



# Jammin' with Your Kids: Developing a Child's Music Appreciation

by Francie Kelley

Children have an innate ability to absorb and appreciate music. From birth they have minds that are open to everything, rather than preconceived notions of what is good or bad. Whether listening to Mozart or The Beatles, the only requirement is a willingness to enjoy the beauty of music.

If we begin to expose babies to a myriad of musical styles, we witness early responses. Even in the early weeks of life, a baby will respond to complex musical works. I certainly observed this in my own child as she responded to complex melodies and varied musical styles in the first months of her life.

At three weeks old, my daughter reacted to a Rachmaninoff piano concerto, with eyes searching, facial changes pronounced. Clearly the sounds had a dramatic and positive effect that calmed her fussing. She became still, seemingly enthralled in the music. Often music can reach a baby like nothing else. (It can also sometimes save you a trip around the block waiting for baby to fall asleep in the car!). The calming effect of lullabies has long been known.

As babies grow into toddlers, listen to music with them that is more complex or unusual in style or sound. Don't limit what children hear just because you might think they are too young to understand it. Music can be absorbed and appreciated at a most primal level.

When I embarked on the recording of my children's music CD ("Wake Up & Go To Sleep", Artsong Music) it never occurred to me to create a watered-down collection of songs made just for young listeners. Rather, the songs evolved into a new mom's narrative influenced by numerous musical styles. The aim was to broaden children's musical appreciation and encourage parents to interact with their kids.

It is a fascinating process to watch what moves a child. Try playing snippets of songs of varied styles and sit back and watch how they respond. How fun to discover what touches them.

Music can help children express what they aren't able to articulate. Often the sheer joy of singing and using their voice can enable a child to begin developing a love of music.

Singing feels good, both emotionally and physically, and dancing or moving to music is a natural expression of rhythm, which is part of life. Encouraging your children to sing and dance will cause them to be more free and expressive.

Kids love learning, especially when its fun and you as parents are part of it! Sing and dance together. Who cares if you can't sing, just let your hair down a bit. Young kids will delight in being with you as you both discover new music.

If you've exhausted your own CD collection and are unsure about how to explore new musical styles, visit your local library. Most have a very good section of CDs. Try checking out a different genre each time. Of course you can browse the Internet and visit your favorite on-line music stores. Most offer downloadable music samples.

Attend outdoor concerts where kids can dance and run around to the music. Many venues offer free concerts, in a variety of styles.

Music is at the heart of a child's spirit. It can inspire little souls to think outside the box!

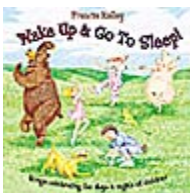
Let the world of music fill your children's hearts with joy, and in return it will do the same for you.

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Francie Kelley has an extensive background in both television and musical theater. She has acted in numerous television commercials and the children's television series "Camp Wilderness" for which she wrote and sang original tunes.

Francie recently released her first CD, "Wake Up and Go to Sleep," a collection of twelve family songs featuring nine original compositions. "Wake Up and Go to Sleep", produced by Pat Kelley, won a 2003 Parent's Choice Award and has received the Dove Foundation Seal of Approval.



Francie is married to Pat Kelley, a top Los Angeles guitarist, composer and producer. Francie and Pat have one daughter, Katie, who besides lending her vocal talents to the album, joins them onstage at their concerts!

**Check out [www.familymatters.tv](http://www.familymatters.tv) for more great family content!**

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