

## From Tickling to Reading: A sound to symbol process for melody

by Terolle Turnham

A music educator first exposed to a music game which is not like Music Bingo may question its learning value. If the game involves laughter and interaction as well as talking and tickling, it is even more difficult to image that the environment is ripe for solid learning. That is, however, exactly what I am proposing and what I will attempt to describe in this article.

This article will present a thorough description of a game and developments for the folk song, "Hey Betty Martin." Included are:

- Variants on the song game to highlight phrases to study
- background knowledge necessary to the study process
- questioning strategies to prompt song analysis
- form book pages for teacher and student investigation.

### Hey, Betty Martin

United States

Hey, Bet - ty Mar - tin, tip - py toe, tip - py toe!

Hey, Bet ty Mar - tin, tip toe fine!

Hey, Bet - ty Mar - tin, tip - py toe, tip - py toe!

Hey, Bet - ty Mar - tin, please be mine!

Before beginning the game, I prepare the children (kindergarten, first, or second grade) for the tickling touch. We discuss ideas about how it will feel as well as how to appropriately tickle another person. Talking about a parent or friend who tickles too hard, helps us know that we do not like that tickle touch. We also do not like to be tickled in our most ticklish places. Sometimes we laugh so hard that we are afraid we will have an accident resulting in wet pants! On the other hand, we love tickling that reminds us of kitten fur against our hand. A touch that is soft and gentle.

### **The Game**

As the class is seated in circle formation, the teacher stands outside the circle and says, "Someone will be tickled right down the spine. The song will choose who it will be. Will it be you?" The children watch as the teacher sings the song "Hey, Betty Martin" and walks around the outside of the circle, bending low to tickle the child who is nearest when she sings "fine." Moving on, she touches the shoulders of the child she is nearest when she sings "mine." "Think about how far I walked before I tickled someone. Whom do you predict will be tickled when I start from this spot outside the circle?"

Once the children seem comfortable with the events of the game and the song, and have noticed that it is the word "fine" which makes the walker tickle someone, the interaction changes. As the teacher touches shoulders on the final word "mine," she or he now asks, "Would you like to go tickling?" If the answer is "yes," the child stands to walk with the song, and the teacher sits in that empty spot in the circle. The children will probably be content with this format for many days of play. When their interest begins to lag, it is time to change the invitation to involve more students in the action turn. The walker can be encouraged to ask, "Would you like to come tickling with me?" And off go two, then four, then eight "ticklers." Soon all are "ticklers" and there are none left sitting in the circle.

### **Game Assessment**

What has happened for the children during this time spent with "Betty"?

- They have had delightful experiences with the song and with one another.
- They have practiced taking and giving turns.
- They have used appropriate touch.
- They have practiced patience as they await their walking turn.
- They have practiced inviting someone to take a turn.
- Seeds for music learning have been planted.
- The song has started and stopped the action, reinforcing the fact that music happens through time.
- Children sing the song with accuracy.

- Children have experienced the partial and the final cadence through touch and movement.

### **Antiphon Game**

The teacher has hummed the melody of the song and the (second or third grade) children have identified it as "Hey, Betty Martin" or perhaps "The Tickle Song." The class is then invited to antiphon the tune with the teacher; the teacher sings a phrase and children respond with the next phrase. The teacher gestures to herself or himself to start his or her voice and then gestures to the children to invite them to sing. Next, the children find partners and take turns leading or following an antiphon rendition of their own. They change partners several times, improving the gestures they use as they lead, and sharpening their perceptual skill as they follow.

- While doing the antiphon study, the children notice new things about the song. They become aware of the structure in concrete way as they manipulate the performance and plan for the chunks they wish to sing. Will the students automatically become aware of the structure? Some will but many will need guiding questions such as:
  - "What comes after you sing the words, "Hey Betty Martin?"
  - "After 'Hey, Betty Martin', are the words always 'tippy toe, tippy toe'?"
  - "Where do the rhyming words come in the song?"
  - "How many times do you sing the words 'Hey, Betty Martin'?"

### **Pitch Study**

Before formally studying the pitch, isolated phrases or chunks of the song can be highlighted to assure that children are aware of the melodic contour of the material to be studied. In the example described here, the chunk will be highlighted through movement.

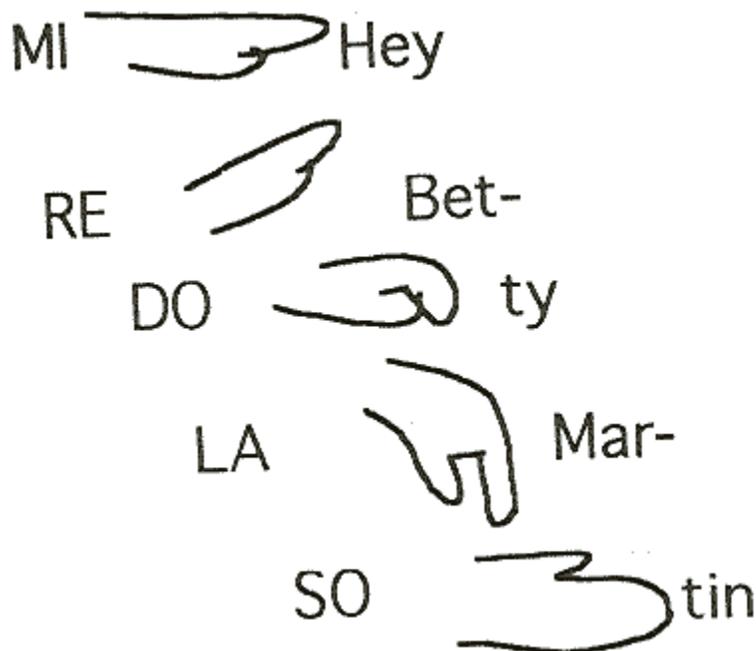
First, the teacher tells the students they will be working with the song "Hey, Betty Martin" and then hums the phrase "Hey, Betty Martin" and asks the students to identify that portion of the song. After identifying the chunk, students work with a partner and plan an action that they will perform each time they sing the "Hey, Betty Martin" chunk. Then, they share their action plan with the class. The other children observe carefully so they can imitate what they see. After each sharing time, observers will be given the opportunity to report what they noticed. Many will use actions which begin high and move lower. To direct student attention toward the melodic contour of the chunk, the teacher may ask a question or two calling attention to pitch change and movement.

"Did the motion match the pitch movement of the voice?"

If students move down when the pitch is going up. "Would it make sense to move

in the opposite direction?"

Finally, the Curwen hand signals for pitch are demonstrated by the teacher and the children sing the normal text of the song using the appropriate hand signals during the words, "Hey, Betty Martin."



The hand sign practice becomes game-like as the children are asked to show ME RE DO with the right hand and LA SO with the left. Student can be given added challenges by asking them to perform the patterns by reversing hands, so that the left hand performs MI RE DO and the right LA SO. An added challenge might be, "how can your hands touch your partner's hands as we sing the song and perform the signals?" Partners share their ideas and the class imitates them. They also begin replacing the words, "Hey, Betty Martin," with the solfege syllables, ME RE DO LA SO.

### **Pentahand**

At another time, students are asked to shape their hands in pentahand formation by looking at the palm of the hand, and bunching the thumb, pointer, and middle fingers. A gap is formed which separates those fingers from the ring and pinkie fingers which are also bunched. The three top fingers become MI RE DO and the lower bunch become LA SO.



"Can you play the chunk, 'Hey Betty Martin,' on your pentahand?"

Can you play the chunk on your partner's hand while he or she plays it on yours?"

### Other Pentahand Patterns

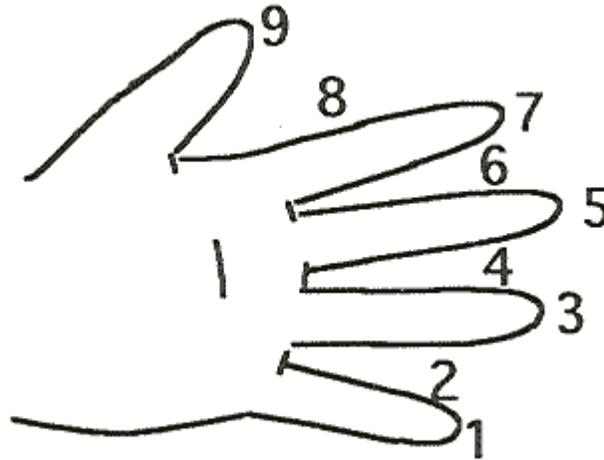
Frequently, students are familiar with the search for and use of patterns from their mathematics study. They expect to make meaning of things by discovering patterns. We want to use their "pattern detection" ability to link the pentahand to other patterns in their lives and eventually to the music staff. So we think of other ways to describe the pattern of the three and two.

- Consider how the days of the week would fit on the pentahand. For instance, beginning on the pinkie and moving up toward the thumb, the pattern would be Monday, Tuesday; the web gap would be Wednesday, followed by Thursday, Friday and Saturday. For an additional challenge, start with Wednesday to name the pattern of fingers and think the name of the web gap without saying it. Example: Wednesday, Thursday (inner-hearing), Saturday, Sunday, Monday.
- Try consecutive months without saying aloud the web gap. Now, try numbers. Start with 1 on the pinkie. The pentahand pattern would be 1, 2 (the gap is 3) 4, 5, 6.
  - Use numbers to sing and play the "Hey, Betty Martin" melodic chunk on the pentahand. One problem, the "Hey, Betty Martin" chunk begins on the top of the pentahand! Quite a challenge is presented here as the students sing "6 5, 4, 2, 1 tippy toe, tippy toe. 6, 5, 4, 2, 1 tippy toe fine. 6, 5, 4, 2, 1 tippy toe, tippy toe. 6, 5, 4, 2, 1 please be mine."
  - Play with other groups of number such as 9, 8, 7, 5, 4, or 12,11,10,8,7.

## Hand Staff

The use of numbers will help make the transition from the pentahand to the hand staff.

In numbering the hand staff, the fingers are given consecutive odd numbers and the webs are given even number names. Looking at your palm, number one names the pinkie, three the ring finger, five the middle finger and so on.



Allow plenty of time to manipulate and explore the hand staff and then transfer information used with the pentahand to the hand staff. For example, use 6, 5,4,2,1 on the pentahand and then find those spots on the hand staff. Try to sing the song replacing the "Hey, Betty Martin; melodic chunk with those numbers. Play the numbered spots on the hand staff as you sing, "6,5,4,2,1 tippy toe, tippy toe, 6,5,4,2,1 tip toe fine, "6,5,4,2,1 tippy toe, tippy toe 6,5,4,2,1, please be mine. Several numerical patterns can be applied in the same manner. End with a pattern that names MI as 7. Now the chunk is 7,6,5,3,2 which will lead into the form book.

## Form Book

Following many kinesthetic learning experiences such as those described earlier, a form book is presented. Students will be guided from page to page.

Form Book for "Hey, Betty Martin" follows the end of this article. The form book pages can be copied and compiled into individual student booklets.

## Summary

My aim is to make this study joyful, interactive, and playful. In my classes, this process has made the approach to the staff very familiar and friendly. This way of studying music brings the student and the melody chunk to the staff with an abundance of kinesthetic knowledge which supports and defines the aural experience. Just as the effective voice teacher asks the student "How did that

feel?" the child knows how MI RE DO feels, looks, and sounds. The chunk becomes not a passing acquaintance, but a well-known friend.

To review, the progressive tasks we followed were:

- folk song game
- partner action highlighting the chunk
- hand signals and solfege syllables on the chunk
- pentahand and solfege syllables on the chunk
- hand staff and solfege syllables on the chunk
- form book leading to traditional notation of the chunk

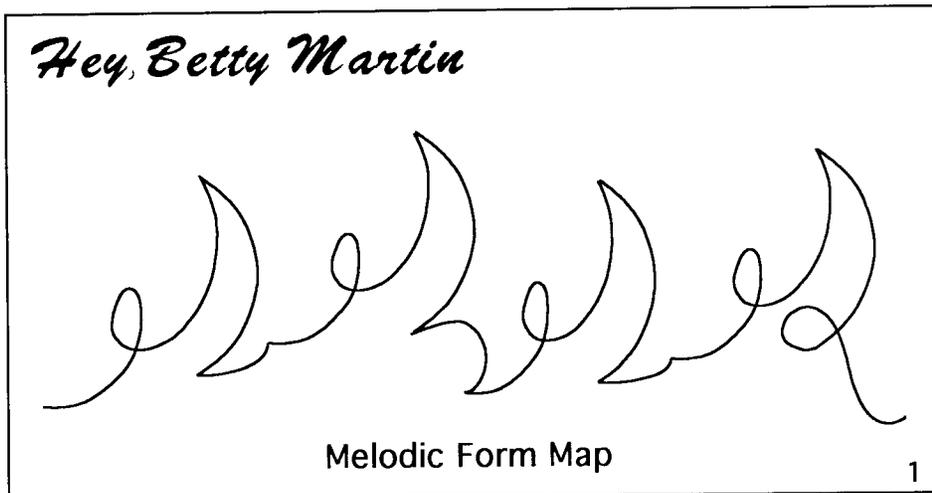
The basic guide has been to move from the largest, most general experience of the song to the smallest, most specific presentation. "Large" means large group as well as large muscles; "small" means self and fine motor experience

Although reading this description may tend toward the tedious, this style of study can be delightful. Children are involved in age appropriate interaction, task, and problems. Their learning feels like play, but it is very solid. They have done the "work" of studying music in response to questions or challenges presented by the teacher whose intent is to lead them to more specific information. The teacher has given them the song and bits of music language but they have developed or constructed their own knowledge base; they have constructed their own meaning and understanding of music. Yes, the journey from tickling to reading has been an environment with learning.

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Note the suggested teacher dialogue at the side of each page of the form book. It is very important to allow children to lead, touch, and hold their own copy of each page. The children will show how they would read and what they would sing as each new page introduces another way to be more specific with the information regarding the melody chunk.

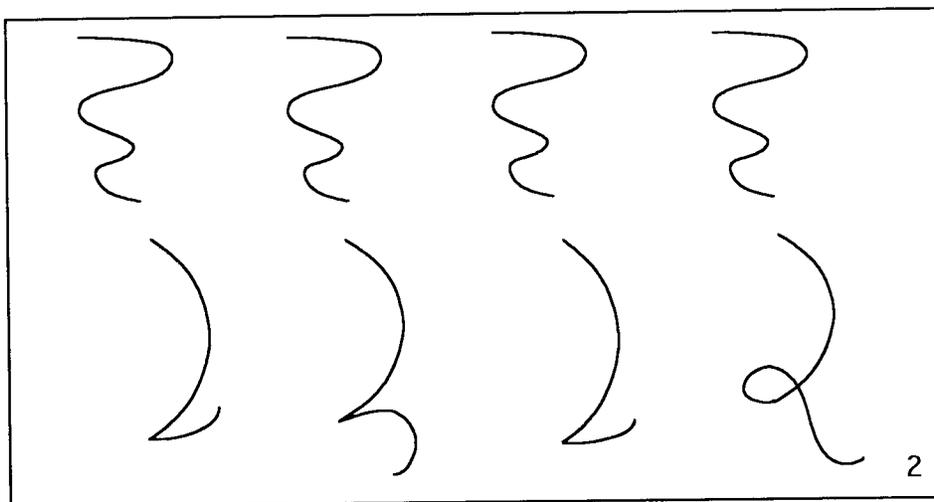
**Page 1. A music map of the song showing the melodic form which will be consistently presented throughout the form book.**



**Teacher prompts:**

- "What do you see that happens four times?"
- "What part of the song will happen at these four places?"
- "Where is the word 'fine'?"
- "Who can lead us through the song and trace the map as we sing?"
- "Where were the 'tippy toe' spots?"
- "Can you follow the map and sing the 'Hey, Betty Martin' chunk in your mind, using your inner hearing, while the rest of the song is sung aloud?"
- "Can you do the opposite, singing aloud 'Hey, Betty Martin' and singing the rest of the song in your inner hearing?"

**Page 2. A map emphasizing the language chunk 'Hey, Betty Martin'**



**Teacher prompts:**

- "Is there anything on this page that you have seen before?"
- "What words will we sing as we follow the wiggly line?"
- "Where does it make sense to start tracing the wiggly line, at the top or the bottom? Why?"
- "Try singing the wiggly line parts on 'loo' and use the song's words for the other map sections."

**Page 3. The solfege score for the "Hey, Betty Martin" chunk is interspersed with the map.**

**Teacher prompts:**

- "What has changed on this page?"
- "Can you sing the music language as written here and also show the hand signals for the pitches?"
- "Can you show the MI RE DO pitches with one hand and the LA<sub>1</sub> SO<sub>1</sub> pitches with the other?"

MI RE DO	MI RE DO	MI RE DO	MI RE DO
LA <sub>1</sub> SO <sub>1</sub>	LA <sub>1</sub> SO <sub>1</sub>	LA <sub>1</sub> SO <sub>1</sub>	LA <sub>1</sub> SO <sub>1</sub>
			

3

**Page 4. The solfege for the "Hey, Betty Martin" chunk is presented on the pentahand.**

**Teacher prompts:**

- "What is the challenge presented to you on this page?"
- "Can you play your pentahand, sing the song, and trace the map section when the song takes you to it?"

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**Page 5. Number patterns for the "Hey, Betty Martin" chunk are presented on the pentahand**

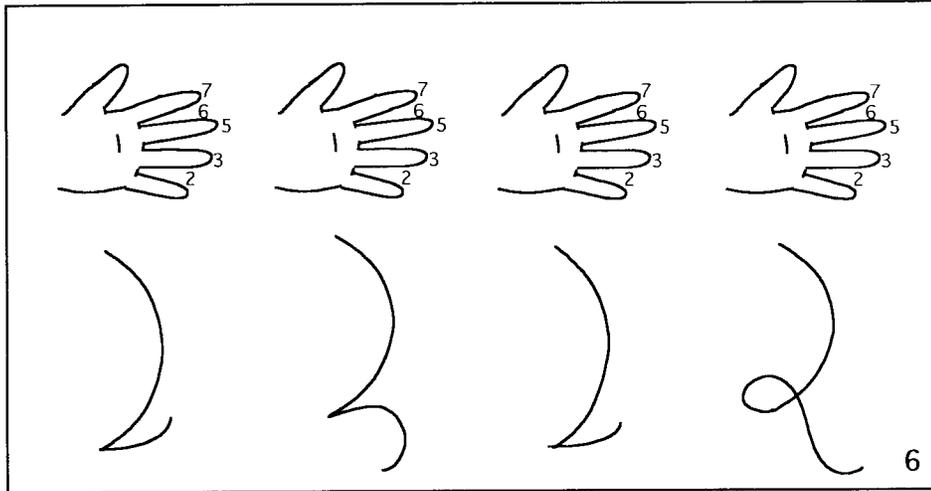
**Teacher prompts:**

- "What has happened with the pentahand names?"
- "Sing the numbers and play them on your pentahand remembering to trace the map also."

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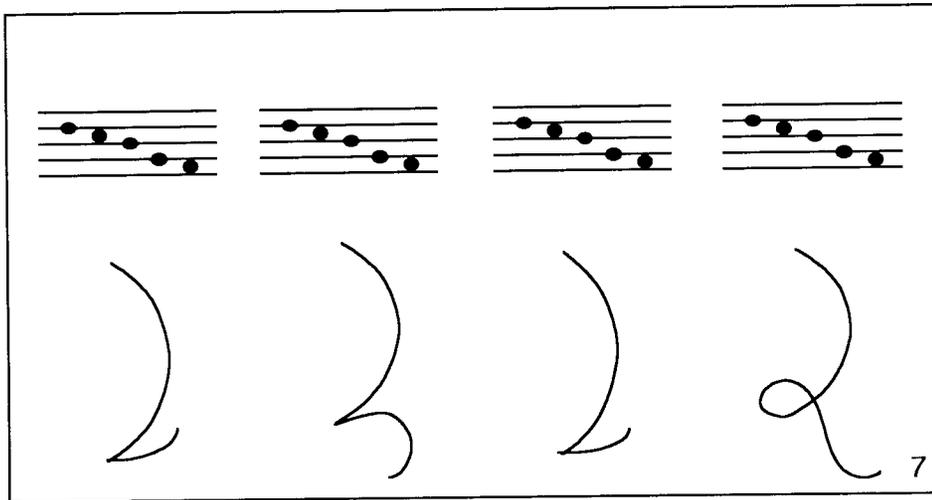
**Page 6. The number patterns for the "Hey, Betty Martin" chunk are presented on the hand staff.**



**Teacher prompts:**

- "Sing and play the number patterns you see on your hand staff and trace the map section."

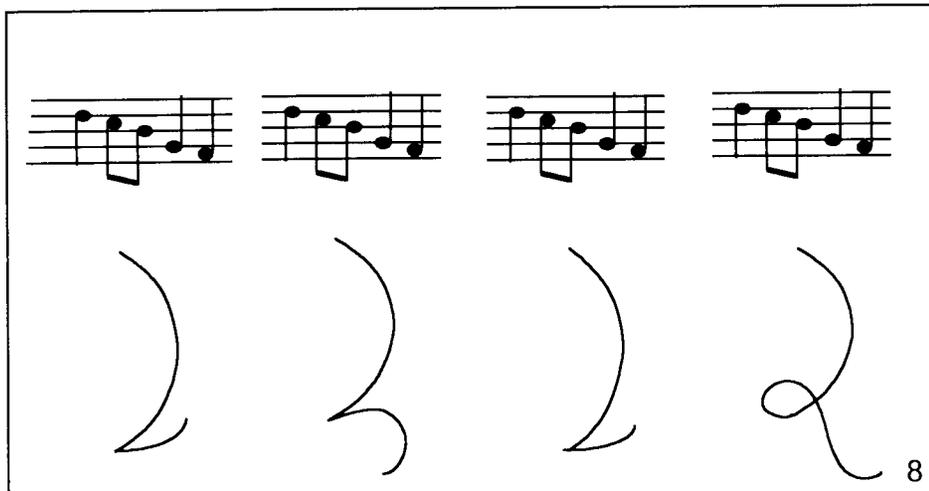
**Page 7. Noteheads for the "Hey, Betty Martin" chunk are presented on the written staff.**



**Teacher prompts:**

- "As you look at the noteheads, can you find the MI RE DO grouping?"
- "How do you know that is MI RE DO?"
- "What is the other notehead grouping? How do you know?"
- "How many different ways can you read and perform this page?"

**Page 8. Finally, the written staff shows the song chunk in full notation.**



**Teacher prompts:**

- "How many ways can you sing the melody chunk shown in full notation?"
- "Can you also sing the written pattern in rhythm language?" For example, "DU DUDE DU DU".