

# *inspirations*

*Songs and arrangements for all ages  
that celebrate the creative human spirit  
through song, dance, recorder and percussion*

by

*Kerri Lynn Nichols*

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## *Contents*

PREFACE	6
PART ONE: PHILOSOPHY	7
That Is Why I Teach Music	8
Inspiration: A Definition	9
We Teach Life Skills	10
Principles and Pedagogy	11
The Elements of Music And Dance	12
Learning Sequence: Imitation to Creation	13
Teaching Process	14
Creativity, Play and Improvisation	15
Improvisational Forms	15
Building Community	17
Every Child Needs a Drum	18
Drum Exercises and Techniques	19
Conceptual/Musical Name Games	20
Instrument/Vocal Abbreviation Guide	22
PART TWO: COMPOSITIONS AND ARRANGEMENTS	23
Over My Head	24
I Am Powerful (Mantra)	27
Pachelbel Canon	30
I'm Gonna Sing When the Spirit Says Sing	33
Walkin' Now in Beauty	36
Shine Your Light	39
Don't Worry. . .Be Happy!	42
Waltz of the Toys	44
Rondo a la Copland	46
Everybody Needs a Drum	50
I Am the Song	54
Follow Me, Moon	57
The Wishing Song	60
Music Is Our Common Ground	62
Freedom Is Coming	65
Acknowledgments	68

## *Principles and Pedagogy*

As educators, the goal is to make our role as teacher obsolete; the students become their own teachers and the teachers of others. If we can inspire, or move our students towards independence, this transformation from student to teacher will take place. We will empower students to make their own choices and resolve their challenges with our support. To create this kind of synergy, we need the following framework:

*principles, beliefs and goals (educational philosophy)*  
connected to  
*essential learnings (core content)*  
through  
*a conceptual approach to teaching (pedagogy)*

Once the overall philosophy of why and what we are learning is established, we need to determine how the learning will take place. A conceptual approach to teaching will allow students and teachers to progress from knowledge through the evaluation stage of learning. It is not enough to simply present exciting music and dance experiences in class; we need to provide our students with a concept that they can later apply to future learning. The conceptual approach gives students a working knowledge of the vocabulary, skills and process to create and extend their own pieces.

Presenting the concepts of music through movement greatly enhances comprehension and retention. The mind-body connection is a powerful force that has not been fully utilized in current educational practice. Any music concept can be paired with a dance concept. These specific concepts will be the primary focus through each experience in a given class. At the end of the class, students will brainstorm how those concepts apply to their lives. This may seem a very advanced thinking skill, however even kindergartners have begun to develop a framework for how life works. It is never too early, or late, to give kids a voice about their world and

encourage them to express it.

On the following page, is a list of musical concepts that I have developed and the dance concepts as developed by Anne Green Gilbert. Use these lists or create your own. The younger the student, the more you can simplify the vocabulary. These concepts should be clearly posted in the classroom and in student and parent notebooks so that there is a common working vocabulary. The successful techniques and approaches for teaching music and dance listed in this book have been gathered from a variety of sources over the years, including Orff-Schulwerk, Kodaly, Dalcroze and ETM (Education Through Music).

## *Learning Sequence: Imitation to Creation*

### **Imitate: (copy teacher)**

- Hear, See, Say and Do the Concept
- Brief description
- BrainDance™
- A quick warm-up for breath, voice, body using the concept

### **Explore: (teacher-guided play)**

- Games and explorations that use the concept playfully
- Experiences that have guidelines, but also experimentation
- Question/Answer forms, name games, brief improvisations

### **Develop Skills: (teacher-directed practice)**

- The body of the lesson
- Teaching a song or dance using the concept
- Skill development and practice, reading and writing music
- Vocal or instrumental techniques

### **Create: (student-directed, teacher-supported)**

- Using the concept, students create something new
- Improvisation, choreography, composition
- Working in small groups or individually
- Creating something that can be shared with others

### **Reflection: (teacher-guided reflection, group closure)**

- Share compositions, dances, improvisations
- Students give/receive feedback
- Discussions, reflections, impressions, evaluations
- Review concept and relate to life skills
- Closing group ritual, breath work or centering

*Over My Head*

trad. Afro-American/arr. Kerri Lynn Nichols

SSA

O-ver my head, I hear mu-sic in the air. O-ver my

Echo

O-ver my head I hear mu-sic in the air.

Tambourine

DBB

Piano

5

SSA

head, I hear mu-sic in the air. O-ver my

Echo

O-ver my head I hear mu-sic in the air.

Tamb.

DBB

Pno.

The musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes parts for SSA (Soprano, Soprano, Alto), Echo, Tambourine, DBB (Double Bass), and Piano. The second system includes parts for SSA, Echo, Tambourine, DBB, and Pno. (Piano). The SSA part has lyrics: "O-ver my head, I hear mu-sic in the air. O-ver my head, I hear mu-sic in the air. O-ver my head, I hear mu-sic in the air." The Echo part has lyrics: "O-ver my head I hear mu-sic in the air." The Tambourine part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The DBB part has a simple harmonic accompaniment. The Piano part has a complex accompaniment with chords and moving lines. The Pno. part has a similar accompaniment to the Piano part. A large watermark "Beatin' Path Publications" is visible across the center of the page.

## *I Am Powerful (Mantra)*

Possible Conceptual Focus: pulse, rhythmic patterns, ostinato, major/mixolydian scales, pitch, echo, vocal timbre

### Suggestions

- Follow the teaching process described on page 14.
- Primary students can sing in unison. For the B Section, simplify to two-part call and response.
- Intermediate students can sing the parts as written.

Secondary students can create additional vocal parts with men singing the AX/AM and BX/BM parts on a vowel or words related to the text. Sing *a cappella* with unpitched percussion parts only.

- Play metal bars with stick ends of mallets. Add a *mbira* (kalimba, thumb piano) for effect.
- Perform the following form: A(A) B A(A) B A(A) B C A(A) C fade.

### Movement

- Pat a pulse while singing. Pat the pulse, micro-pulse (fast pulse) and macro-pulse (slow pulse).
- Put the pulse in your feet as you walk about the space.
- Step side-to-side on pulses one and three; clap your hands on pulses two and four.
- Teach the instrument parts through body percussion and mirroring (simultaneous imitation).
- Create a body percussion sequence for the vocal parts in C Section. Older students can create a stomp or step piece with complementary rhythms to the speech parts.

### Creative Extensions

- Write new lyrics for the B Section.
- Small groups can improvise vocals and unpitched percussion parts for C Section.
- While repeating rhythms in C Section, read a related poem or speech, i.e., “I have a dream...”
- Primary students can sing with simple, one-chord guitar (G) accompaniment.
- Improvise with recorders in G pentatonic while barred percussion repeats section A (no voices).

*Suggested Lesson Plan Format*

*Imitate:* Body and vocal warm-up. May use the recording from *I Am the Song*.

*Explore:* With a partner, clap, echo and contrast phrases; Clap contrasting phrases together.

*Develop* Practice speaking and singing the text. Practice the varying rhythms in the piece. Sing the

*Skills:* G pentatonic scale using correct vocal technique.

*Create:* Improvise with recorder or glockenspiel in G pentatonic over the bass line.

*Reflect:* Perform the piece; give and receive feedback. Discuss the process and evaluate.

# I Am Powerful (Mantra)

by Kerri Lynn Nichols

## A

4/4

V1: I am pow-er-ful and I have a voice. Oh I can change the world. Will you

V2: List - en, I am pow-er-ful and I have a voice. Oh

AX/AM

AG

BX

CBB

## B

4

V1: 1, 3, 5. I am lis-ten to my sto-ry? I am lis-ten to my sto-ry? Ev-'ry bo - dy gon-na hear this song.

V2: I can change the world will you lis-ten to my sto-ry?

AX/AM

SG

BX

CBB

# Music Is Our Common Ground

by Kerri Lynn Nichols

SR/V

Love now will sing. Song of

SG

AG

BX/BM

Low HD

DBB

5

SR/V

life, set us free.

SG

AG

BX/BM

Low HD

DBB

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## *Music Is Our Common Ground*

Possible Conceptual Focus: pulse, ostinato, syncopation, pitch, melodic sequence, octave, Dorian mode, phrase, canon, crossover pattern, crescendo, descant, legato, tempo, ground bass, harmony

### **Suggestions**

- Follow the teaching process described on page 14.
- Primary students can sing the melody in unison and play an accompaniment of half notes: D, E, F, G.
- Students can sing in a two-part canon. Simplify BX/BM part. Play the melody on recorders.
- Secondary students can sing in a four-part canon and add other harmonies and vocal improvisation.
- A student can play a piano or guitar accompaniment (chords: dm, em, F, G).
- Change the SG and AG parts to female voices on an open “Ah.”
- Create a form: instrumental intro, unison voices, two- or four-part canon and recorder/vocal improvisation.

### **Movement**

- Pat or walk the pulse around the room as you sing or play. Vary the pulse: fast, medium, slow.
- Use hands to show the melodic contour.
- Use the recording as a guide for movement improvisation and practice.
- Use body percussion and mirroring (simultaneous imitation) to teach the instrumental parts.
- Create a movement canon to accompany the voices (four phrases).
- Design a circle dance with the class. Divide into four circles and perform the dance in canon.

### **Creative Extensions**

- Create a B Section with a four-part recorder canon.
- Develop new sections through improvisation using pitched/unpitched instruments, movement and/or vocals.
- Sing using vowel sounds or related text or add a spoken introduction/coda.
- Write new lyrics for the melody.
- Use the piece in a musical drama or as an interlude for readings of poetry or quotes about music.

### *Suggested Lesson Plan Format*

*Imitate:* Body/vocal warm-up: Stretch/breathe (use recording). Vocalize using the Dorian scale.

*Explore:* In a line of four, shadow the leader’s movement while traveling through the space. Turn around to follow a new leader. Use the recording to guide your movement.

*Develop Skills:* Teach the melody first using speech and neutral vowel sounds. Sing the melody against the bass line. Use body percussion (down and upbeats) to teach the syncopated parts.

*Create:* Small groups can compose new canonic melodies in the Dorian mode.

*Reflect:* Perform the piece; give and receive feedback. Discuss the process and evaluate.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### **Over My Head** (page 24)

I have always been inspired and empowered by the African-American tradition of song and community. I first heard this piece sung by a private student of mine in the Seattle Children's Choir.

### **I Am Powerful (Mantra)\*** (page 27)

This piece came out of my work with young children in a Summer Drama Program at First United Methodist Church of Olympia. The chants were part of a self-esteem building activity.

### **Pachelbel Canon** (page 30)

What makes this piece a classic is that it has long stood the test of time. When I hear it, I connect to all those in history who have heard it and loved it.

### **I'm Gonna Sing When the Spirit Says Sing** (page 33)

The African-American spirituals are dark and deeply wrought with the emotion and struggle of these strong people. This melody is different from the one in the hymnal so I am not sure how I know it.

### **Walkin' Now In Beauty\*** (page 36)

I created the A Section melody for an Orff workshop in Orange County. I shared it with my high school students as a warm-up and we developed the parts and B Section. It is now my theme song as I walk about this beautiful earth.

### **Shine Your Light\*** (page 39)

The first two lines of this were written before a workshop I taught at an OMEA conference in Eugene, Oregon. I developed the rest of the piece as I worked with students on the image of light in our lives and what they felt their light (or gift) was.

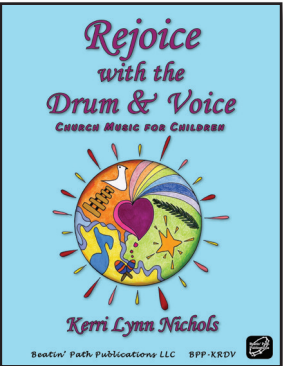
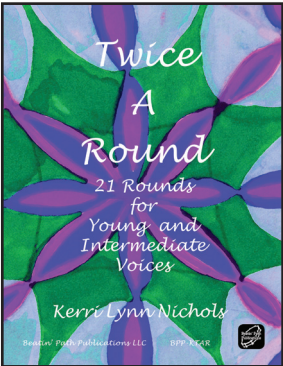
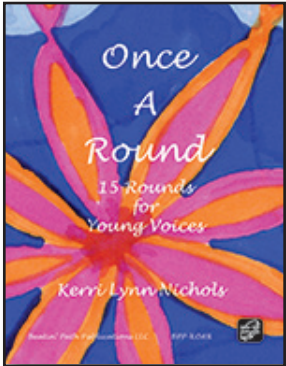
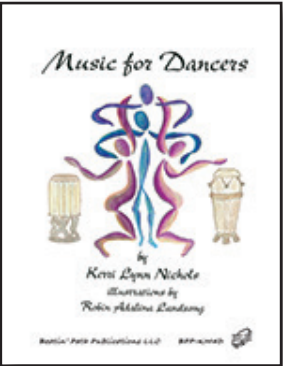
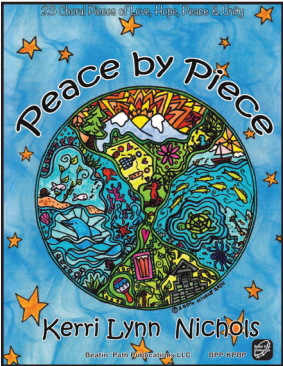
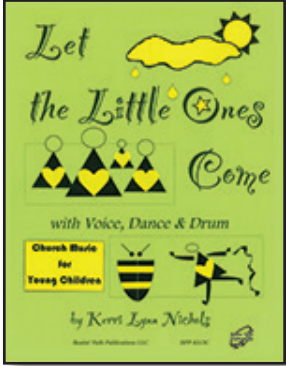
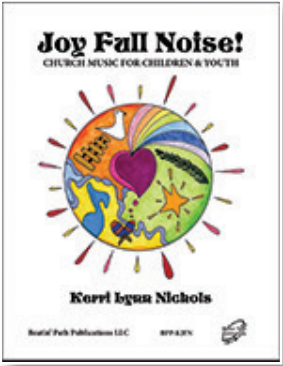
### **Don't Worry, Be Happy** (page 42)

I have followed the artistry of Bobby McFerrin ever since he came on the scene. His joy, playfulness, creativity and eclectic nature have been an inspiration to myself and many others. This song exemplifies that wonderful philosophy of life we enjoy in childhood.

### **Waltz of the Toys\*** (page 44)

One summer in Drama Camp, we presented *The Velveteen Rabbit*. This song was written as the opening scene for that presentation. Brother Michael first shared this wonderful story with me at church camp and later, my mother gave me a beautifully illustrated copy of my own which I cherish today. Love makes us real!

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