

A Musical Treat That's Fun to Beat

the poetry of Dennis Lee
set in the Orff Style
by Judy Sills

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Printed and distributed by
Beatin' Path Publications, Ltd.
302 East College Street
Bridgewater, VA 22812
www.beatinpathpublications.com

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The poetry of Dennis Lee is fast becoming the “Nursery Rhyme” of today’s child. The subject matter is current, using topics of interest to children. The rhyme is clever and catchy, and the images he portrays are humorous, stimulating the imagination. Children learn the poems easily and remember them for a long time.

Poetry plays a vital role in the Orff philosophy of music, exemplifying the premise that music is a natural outgrowth of speech. The poems of Dennis Lee fit well into this philosophy as they lend themselves naturally to a variety of ostinato accompaniments and melodic interpretation.

Children of all ages are fascinated by the magic and mystery of poetry. They are intrigued with onomatopoeia and nonsense syllables and are amused by unusual combinations of words and rhymes. Poetry in music expands language development and creative expression.

These selected poems by Dennis Lee from his books, *Alligator Pie*, *Garbage Delight*, *Jelly Belly*, and *The Ice Cream Store*, have been orchestrated in the Orff style. As you teach and perform the arrangements, I hope your students will derive as much enjoyment from singing and playing them as my students have for many years.

I suggest that each selection be taught using the following basic format:

- ☛ Present the poem in its totality.
- ☛ Teach the words as suggested.
- ☛ Repeat the text several times using a variety of vocal inflections, dynamics, and tempi until it is secure.
- ☛ Add accompaniment parts one at a time always remembering to

TEACH EVERYTHING TO EVERYBODY.

- ☛ Allow opportunities for creative input from the children.
- ☛ Finish with a final performance.

- Judy Sills

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Skyscraper

V Sky-scrap-er, sky-scrap-er, scrape me some sky: Tick-le the sun as the stars go by.
 G
 SM
 AM
 BX
 BM
 CBB

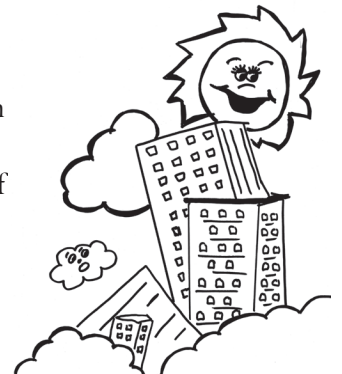
V Tick-le the stars while the sun's clim-bing high, then sky-scrap-er, scrape me some sky.
 G
 SM
 AM
 BX
 BM
 CBB

Process:

- Teach song and orchestration beginning with the bass and adding the countermelody.
- Divide the class into groups of five or six.
- While the accompaniment plays, each group builds a skyscraper in movement as follows: The first person in the group makes a shape on first beat of measure one. The second person makes a shape on first beat of measure two. Continue in this pattern until everyone is part of the skyscraper.

Final Form: A • B • A

- A: Sing song with accompaniment (skyscraper statue remains still).
- B: Instruments improvise for eight measures in F pentatonic (skyscraper moves, scraping the sky).



Boogie Tricks

One, two, three: The cat ran up the tree. Four, five, six: He

did some boogie tricks. Seven, eight, nine: He boogied on the line.

Ten, eleven twelve: He boogied by him-self.

The numbers *seven* and *eleven* are pronounced as one syllable.

Process:

- Teach poem.
- Teach ostinato accompaniments one at a time, first as body percussion, then transferring to instruments.
- Add instrument ostinatos to poem.
- Teach movement by dividing the class into four groups.
- Assign each group one line of the poem.
- Each group improvises movement for their line.

Final Form: A • A1 • A2

- A: Poem alone
- A1: Poem with body percussion
- A2: Poem with instruments and movement

