

# Music Without Tears

GARY H. PATERSON

*What To Do Until the Music Teacher Comes*, Louise Glatt. Illus. by Kitty Cockburn. Berandol Music Limited, 1978. 94 pp. \$7.95 paper.

*Honey On Toast*, Sandy Tobias Offenheim. Illus. by Nadine Offenheim. Piano Accompaniments by Howard J. Baer. Berandol Music Limited, 1977. 108 pp. \$5.95 paper.

I recently created and taught a continuing education course called "Children's Literature for Fun". While demonstrating games and suggestions for literary activities with pre-schoolers, I was struck with the idea that one could create an equally valuable experience with children in the field of music. The two books under review above make such an experience possible now.

The philosophy behind Louise Glatt's *What To Do Until the Music Teacher Comes* is, simply, that music should be fun, without offering obstructions to the freedom of imaginative creativity. Making the ear sensitive to different everyday sounds can be an amusing experience if it is turned into a game. Listening to tape-recordings of traffic, footsteps, or dripping water and trying to guess the sound is one way of getting a child to *listen* to his environment.

From here, the possibilities of making homemade musical instruments are unfolded. Simple, yet helpful illustrations point out how to construct bells, chimes and rhythm sticks out of articles found about the home.

Making up songs can be fun if a little imagination is thrown in. One can begin with a well-known melody, then add new and personal lyrics. Although it may be difficult for the self-conscious or unmusical parent, words can be added to simple phrases of made-up music to help turn chores or duties into fun.

Music can be skilfully used to reinforce newly acquired knowledge. Louise Glatt provides ideas for a variety of games involving shapes, colours, hats, parts of the body – all accompanied by singing and body movement. The child is hardly aware that he is meeting such important

musical qualities as tempo, rhythm, and timbre.

The latter half of *What To Do Until the Music Teacher Comes* is more specifically a song book interspersed with further ideas for games and creativity. There are greeting songs, finger songs, holiday and birthday songs, lullabies, songs for older children, and songs for the shy or non-participating child. These are all appropriately simple; the melodies are fairly catchy but few are memorable. The concluding section is a brief annotated bibliography and discography.

The format of *What To Do Until the Music Teacher Comes* is most attractive: large, uncrowded pages are well illustrated with drawings of happy-faced children who really do seem to be enjoying themselves. I was also impressed with the encouragement and suggestions directed to the parent or teacher.

*What To Do Until the Music Teacher Comes* is written for parents and teachers of pre-schoolers, although, of course, many of the ideas can be used through Kindergarten and Grade 1.

*Honey On Toast*, a second collection of original songs by Sandy Offenheim, is for the somewhat older child. The wide variety of titles can be roughly classified as action songs, songs that are really spoken to chord or piano accompaniment, songs dealing with the problems of growing up ("I Swallowed My Tooth for Lunch", or "The Stethoscope is Cold"), songs about emotions or introspective feelings ("Talking to Myself", "You and Me Time") and one song from the adult point-of-view (" 'No' is Just Another Way to Say 'I Love You' ").

Lyrics are original and generally imaginative, as in the ideas suggested to avoid birthday paddy whacks at school. There are sensitive lyrics about self-identity: "Talking to myself is so very good for me . . . I don't have to use my manners and there's no apology." Coping with attitudes towards living is almost made into fun:

'Can't' is a word that is negative in connotation.  
Doesn't give you inspiration. Don't you agree?  
But take off the 'T' and the Apostrophe.  
And 'Can' is the new word you will see.

There are other wordplays: "My six year old moulders feel bigger than boulders" is beautiful.

The melodies are fresh, jaunty, and nicely matched to the mood of the lyrics. The slower ballad-like songs have a fine wistful feeling, which is greatly enhanced by the competent accompaniments of Howard J. Baer.

*Honey On Toast* is divided into two sections. The first presents all the songs in melody line only, with simplified chord symbols for guitar or autoharp; the second supplies the same songs with piano accompaniment, embodying somewhat more complex chord structures. There are arguments

for and against such an arrangement. The format is certainly easy to follow in both sections. On the other hand, if only the piano accompaniment is going to be used, you must pay for forty-one pages of irrelevance. Presumably, some technique could have been used whereby the two sets of chord symbols might have been combined without repetition and wastage.

In comparing the two sections, I also fail to see why some of the key signatures were changed. "I Swallowed My Tooth for Lunch", for example, is in the easy key of G for the autoharp and guitar section, while it is changed to the somewhat more cumbersome A-flat in the piano accompaniment section. Tempo indications are missing in seven of the fifteen songs in section two and when they are supplied, they are sometimes unnecessarily vague: the directive "simply" tells me nothing about tempo.

I was disappointed in the lack of Canadian content in both books. Naturally, one doesn't expect to find the Canadian geographical jingles that Dennis Lee can manage so well, but it is surprising that in books by Canadians there is nothing, with the exception of a four-bar Iroquois lullaby in Glatt's book, that could be classified as distinctively Canadian.

*What To Do Until the Music Teacher Comes* and *Honey On Toast* could act as fine companion volumes. Beginning with the listening games in the former and working through to the more sophisticated songs about feelings in the latter, both parent and child can have a richly shared musical experience – as well as a great deal of fun!

*Gary H. Paterson teaches Victorian, Modern, and Children's Literature at King's College, University of Western Ontario. He holds an A.R.C.T. in piano and is an enthusiastic amateur performer and recitalist.*



## Pour les petits

LOUISE LEWIN

*Josué, Claude Steben. Illus. par F. Ladouceur. Les Editions Héritage Inc., 1978. 16 pp. \$2.50.*