

Are there Words to that Song?

by Faith Farr

When someone asked, "Are there words to that song?" at the MNSOTA convention, I decided to do some research. In my teaching, I use lyrics to most of Suzuki Book 1. Some of the words I made up myself, some I learned from students at workshops who had learned them from other teachers, some I learned observing others teach, some I read in magazines or books, some we all "just know." Here is a compendium of what I found!

I use lyrics when teaching students by rote. My rule is you can't start playing it until you can sing it! Even with students who read, the lyrics are helpful in defining the pitch and the rhythm. With students working from memory, the lyrics give us an easy way to find a starting place in the middle of the piece, without saying, "line 3 bar 2."

I like teaching the traditional words to the folk songs so that students know the full context of the piece they are playing. Students like silly words, because, well, they are silly. Some lyrics teach technique or theory words by telling you how to play the song. Form becomes obvious if the same words are used when the phrase repeats.

Please be creative and invent your own words, or have your students invent them. By trying to find words that fit the rhythm, students can become more precisely aware of the musical rhythm they are playing. "Banana" and "Copy Cat" would not fit the same 3-note pattern. "Hot Dog", "hiccup" and "Achoo!" are more subtly different.

A word of caution: some students focus so much on the lyrics that they stop hearing the musical qualities of pitch, tone and articulation in their playing. And please, be careful of attaching banal words to great music. In third grade, I was taught the most trite words possible to *Ode to Joy*, and to this day, I can't appreciate Beethoven's masterpiece as I would like because those stupid words intrude. On principle, I now teach lyrics only for the folk-song-like pieces and not for the pieces by the great composers.

French Folk Song

Sesame Sesame Sesame Street
Is a nice program you'll probably meet
Big Bird and Oscar and Ernie and Bert

Susan and Gordon and Kermit the Frog
Can you tell me how to get to that
street? (Field)

Here I am playing my cello so fine
I like it so much I play all the time
My bow goes up down up down as I
play
My fingers 1 - 3 - 4 climb up each day
Right from the top I come down all the
way. (Farr)

Lightly Row

Lightly bow, lightly bow,
Move the bow across the string
Touch the string and hear it ring,
Just move it lightly on the string.
Let it float just like a boat,
Smooth and easy, see it float.
Hear it singing, hear it ringing,
Lightly bowing, lightly bow. (Mills)

Tuna fish! Tuna fish!
Sing a song of Tuna fish!
Tuna fish Yum (Yuk)! Tuna fish Yum
(Yuk)! —
It's a very favorite dish.
Everybody loves it so —
From New York to Kokomo.
Tuna fish Yum (Yuk)! Tuna fish Yum
(Yuk)! —
It's a very favorite dish. (Field)

Little Mouse, in your house,
Walking, walking, standing still.
Little Mousie in your housie,
Skipping, skipping, standing still.
One, two, three, four, five, hurray!
I play cello every day!
Little Mousie in your housie
Skipping, skipping, standing still. (from
a student 10/98)

Lightly Row, quick and slow,
Up the river we will go.
Mississippi, Mississippi,
That's the place to go, go, go.
On our vi-o-lins we'll play,
One, two, three, four, five, Hurray!
Mississippi, Mississippi,
That's the place to go, go, go. (Poole)

Lightly row, lightly row,
O're the glassy waves we go,
Smoothly gliding, smoothly gliding,
On the ever silent tide.

Let the wind and waters be
Mingled with my melody,
Singing floating, singing floating
In our little tiny boat. (traditional/Farr)

Song of the Wind

Who has seen the wind I wonder?
No-one that I know. (No-one that I
know.)
Where the leaves are fluttering
The wind is there but can't be seen,
Where the trees wave to and fro
The wind is there I know. (Rosetti/Farr)

Fox you've stolen goosey gander,
Bring him back to me. Bring him back
to me.
If you don't I'll sic my dog to chase you
up a tree-ee-ee,
If you don't I'll sic my dog to chase you
up a tree. (traditional/Mills)

Once there was a crocodile who
Snapped at all he saw. (Snapped at all
he saw.)
Then he snapped a rock and got
A toothache in his jaw-aw-aw.
Then he snapped a rock and got
A toothache in his jaw. (Field)

Up the river we will go
A-sailing in the wind. (Sailing in the
wind.)
Wind is blowing, water's flowing,
Boats are rowing through the foam.
Wind is blowing, water's flowing,
Boats are rowing home. (Poole)

Go Tell Aunt Rhody

Go Tell Aunt Rhody, my Aunt Rhody,
Go Tell Aunt Rhody, old gray goose is
dead.
One she's been saving for my pillow,
A feather pillow for my bed.
Go Tell Aunt Rhody, my Aunt Rhody,
Go Tell Aunt Rhody, old gray goose is
dead. (traditional/Farr)

Go Tell Aunt Rhody, John is very sick.
Please tell the doctor, John is sick in
bed.
He had some pop corn, then some
candy floss,
Then peanut butter on his bread.
Go Tell Aunt Rhody, John is very sick.
Please tell the doctor, John is sick in

bed. (Poole)

Hush-a my babe, lie still and slumber,
Holy angels guard thy bed.
Heavenly blessings without number,
Gently falling on thy head.
Hush-a my babe, lie still and slumber,
Holy angels guard thy bed. (Watts, in
Mills)

O Come Little Children

Up bow on the A(E) is the way to begin
Up bow now again helps your teacher
to grin.
Up down on each phrase this line ends
finger 1.
Up bow now again makes this song
'specially fun. (Mills/Farr)

O Come little children, O come, one
and all.
To Bethlehem hasten and to the cow's
stall.
We'll see what our Father, this holiest
night,
Has sent to his children for joy and
delight. (traditional carol)

If wishes were horses then beggars
would ride.
If windmills had windows, we'd all peer
inside.
If ponies could speak and if blind men
could see,
If dreams could come true, then how
happy we'd be. (Poole)

May Song

Spring is here, the birds are near,
Listen to their singing.
Black and yellow, red and blue
Sing their pretty songs to you.
Spring is here, the birds are near
Listen to their singing. (Mills/Field)

Hear our song, our joyful May Song,
How the sun is shining.
Hear the echo of children's song,
As we join in singing along.
Hear our song, our joyful May Song,
How the sun is shining. (Farr)

Birds are singing, winter is gone,
Fish are in the river.
Up above the clouds sail right by,
Like big banks of snow in the sky.
Birds are singing, winter is gone,
Fish are in the river. (Poole)

Allegro

Did you know Allegro means to play
fast;
Notes with dots are short staccato
notes?
Yes I know Allegro means to play fast;
Notes with dots are short staccato
notes.
Dolce means to please play sweetly,
Ritardando means slow down,
Then A Tempo means to go the first
speed,
So we end the way that we began.
(Farr)

David's singing, Margo's playing hop-
scotch,
Nancy's skipping, John is sick in bed.
David's singing, Margo's playing hop-
scotch,
Nancy's skipping, John is sick in bed.
Father's weeding, Mother's reading,
Grandma's baking gingerbread.
David's singing, Margo's playing hop-
scotch,
Nancy's skipping, John is sick in bed.
(Poole)

Perpetual Motion

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled
peppers end on A A.
Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled
peppers end on D D.
Betty Botta bought a bit of better but-
ter end on A A.
Betty Botta bought a bit of better but-
ter end on D D.
Simple Simon met a pieman going to
the county fair-air.
Simple Simon met a pieman going to
the county fair-air.
Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled
peppers end on A A.
Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled
peppers end on D D. (Farr)

Who has seen an alligator riding up an
escalator,
Who has seen an alligator riding in an
elevator.
Once I saw a ballerina on my way to
Pasadena.
Once I saw a ballerina playing on her
concertina.
Have you seen an armadillo climbing
ladders with a pillow,
Have you seen an armadillo fast asleep
upon a pillow.

Who has seen an alligator riding up an
escalator,
Who has seen an alligator riding in an
elevator. (Poole)

Long Long Ago

Tell me the tales that to me were so
dear,
Long long ago, long long ago.
Sing me the songs I delighted to hear,
Long, long ago, long ago.
Now you are come, all my grief is
removed,
Let me forget that so long you have
roved.
Let me believe that you love as you
loved,
Long, long ago, long ago. (Bayly)

Long long ago, on a bright summer
day,
I saw a frog hop on a log.
Long long ago, on a bright summer
day,
I saw a frog on a log.
He jumped so high that I thought he
would fly.
(He jumped so high that I thought he
would fly.)
Long long ago on a bright summer day,
I saw a frog on a log. (Field)

Allegretto

Do you know all the words that com-
posers might use
When they want us to play rather loud
or quite soft?
Do you know all the words that com-
posers might use
When they want us to play rather soft?
Well now forte means loud, and piano
is soft
And for really soft we use p'anississimo.
Do you know all the words that com-
posers might use
When they want us to play rather soft?
(Farr)

In a place far away on a hot summer
day,
The three bears cottage stood on the
edge of a wood.
In that place far away on a hot summer
day,
The three bears went away for a walk.
First the big Pappa Bear, then the kind
Mamma Bear,
Far away with his chair came the small

Baby Bear,
In a place far away on a hot summer
day,
The three bears went away for a walk.
(Poole)

Andantino

Tippy toe, tippy toe, tippy toe, boo!
Tippy toe, tippy toe, tippy toe, boo!
Tippy toe, tippy toe, tippy toe, boo!
Tippy toe, tippy toe, tippy toe, boo!
1, 1, 4, D, 1, 3, 4, D
A comes marching down to low A
Tippy toe, tippy toe, tippy toe, boo!
Tippy toe, tippy toe...tippy toe, boo!
(Farr)

Cardinal, Kingfisher, Robin and Wren,
Bobolink, Humming Bird, Heron and
Hen
Cardinal, Kingfisher, Robin and Wren,
Bobolink, Humming Bird, Each has his
name.
Penguins, Peacocks, Pigeons that coo,
All the birds have names as we do,
Cardinal, Kingfisher, Robin and Wren,
Bobolink, Humming Bird, _____
That is my name. (Poole)
[Say your name during the pause.]

Rigadoon

This is Rigadoon, an English sailors'
dance tune.
This is Rigadoon, an English sailors'
dance.

With a flute and a drum playing loud,
they'd jump and hop.
With a flute and a drum playing loud,
they'd step, step, stop.
Henry Purcell wrote this song. He's the
composer of it.
Henry Purcell wrote this song; he
thought it up.
This is Rigadoon, an English sailors'
dance tune.
This is Rigadoon, an English sailors'
dance. (Farr)

Etude

Henrietta Poppeletta
Had a special friend to play called
Wilhemena Windowcleaner,
And she brought along her football.
Henrietta Poppeletta
threw the football to her friend called
Wilhemena Windowcleaner
And it went right through the window.
Mother came right down the stairs and
called to Father,
Father came right down the stairs and
Quickly picked up
Henrietta Poppeletta
Picked her up and spanked her quick
And sent her off to bed. (Field, Poole)

Once, pick up to twice, pick up to
thrice, and down the scale
Pick up to once, pick up to twice, pick
up to thrice and down the scale
Pick up to once, pick up to twice, pick

up to thrice and down the scale
Pick up to once, pick up to twice, pick
up to thrice and down the scale
Ar-peg-gi-o and down the scale one
more let's go
Ar-peg-gi-o and down the scale once
more let's go
Pick up to once, pick up to twice, pick
up to thrice and down the scale
This time we go so ve-ry low. (Field)

References:

Many of the lyrics have been spon-
taneously composed and then passed
by word of mouth. I list below where I
have learned the words or have seen
them published. If you know the actual
authors, please let me know; I would like
to give them credit.

Faith Farr, unpublished lyrics
Grace Field, *Tuneful Tips*, in the *Amer-
ican Suzuki Journal*, 9-10/85
Kathryn Merrill / Jean Brandt, *The
Pre-Twinkle Book*, October Press, 1980
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Diablo Press, 1974
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4/89

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