship is more than playing the right note at the right time and reading it from the page. Music education should develop musical ears and eyes in addition to learning to sing, play, read, and write. Long before notation is ever introduced, your child will learn developmentally appropriate songs by listening. Then, you will use these songs to teach symbols and terms, not as something foreign to your child's lived experience, but as names for things *that are already familiar*.

For those without a musical background, this series will help you develop your own skills step by step. Progress is incremental and gentle. Every choice - the songs, the order, the instructions, the layout - was made with *you* in mind. You can teach music with confidence, peace, and joy.

Except for this volume, *Sprouts*, the *Our Music Garden* series is non-seasonal so that you can begin at any time, rearranging the months as it suits you. For holiday-specific resources, please visit [www.HearthAndGnome.com](http://www.HearthAndGnome.com).

Please note that *Our Music Garden* emphasizes North American folk music. That is my musical "mother tongue" and it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, for me to write authentically in another tradition. *Please do add songs from your own and/or your students' cultures to your music lesson times!*

Remember that there are many reasons for music education: enhancing cognitive abilities, nurturing self-expression and confidence, cultivating talents and interests, and developing practice habits. Music can also teach deep truths. It is my hope that the *Our Music Garden* series helps you do all of these and above all, that you foster meaningful connections between you and your students, building bridges instead of walls.

## *The Method*

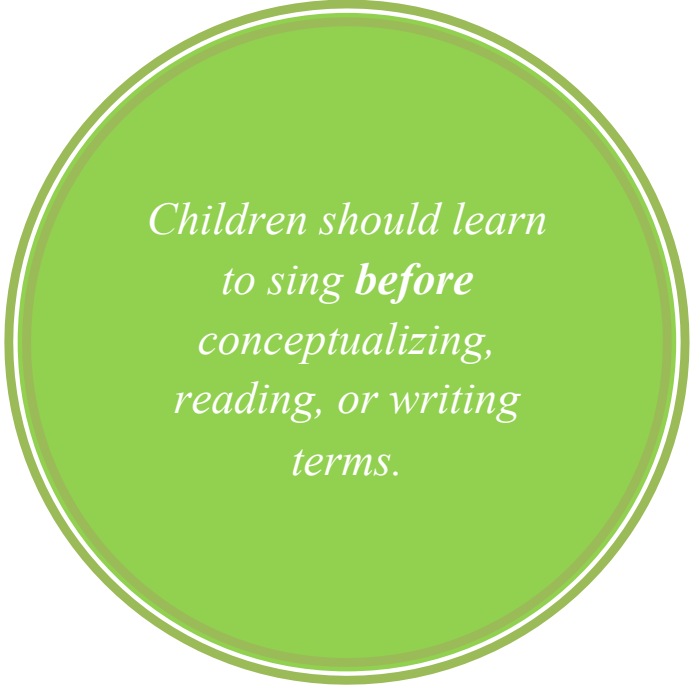
This curriculum relies on the work of Hungarian musicologist, educator, and composer, Zoltan Kodaly (1882-1967) (“ZOHL-tahn ko-DYE”) whose pedagogy is used the world over. In the early 1900s, Kodaly visited remote Hungarian villages and collected folk music by recording it on phonograph cylinders. Beginning in 1925, he became an avid champion for better music teachers, better music curriculum based on high-quality music, and more time devoted to music in schools based on the works he had collected. With his colleague Jenő Adam, he created that new curriculum, new method, and body of music. Their work was first implemented in Hungarian public schools in 1945. By 1965, nearly half of Hungary's schools were music schools! International music educators quickly took notice and in 1973, the first symposium dedicated solely to his method was held in Oakland, California, and the International Kodaly Society was founded.

When I was a new classroom music educator teaching older children with very little formal music education with an annual end-of-year assessment looming, I found a lifeline in my mentoring group. The seasoned educators who mentored me through those first years were firmly grounded in Kodaly's methodology and patiently taught me how to bring that to my students with great success. I have used what I learned in that first school ever since with students of all ages--in my home, small groups, at church, and in the classroom. *It works* - and, like those precious ladies who shared it with me, I want to share what I can with you.

In *Our Music Garden*, I will share a sequence for introducing elements and skills as well as some of the many *ways* in which they can be introduced including listening, singing, and moving. I have drawn heavily from authentic folk music as well as newly composed songs that are developmentally appropriate. Most importantly, following Kodaly's belief that children should learn to *sing* before conceptualizing, reading, or writing terms, the *Our Music Garden* series follows the sequence of *preparation, presentation, and practice*.

Each grade level will have its own bank of song materials as well as build on the song materials from previous grades. Teaching the bank of songs is the *preparation* - the foundation for all that follows. Once those songs are well-learned, we use them to name and conceptualize musical elements and skills - the *presentation*. Then, we *practice* with more singing, movement, games and the like.

In this volume, the musical selections are interwoven with a simple story. Suggestions for extending the circle time are included in each lesson. *Please do not feel that these are required!* I find that introducing songs in the context of a story or with some connection to what we are learning during our school time is helpful, but you may wish to use your own stories. I have included these for those who wish to use them, but I am not the boss of you! I like to incorporate many different learning opportunities around a central theme with my own children and the children I teach, but please do what works for you. *The songs are the main event - the rest is extra.*




*Children should learn  
to sing **before**  
conceptualizing,  
reading, or writing  
terms.*

## *Teaching Music for the Non-Musician*

Teaching music well is an art form, one that music educators spend a great deal of time studying, practicing, and improving over a lifetime. However, not all children have access to a professional music educator, and this book is for the adult who is willing to attempt to fill that role whether that is a parent, teacher, or small group leader.

First, read this curriculum carefully, cover to cover. Then, make a plan to learn the music yourself. If this is new to you, the learning curve can be steep, but you can do it! Stay ahead of your child *by setting aside regular time for your own practice*. If you do not read music, the best way to learn the songs is to *listen to the recordings available online*. Listen and sing along until you are comfortable singing on your own from memory. *Take your time and be patient with yourself*. Music education is a process! After familiarizing yourself with this curriculum, make your plan for the year just as you plan with your main curriculum.



*Take your time and be  
patient with yourself.  
Music education is a  
process!*

## *Overview: Sprouts*

The primary focus of the early childhood year is to *enjoy* music. You can and should incorporate *singing* throughout your day because singing is the foundation of an excellent music education. Sing at waking, mealtime blessings, household tasks, circle time. Sing in the car and during transitions between activities. Be mindful that music at this age is an *experience* and allow them to enjoy it fully!

You will work toward the following goals:

1. Finding and using the singing voice.
2. Learning a bank of rhymes, folk songs, and singing games.
3. Moving to the steady beat.
4. Gently exploring fast and slow, loud and soft, high and low, short and long, same and different, smooth and jerky.
5. Improvising new texts and movements to known songs.

*Our Music Garden* has all of this *built-in*. Just follow the curriculum!

## *Elements of the Early Childhood Music Lesson*

*Our Music Garden* is not meant to be a huge time commitment. It is meant to be a simple, low-fuss addition to your day. Lessons may be just a few minutes long at first, lengthening as your child grows.

1. Sung Greeting.
2. Opening Song or Verse.
3. Voice Exploration Games.
4. Song Story.
5. Extending the Circle (optional).

At first, children may just listen and observe. Invite them to join you in the movements and then in the singing. Be patient and go at their pace. *In early childhood, we avoid overtly correcting errors!* We want children to enjoy the process of music-making, discover their singing voice, and develop the ability to sing and imitate what they hear and see. The process is more important than the product! Praise their efforts liberally.

## *Sung Greetings*

Each lesson should begin with a Sung Greeting. This pattern sets the tone for the children listening and imitating. There are six different Sung Greetings in *Sprouts*, but feel free to create your own. These patterns should be very, very simple with a limited range.

### Sung Greeting #1

Kimberly Parsons

Hel - lo, chil - dren! Hel - lo, teach - er!

Are you rea - dy? We are rea - dy!

Let's all sing now! Let's all sing now!

The teacher sings the first phrase and children echo. You will have to teach this as if it were a new song. Cup your hand around your ear to gesture when it is their turn. You will likely have to sing with them at first, singer ever more softly over time until you do not sing with them at all.

## Sung Greeting #2

Kimberly Parsons

Good morn - ing, chil - dren! Good morn - ing, Teach - er!

5 How are you? - How are you? -

9 I'm well, let's sing!

11 I'm well, let's sing!

## Opening Songs and Verses

After the Sung Greeting, begin with an opening song or verse. There are six included in *Sprouts*. Children thrive with repetition. I find my classes are ready for me to change the opening song after a month or two and are happy when the song rotates around to their favorite once again.

### Good Morning to You!

## Good Morning to You!

Traditional

Good morn - ing to you! Good morn - ing to you! Good

5 morn - ing, dear friends! Good morn - ing to you!

## If You're Ready for Some Music

### If You're Ready for Some Music

Trad./K. Parsons

The musical score is written on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 8/8. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. The lyrics are written below the staff, with some words split across lines. The score is divided into three systems, with measure numbers 6 and 12 indicated at the start of the second and third systems respectively.

If you're rea - dy for som mu - sic, clap your hands! \_\_\_\_\_ If you're rea - dy for some

mu - sic, clap your hands! \_\_\_\_\_ If you're rea - dy and you know it then your face will sure - ly

show it, if you're rea - dy for some mu - sic, clap your hands!

Substitute other activities and movements as desired. "Are you ready from some singing/stories?" Get the wiggles out!

### *Voice Exploration Games - Finding The Singing Voice*

A child's natural singing voice is light, high, and has a breathy quality. Unfortunately, some children have a difficult time accessing their natural voice and sing too low with a throaty, harsh sound. Many children need quite a bit of help finding their singing voice. This has not always been the case, but now that most children are primarily exposed to popular music that is pitched very low, they only hear adults singing in their lowest register.

As you prepare to teach the songs, you may sing them at a lower pitch than written, but please be careful not to sing too low for the children! Be sure you are working with them to help them find their singing voice by doing some of these exercises *every time*.

- Have a conversation in silly voices, voices that are high and light. Imitating a certain mouse of international fame works very well.
- Invite your child to demonstrate the three bears' voices. Baby bear should not be squeaky - just high and light.
- Make train whistle noises and locomote around the room. The faster the train, the higher the pitch.
- Hoot like owls and tweet like songbirds.
- Purchase a slide whistle and ask your child to imitate. *Focus on sounds that go from high*

to low at first, then add sounds that go from low to high. Help them find all the parts of their voice by playing your slide whistle and guiding them in making sounds to match, moving through their high voice, middle voice, and low voice. I tell my students we are going to chirp like the birds with little tiny beaks so that I am teaching them early to pucker their lips for a round sound instead of a flat, wide sound.

- Pretend you are on a roller coaster together. When you reach the top of an imaginary hill and your car races to the bottom, say, “Wheeee!” in a high, light voice, descending as you plummet. The higher the hill, the higher the starting pitch. As you ascend the next hill, say, “Oooooooh!” starting low and flipping into that high, easy voice at the top.
- Use this verse with movement.

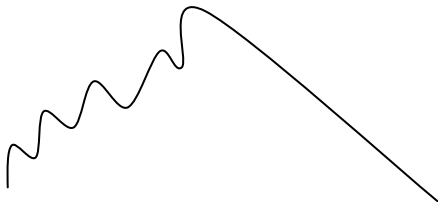
*This is my deep, deep voice. (Hand on chest, a very deep voice)*

*This is my speaking voice. (Hand on throat, my regular voice.)*

*This is my singing voice. (Finger-tip to forehead, similar to sung greeting pattern)*

*Now, let’s all remember to use our singing voices today!*

- Use a tabletop xylophone to guide them in singing from high to low and back again. With very young children, avoid skipping around. Let them grow accustomed to matching the instrument and the notes in order.
- Make "Chutes and Ladders cards" - visual representations to help children move their voices through the entire spectrum of pitch - from low to high and everything in between. I suggest starting with at least six. On heavy cardstock, simply draw a thick line to represent what you want them to do with their voices. These can be simple or you can get creative. In circle, simply hold up the card and use your finger to slowly trace the line as you demonstrate the sound. I prefer the long oo vowel or an ah vowel. For example, this line represents a wiggly voice going low to high and swooping back down again.



## *Using Shakers*

Shakers are fun, useful tools for teaching children to follow directions, make steady beat motions, and develop fine motor skills and cross-body movement. Plan ahead how you will pass them out and collect them! I remind my children each time that we get what we get and we don't throw a fit; not to put the shakers in their mouths, noses, eyes, or clothes and not to sit on them like a hen (ours look like eggs); that the shakers stay in their hands and if they throw their shaker, it goes away until next time. I ask them to make a nest with their hands as I pass them out. This is also a great time to practice saying, "Thank you!" I do let the children "test them out" when they get them - telling them to hold them still is not a ditch I'm going to die in. Then, once everyone has a shaker, I do this focusing activity, shaking on the steady beat on the last line:

*Shake them high,  
Shake them low,  
Shake them fast,  
Shake them slow.  
Shake it by your (body part)  
Shake it by your knee,  
Now, can you shake it just like me?*

Use the shakers to make beat motions or get creative and use them to "act out" the verse. Consider asking your children to shake with their non-dominant hand as well. They could also pass their egg back and forth between hands on the beat, behind their backs, or under their legs. Use them to help those with poor balance, muscle tone, etc. develop those skills.

## *Using Beanbags*

Like shakers, beanbags can be very useful tools - but you must plan ahead for how you will pass them out and collect them! I tell my children each time to pass the beanbag gently, to receive it carefully, to pass it on the next person gently, then *turn to receive the next beanbag*. Little ones have a tendency to pass the bean bag and watch its progress, creating a bean bag pile-up behind them. I demonstrate this for them before we begin. Use a single beanbag or more than one - the choice is up to you. Just make sure they are all headed in the *same direction*!

## *Life on the Farm*

### **Children Will:**

- Explore their voices for singing and speaking.
- Use their singing voices to accurately reproduce pitch.
- Make steady beat motions.
- Learn about farm animals.
- Engage in gross motor, fine motor, and cross-body movements.
- Work cooperatively.
- Develop their memory.

### **Materials & Supplies (Ideas, Instructions and Links below):**

- Table Puppets
- Cloths to represent a farm scene if desired - brown for soil, green for pasture, blue for a pond, etc.
- Farm animal pictures (or magnets, toys, etc.)
- Bean bags or stuffed toy sheep.

**Story Introduction: Once upon a time, there was a little girl named Emily and a little boy named Peter. They were sister and brother and they lived on a farm with their Grandmother. Peter and Emily loved their grandmother and they loved their farm. Every day, they helped take care of the many animals on the farm.**

Take some time to talk about farms and farm animals. Do any of your students live on a farm? Have they visited a farm? What animals have they seen or would they expect to see on a farm?

## Old MacDonald

### Old MacDonald

Traditional

Old Mac-Don-ald had a farm, E I E I O! And on that farm he had a cow,

E I E I O! With a moo, moo here and a moo, moo there!

Here a moo, there a moo, ev' rywhere a moo moo. Old Mac-Don-ald had a farm, E I E I O!

As you sing, lay out your scene including your animal pictures, magnets, or toys. There are two ways to do this song - one animal each time, or as an additive song. In the additive version, you sing each animal's sound *every time*. So, if your second animal was a duck, you'd sing, "With a quack quack here, a quack quack there, here a quack, there a quack, everywhere a quack quack. A moo moo here, there a moo, everywhere a moo, moo...." This works best with a visual cue for the children - point to the toys/pictures/magnets as you sing.

**Story Continues: Peter's special jobs were checking on the ducks, his pony Jack, and his little pig. Sometimes, things didn't go as expected!**

## Ducks in the Millpond

### Ducks In the Millpond

Traditional

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the song 'Ducks in the Millpond'. The first staff is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It contains the melody for the first line of the song. The second staff starts with a measure rest marked with a '9', indicating it begins at measure 9 of the piece. It contains the melody for the second line of the song. The lyrics are written below each staff.

Ducks in the mill-pond, geese in the clo-ver. Fell in the mill-pond, got wet all o-ver!

Rise, chil-dren gon-na rise, gon-na rise! Rise, chil-dren gon-na rise, gon-na rise!

2. Had a little pony, his name was Jack,  
I put him in the stable and he jumped through a crack.

3. Had a little piggy, lived by the barn,  
Got into the pasture and ate up all the corn!

**Story Continues: His little piggy did have a knack for getting out - she loved to go on adventures. Do you know this rhyme about piggies and adventures?**

*This little piggy went to market (point to thumb)*  
*This little piggy stayed home (point to index finger)*  
*This little piggy had roast beef (point to middle finger)*  
*This little piggy had none (point to ring finger)*  
*And this little piggy (point to pinky) cried, "Wee, wee, wee!"*  
*All the way home! (wiggle and hide your hand behind your back).*

Many children do not know this rhyme! Use it as an opportunity to count fingers on each hand, fingers all together; toes on each foot and toes all together. You can do each hand (not just the dominant hand), and hands together. All of these develop fine motor skills and different types of coordination.

Fun Facts: One pound of wool can make 10 miles of yarn. There are 150 yards (450 feet) of wool yarn in a baseball.

Pass out your shakers.

**Story Continues: Emily had special jobs, too. She was in charge of turning the sheep out into the pasture.**

## Little Bo Peep

*Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep  
And doesn't know where to find them  
Leave them alone and they'll come home  
Wagging their tails behind them\**

\*Shake rapidly, cross the body, and place in the other hand)

Collect your shakers.

This next song makes a good beanbag passing game.

**Story Continues: Emily loved to watch the fluffy sheep wander through the grass looking for tender green shoots to eat. Their wool would make lots of warm sweaters, mittens, hats and scarves for the winter time!**

## Baa Baa Black Sheep

### Baa Baa Black Sheep

Traditional

Baa baa black sheep, have you an - y wool? Yes, sir, yes, sir, three bags full!

5 One for my mas - ter, one for my dame, and one for the lit - tle boy who lives down the lane.

9 Baa, baa black sheep, have you an - y wool? Yes, sir, yes, sir, three bags full!

**Story Continues: Yes, everyone on the farm had many jobs to do. But they always found time for some fun!**

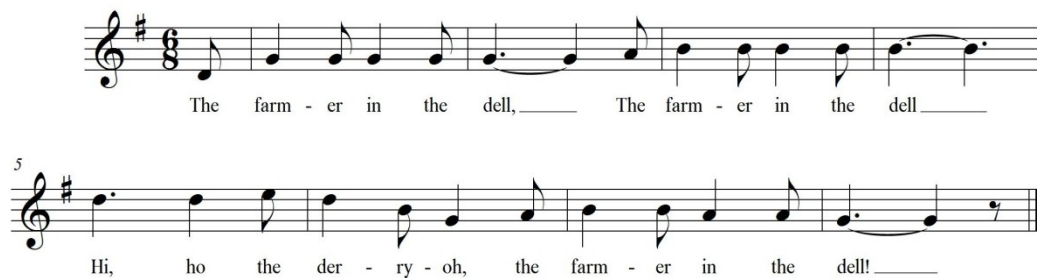
Help the children form a ring. One way to do so is to stand in the middle and ask the children to form a circle around you. I prefer this method if possible to reduce the spread of germs. If your children are very young, you may need to use the hold hands and make a circle method!

Choose a farmer and have that child stand in the middle. With first-time players (many children have never played this game) and with the very young, I eliminate the "choosing" and do the choosing myself. "If I tap you, go to the middle." As the children stand and sing, I walk outside the circle and tap the chosen child on the shoulder. Before the verse about the cheese, I tell them to listen for the word "alone" and that all the children except the cheese should return to their place in the circle. The cheese becomes the next farmer.

## **The Farmer in the Dell**

### **The Farmer in the Dell**

Traditional



*The farmer takes a wife...*

*The wife takes a child...*

*The child takes a dog...*

*The dog takes a cat...*

*The cat takes a rat...*

*The rat takes a cheese...*

*The cheese stands alone...*

**Story Continues: Peter and Emily loved helping on the farm. They loved all of their animal friends and loved taking good care of them, too.**

**If you will be reading a picture book**, you can transition to this time by saying, “**As Peter and Emily ate their snack/had a rest after all of their hard work, Grandma read them this story.**”

## **Extending the Circle**

*Stories from Treasury for Children* by James Herriot

*Cows Can Moo! Can You?* by Bonnie Worth

*The Little Lamb* by Judy Dunn.

## **Beyond the Circle**

Talk about animal jobs on the farm. Cows give milk; milk can be made into yogurt, cheese, and ice cream. Chickens give eggs. Horses do work pulling plows and wagons. Geese give feathers for pillows and furniture. Sheep give wool. Dogs guard the homestead and may participate in herding. Even cats have a job on the farm - catching vermin that want to eat the feed and seed! Note: I live in a rural community where children are very aware that many animals are destined for human consumption and kids often mention eating beef, chicken, etc. If you *don't* live in such a community - *be sensitive to and respectful of community norms and parent expectations!* Many young children have not made the connection between those nuggets and the chicken, or the hamburger and the cow and it can be very upsetting! Plan a field trip to a farm or to a fiber artist's studio.

Create a farm center with a barn and animals.

Encourage the children to work on their sequencing ability in a "Farmer in the Dell" center. With picture cut-outs, see if they can put the characters in the song in order independently or with a friend.

### *Printable Song & Verse Cards*

Print these on heavy card stock and cut out. Punch and save on a binder ring. Consider using different colors for different seasons and one color for generic songs that fit any season. If you want to create your own circle, you can see quickly which pieces might suit your current season. As your repertoire grows, you can move the cards you are using to the front of the ring for easy use during circle. I have been doing this quite awhile - and I still need my cue cards!

#### **Fun on the Farm**

##### **Old MacDonald Had a Farm**

Old MacDonald had a farm

EIEIO

And on that farm he had a cow

EIEIO

With a moo moo here, a moo moo there

Here a moo, there a moo, everywhere a moo moo

Old MacDonald had a farm

EIEIO

(Add various animals and their sounds on subsequent verses)