



The Joy of Music

The sublime pleasures of singing with my children.

On a Friday evening not long ago, I had a moment of exquisite delight while singing “chugga-chugga, chugga-chugga, CHOO-CHOO!” and dancing along with a bunch of other moms, dads, and toddlers in a modified conga line. My wife, Stefania, our two-year-old son, Sebastian, and I were at our weekly meeting of Mile High Music Together on Tennyson Street, and after the requisite warm-up (the “Hello Song”) and some rhythmic mimicking of the instructor (la-LA-la; me-ME-me), now we were really getting down.

Hipsters eager for cocktails at the nearby Big Hoss wandered past the studio’s street-facing windows, some with dumbfounded stares on their faces, others openly laughing at the ridiculousness of the scene. And, yet, none of us in that room with fully formed superegos seemed to mind; we all went on dancing and singing as if the folks on the other side of the window were missing out, as if we were onto a little secret.

Stefania first signed us up for Music Together—an early-childhood music-edu-

cation program founded in 1987—when Sebastian wasn’t yet one year old, and I was skeptical. I wasn’t sure what our young son could gain from such a class, and I didn’t want to be one of *those* parents—the kind who schedules every hour of his child’s day to ensure that he can pen a sentence like James Joyce, play the cello like Yo-Yo Ma, and shoot hoops like Kobe Bryant, all by the time he’s five.

At first, my cynical reasoning was validated. Sebastian, who couldn’t even walk or talk, let alone dance or sing, sat idly during the Friday-night classes while our instructor, Melissa, energetically led us through 45 minutes of songs. Then, one day, Sebastian began to ask to hear the Music Together songs on the stereo at home. He wanted to strum my acoustic guitar. He became more engaged at class, banging on the huge African-style drums even before we settled into the “Hello Song.” He started to enjoy the music Stefania and I listen to—everything from Fountains of Wayne to Johnny Cash to Billie Holiday—and he started exclaiming, “Tonight’s music class!” every day of the week. Even I started to look forward to Music Together as I saw my son’s love of music grow, and as I embraced my role as the dorky dad who knew all the words—and hand movements—to “The Itsy-Bitsy Spider.”

We’re wrapping up our sixth “semester” of Music Together, and now we also bring along our seven-month-old, Leo. He sits there quietly and doesn’t seem to have any idea what’s going on—sometimes he even falls asleep. But that’s OK. One day, I know that he’ll join his brother, mom, and me as we sing and dance our way through another Friday evening. —GEOFF VAN DYKE

Mile High Music has 4 locations: Highlands, Westminster, Aurora, and East Denver. \$160 includes 10 classes, 2 CDs, songbook, & Parent Guide. www.milehighmusic.org