

Session 1: Music as a Universal Language

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why do we listen to music?
- How does music make us feel?

Overview: In this session, families will interact with the picture book, *Hold On to Your Music: The Inspiring True Story of the Children of Willesden Lane (Hold On to Your Music)* by Mona Golabek and Lee Cohen, adapted by Emil Sher, as well as the animated film, *Music Dreams*. The theme for the activities is music while the literacy focus is on digital literacy.

Component	Materials	Digital Materials
Children's Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chart paper and markers • Paper and drawing supplies • Book: <i>Hold On to Your Music</i> by Mona Golabek and Lee Cohen, adapted by Emil Sher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio: <i>Clair de Lune</i> by Claude Debussy, performed by Mona Golabek https://bit.ly/MGolabekClairdeLune (5:27)
Parent Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chart paper and markers • Book: <i>Hold On to Your Music</i> by Mona Golabek and Lee Cohen, adapted by Emil Sher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio: <i>Clair de Lune</i> by Claude Debussy, performed by Mona Golabek https://bit.ly/MGolabekClairdeLune (5:27) • Video: <i>Wiegenlied</i> by Fini Henriques, performed by Victor Borge https://bit.ly/VBorgeLullaby (3:12)
Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time®	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chart paper from Parent Time with questions • Writing/drawing materials • Chart paper and markers • Poster board • Art supplies: markers, pencils, crayons, paint, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short animated film: <i>Music Dreams</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ https://bit.ly/MusicDreamsHOTYM (6:58) • Introductory images <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Image 1 - Bedroom ◇ Image 2 - Train Station ◇ Image 3 - Willesden Lane ◇ Image 4 - Concert Hall

CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Learning Goals

- Introduce children to the concept of music as a text.
- Help children think about the meaning of music in their lives.

Welcome and Introductions.

Welcome children to the workshop. Let them know any expectations for the space (sitting vs. moving around, noise level expectations, etc.) and make introductions.

CONSIDER:

Opening Activity

1. Ask the children if they have ever listened to music or sung a song. Then ask, why? Possible prompts could be:
 - a. Why do we sing to babies?
 - b. Why do we listen to music?
 - c. Where/when do you listen to music, and why there/then?
 - d. If you sing or play music, why? What do you like about it?
2. Have them share with a partner one or two of their favorite songs or kinds of music, then share with the group. Write the list on the chart paper, titled "Our Favorite Songs."
 - a. Then ask learners how their favorite music makes them feel. Possible prompts could be: Do you have different feelings with other kinds of music, or at other times?
 - b. Do some kinds of music make you feel different from others?
3. What kind of music do you like when you're feeling (happy, sad, angry, lonely)? Match emotions to the list of music already generated, where possible.

Optional: play or sing some of the songs children have identified, if appropriate. Take a little dance break!

4. Let children know that they will be talking more about music and what it means to us. Explain that later they will watch a short animated film, *Music Dreams*, about some kids (Carlos and Lisa) and what music means to them.

COLLECT:

1. Prepare children to listen to a piece of music called *Clair de Lune* by Claude Debussy. Ask them to think about how it makes them feel/what it makes them think about while listening. (Facilitators may only want to play a portion of the lengthy clip.)
2. Offer children paper and drawing supplies if they would like to draw or write how they feel while listening.
3. Play the audio recording of Mona Golabek playing *Clair de Lune*. <https://bit.ly/MGolabekClairdeLune>
4. Ask children to share their thoughts and feelings about the music. Ask them to think about whether this music makes them feel happy, sad, calm, or excited.
5. Play the audio recording a second time, and invite children to draw, if they would like to, anything the music makes them think about, or imagine. Invite children to share what they thought of and/or their writing/drawing.
6. Hold up a copy of *Hold On to Your Music* and tell children that the author of the book is the person who played the music they just heard. Next session, they will read the book together!
7. Let children know that they will watch the animated film *Music Dreams* with caregivers during PACT Time.

Facilitators' Note:
French composer Claude Debussy's well-known piano piece, *Clair de Lune*, meaning "moonlight," is part of the four-movement work, *Suite Bergamasque* (1890-1905). Debussy began writing the piece of music in 1890 when he was only 28, but it wasn't published for another 15 years!

PARENT TIME

Goals

- Introduce caregivers to the idea of digital literacy.
- Encourage caregivers to talk with children about any media or “text” they consume.
- Give caregivers some historical background about the Children of Willesden Lane books that will be read during this program.

Welcome and Introductions

Welcome caregivers to the workshop. Allow time for participants to introduce themselves. Ask caregivers to share with a partner something they are hoping to learn from this program or why they chose to participate in the program.

CONSIDER:

Opening Activity

1. Ask caregivers to think about what music means to them and their family. Invite them to share:
 - a. Where do you hear music in your daily life? How is it being used? (Examples might be: singing to children to calm them, singing in the shower for fun, listening to music in the car, dancing to music, etc.)
 - b. What different kinds of music do you listen to? How might music influence your feelings or your mood? For instance, do you listen to music to energize yourself in the morning, or to relax at night?
 - c. Are there certain songs that are important to you and your family? Songs you like to listen to with your family? Why are they important to you?
2. Let caregivers know that we will talk more about what music means to them during the session and will watch *Music Dreams*, a wordless short animated film inspired by the book *Hold On to Your Music*.

COLLECT:

Literacy Skill: Digital Literacy

1. Share with caregivers a narrow, commonly understood definition of “text”—written words. Ask for examples of kinds of text using this definition. Examples might include books, poems, stories. If no one suggests it, offer further examples like magazines, grocery lists, street signs, labels on food and shopping bags, websites, etc.
2. Then explain that we can think of “texts” even more broadly. A text can be anything that conveys meaning. Offer examples like a painting, cartoon, movie, or others, and ask for additional suggestions. If no one mentions it, include music as an example of a text.
3. Ask caregivers what “digital literacy” means to them. Explain that digital content contains not only texts or pictures but also links, videos, embedded items, and the other examples we have listed. The domination of technology in our everyday lives highlights the importance of digital literacy not just for adults but for our children.
4. Invite caregivers to think about ways to use digital literacy to improve children’s comprehension. Explain to caregivers that back-and-forth conversations help develop children’s brains even more than reading or talking to a child alone. Conversations help improve language skills and comprehension. Offer some examples of how to engage with children around non-traditional “texts.” Examples might include:
 - a. Asking for help reading grocery lists or finding items in the grocery store.
 - b. Asking open-ended questions about the cartoon or TV show they’re watching.
 - c. Asking their opinions about music they listen to.
 - d. Watching TikTok videos together and discussing the content.
 - e. Playing a video or computer game together and asking them to read the menus/dialogue on the screen.
 - f. Asking about their favorite Twitch/YouTube content creators. Why do they like them? What kind of content do they create? What do they talk about?
 - g. Ask caregivers for their suggestions.

Facilitators’ Note:

Studies have shown that conversational turns, or “back-and-forth” exchanges with children, are more important for brain development than the total number of words children hear. i.e., it is more effective to have conversations with children than to talk to them. <https://news.mit.edu/2018/conversation-boost-childrens-brain-response-language-0214>

5. Explain to caregivers that we will practice talking about a music text together in preparation for PACT Time.
6. Play the audio clip of *Clair de Lune* <https://bit.ly/MGolabekClairdeLune>. Ask caregivers to share their thoughts and feelings about the music. Ask them to brainstorm open-ended questions they might ask about this music to start a conversation with their children. Record their questions on chart paper, and save it for PACT Time. Examples might include:
 - a. How does this music make you feel? What do you think of when you listen to this song?
 - b. What other music you listen to makes you feel like this?
 - c. What do you think the musician is thinking or feeling?
 - d. Do you like the song? Why or why not?
 - e. The name of the song means “moonlight.” How might that change how it makes you feel or what you think about as you listen?

Facilitators' Note:

As caregivers begin to transition from Parent Time to PACT Time, invite them to think about songs they might have sung to their children, or lullabies from their own childhood. Invite them to listen to a clip of Victor Borge playing a lullaby that he remembered from his childhood before the war (<https://bit.ly/VBorgeLullaby>). A brief [biography of Victor Borge](#) is provided in this guide for background information.

Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time®

CONSTRUCT:

Music Dreams

1. Welcome families back together.
2. Invite families to watch a short, animated, wordless film called *Music Dreams*. *Music Dreams* is inspired by the books we will be reading during these sessions! While the books are historical, the film takes place mostly in the present day.
3. Display the introductory images from the short film, *Music Dreams*. Point out Carlos and his brother, and let families know that they are refugees separated from their family. Point out Lisa and explain that she lived during World War II and was a refugee who left her family. Invite families to notice how the setting and “look” of the pictures changes from the modern-day section to the historical section, including how Carlos looks different in certain parts of the film.
4. Invite families to make some predictions about the film. Continue displaying the pictures and ask:
 - a. What do you think this film is about? What story might it tell, and why do you think that?
 - b. The film is called *Music Dreams*; why do you think it might be called that?
5. Play the short animated film *Music Dreams*: <https://bit.ly/MusicDreamsHOTYM>
6. Invite families to discuss the film. Remind caregivers they can use/adapt questions from their list of open-ended questions created during Parent Time.
 - a. How did the film make you feel?
 - b. Did you feel a connection to the characters?
 - c. What questions do you have about the film?
 - d. How were the characters connected by music?



7. Ask families to think about why music is important to us. Record responses.
 - a. What kind of music would you “hold on to” like the children did in the film? (This could be genre, style, artist, country of origin, song title, etc.)
 - b. Why is music something to “hold on to?” Does everyone feel that way? Why or why not?
 - i. If music isn’t something you would “hold on to,” what other kinds of texts might you hold on to? Stories, diaries, photos, art? What about other things? (Examples could include: nature, cooking, imagination, language, memories, hobbies, or more.) What do they have in common with how characters use music in the film?
 - ii. If participants don’t mention it, bring up the idea of music/other texts as carrying on family traditions, cultural traditions, etc. What is their value beyond our personal connection to them?

Make a Drawing

1. Invite families to make a drawing together about a song (or more broadly: style, genre, instrument, etc.) that is important to their family. The artwork could include:
 - a. The name of the song/genre/etc.
 - b. Adjectives/descriptions of how they feel when they listen to that music.
 - c. Drawings that represent that music to them, or how they feel when listening.
 - d. Any connection the song, genre, or instrument has to their family (is it based on a family memory, their culture, etc.).
 - e. Anything else that families would like to include.
2. Shadow families as they work on their art and offer assistance as needed.

Facilitators’ Note:

2021 marked the 83rd anniversary of the arrival of the first Kindertransport to the United Kingdom. This rescue operation saved 10,000 child refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe. As part of the commemoration, USC Shoah Foundation produced an animated short film, *Music Dreams*, based on the story of Lisa Jura, a young Holocaust survivor who, in 1938, escaped from Vienna to London on the Kindertransport. *Music Dreams* was inspired by The Children of Willesden Lane books, written by Lisa’s daughter, acclaimed concert pianist and author Mona Golabek. Set in 2021, *Music Dreams* centers on a lonely boy, a refugee separated from his family. Lying awake at night, he finds a piece of mysterious old sheet music that whisks him to late 1930s Europe where he meets Lisa Jura, a young aspiring pianist. The boy accompanies Lisa as she travels via the Kindertransport from Vienna to London, where she finds a home at a hostel on Willesden Lane and pursues her dream of becoming a concert pianist.

COMMUNICATE:

Sharing Art

1. Invite families to display their art on their table. Have half the group stay at their tables while the other half walks around to view others' creations, ask questions, and give compliments.
2. Then switch the groups.
3. Let families know that over the course of the program, they will create a portfolio of work. This art will be the first piece added to their final collection!

Wrap-up

1. Bring the group back together and ask families to share the art they created during PACT time and to reflect on experiences during PACT Time.
2. Answer any questions that families have.
3. Provide reminders about how families can use open-ended questions to build comprehension and language skills when talking about any texts they encounter—from books to TV shows to public murals or music on the radio! Review the list of open-ended questions they created during Parent Time.
4. Remind families that they listened to *Clair de Lune* earlier in the session, and it was played by Mona Golabek. Hold up a copy of *Hold On to Your Music* and explain that Mona is also the author of the book they will read next session. Introduce *Hold On to Your Music* as a true story about Mona Golabek's mother, Lisa Jura, who was a pianist.
5. Thank families for attending and invite them to join the next session, where they will explore the pictures in *Hold On to Your Music* and how they tell the story. Encourage families to continue learning about music by exploring Wonder of the Day® 1367: "Does Music Influence Your Mood?"











Hold On To Your Music— Music as a Universal Language

Biography

Victor Borge (born Børge Rosenbaum), son of Bernhard and Frederikke, was born in Copenhagen, Denmark on January 3, 1909. He had three older half-brothers, George, Ignar and Iwald; and one older brother, Sven. Victor's father was a violinist with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and his mother gave piano lessons. Victor attended synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and he had a Bar Mitzvah. He attended the Royal Danish Music Conservatory on scholarship, where he studied piano, and went with one of his teachers to study in Vienna, Austria. He later studied in Berlin, Germany, and while he was there he became aware of Nazism. Back in Copenhagen, Victor played piano at ballet schools and in tea salons. He was also an organist at the Jewish cemetery. Victor married his first wife, Elsie, in 1933. In 1939, Victor contacted a friend in Stockholm to see if he could be hired there. He was working in Stockholm when the German army invaded Denmark on April 9, 1940. Sweden was neutral during World War II, and this allowed Victor and his wife to immigrate to the United States. Victor continued to entertain as a pianist and comedian for a living, and performed on the radio and later on television. He debuted at Carnegie Hall in 1945, and eventually had his own show on Broadway. After divorcing his first wife, he married his second wife, Sanna, in 1951. He had five children. Victor received a Kennedy Center Honor in 1999. Victor Borge died on December 23, 2000. This interview was conducted on June 16, 1998 in Greenwich, Connecticut.



Testimony Transcript

What you play for little babies – a lullaby, yeah. This is a little lullaby written by one of my father's colleagues, a great composer by the name of Fini Henriques. And he was in the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, sitting next to my father and playing. And this is one of his songs. He has written operas and was very talented. And I remember him very clearly. Fini Henriques' 'Lullaby.'

- Victor Borge, June 1998