2012 Marks the 20th Year of Music EdVentures, Inc.

A salute to MEI Presidents Past and Present
Thank you for 20 years of leadership.

1992-1994  Sandy Verschoot (MT)
1994-1996  Judy Suvak (MT)
1996-1998  Anna Langness (CO)
1998-2000  Terolle Turnham (MN)
2000-2002  Marty Stover (MN)
2002-2004  Sandy Murray (BC)
2004-2006  Tony Williamson (OR)
2006-2008  Mary Springer (WA)
2008-2010  Deb Eikenbary (IN)
2010-2012  Marilyn Winter (MT)

Happy 20th Anniversary
Music EdVentures, Inc.
1992-2012
Emerging Pioneers in Education

Eight young educators were recipients of the Fleurette Sweeney Fellowship for Emerging Pioneers in Education. In return for this recognition and financial assistance we requested feedback from our Emerging Pioneers about the 2011 Conference. In this issue and future issues, EPs will tell of the insights they gained from experiencing the principles and practices of the SongWorks approach at the conference and in their classrooms.

“Keeping a Lid on It”

Since returning from the Music EdVentures conference as a recipient of the Fleurette Sweeney Fellowship for Emerging Pioneers in Education Grant, my students have been reaping the benefits of a happier and more joyous music making environment. This is my first year teaching in a full time general music position, and I am experiencing the joys, along with the trials, of being a new teacher. Every day is an adventure into mostly uncharted territory. As the students become familiar with me and my teaching style, I find myself wanting to set clear boundaries and develop a rapport of mutual respect. Lately, I’ve been increasingly aware of my tendency to try to maintain “control” over the group as we explore a new singing game or work in partners and small groups. Sometimes, I find myself attempting to manage every little squeak, giggle, and wiggle, until the joy has been taken out of the activity.

A month before arriving at the conference, I was lucky enough to be visited on separate occasions by Judy Fjell and Anna Langness, two veteran teachers who live and breathe the SongWorks principles. I watched as they effortlessly taught singing games to my kids. They giggled, chased, explored, and were even a bit silly while I watched on the sidelines, resisting my urge to intervene and tell certain children to “behave.” All I could think was, “I want to teach like them!”

At the conference in February, the tables were turned and I had a chance to be the student as colleagues shared their ideas. During one particular game, I was being chased by the person who was “it,” and I let out a very loud, high-pitched scream. I was overcome with excitement, and even a little embarrassed after I realized I had just screamed out loud at a professional conference. It was at this moment that it occurred to me what my students are feeling the first time they experience the thrill of a chase game in the music room. If their 28 year-old teacher could not contain her shrieks of joy and excitement, how could they at the ages of five, six and seven?

After the conference, I returned home with a new idea on how to “keep a lid on things.” If we keep the lid too tight, we run the risk of stifling the sense of joy and spontaneity that is at the very heart of these singing games. If we let the lid come off entirely, the result is no better. After seeing so many masterful teachers in action at the conference, I find myself striving to achieve that delicate balance where my students feel safe to explore their musical and human potential to the fullest. §
Since the MEI Conference, I have visited with several colleagues in several settings about the SongWorks approach and its benefits for children. On March 11, 2011, I presented to my K-5 district vocal music department a (very brief) summary of some of the highlights of the 2011 conference. I had a chance to share about the Fleurette Sweeney Fellowship I received and what an honor it is. I also shared specific strategies from two sessions: Kari Wendroth’s presentation of “Turn the Glasses Over” from *Come, Jump, Turn and Read* and Dr. Peggy Bennett’s presentation of “Also Sprach Zarathustra” from *Playing with the Classics*. I also led our department in a brief vocal and breathing warmup based on some of the techniques demonstrated by Kathi Smith and Judy Fjell.

Based on the feedback I have received, both in person and via e-mail, my colleagues were highly impressed — not only with the literature, but also with the principles and practices of SongWorks that were embedded in the sharing. I have found it ironic that even though this department is full of creative, musical individuals, we have often seemed to begin our meetings and gatherings in the gruff ways that Anna Langness and Angelie Timm demonstrated in their session, “Incorporating Vocal Health for All.” We walk in, plop down, grunt a little bit (maybe even complain some) and then get down to the agenda at hand…no singing, no musicality, and no playfulness! Not fun.

I approached our department coordinator and asked if I could begin our meeting with the brief warmup, followed by a song and game. She was completely enthusiastic and encouraging, a good sign! Later on, we had reached a point when we had been sitting for a while and needed to move. I suggested sharing one more activity (“Also Sprach Zarathustra”) and “the crowd went wild!” Five minutes, few words, complete engagement. Success!

Several have thanked me since then for sharing, and some have asked for more information about the conference, SongWorks, or MEI.§
Sandy (Murray), Heather (Hicks), Kate (Smith) and I had the privilege of representing the MEI community at Annette’s retirement celebration on May 27. She had invited friends from the school and music communities of her entire teaching career---in Nova Scotia from the 1970’s, Vancouver Island, and finally Coquitlam School District where since 1981, she taught first at Nestor Elementary, then Maple Ridge Middle School and finally served as District Music Coordinator. Annette MC’d the event herself. That was particularly special because her inimitable humour bubbled up at every turn of phrase. She had asked me to speak. It was such fun sharing old stories of her apprenticeship days as the stories were new to many of the folks that were there. I told of the adventures that she, Mary Helen, Peggy and I had while traveling the continent by car and plane, of border crossings and suspicious bogus nuns, of practicing so-fa and rhythms in the back seat of the car and in airport waiting rooms, of playing games at rest stops.

Perhaps the most significant tribute to Annette that evening was the one she gave to herself! She performed two of her songs from her newly released CD. Imagine, after singing with children every day these many years, she sang as lyrically and beautifully as ever---at her retirement party! To me that was tribute par excellence to a music educator who has respected, and consistently cared for the gift of voice---a model to us all.§

SongWorks is all about having a playful, positive learning partnership with children. As we play and adapt games to teach concepts, we do so with love and respect for children as they enter our classrooms each day.

Judy Fjell
Announcing New Book

SUMMER EXERCISES

Remember to keep exercising these special teaching skills during your summer vacation.

Synchronized clapping

Storytelling

Listening and waiting for a response

Walking squats
Neck and tongue stretches

Conditioning for arm strength and coordination, focused listening and concentration
Expressive feet, legs, arms, hands, and face for sneaking and chasing

Precision clapping, brushing, tapping for secret songs

Photographs by Marilyn Winter and Daisy Cochran
News and Notes is the monthly communication of Music EdVentures, Inc. (MEI). Regular features will keep members and friends up to date on coming events and the latest teaching techniques, tips and strategies. Submissions are due on the 15th of the month prior to publication and may be submitted months in advance, indicating the month in which they are to be published. The committee reserves the right to select material to be published according to length and appropriateness. Articles should be 200-325 words. Visuals should be scanned and submitted as PDF or jpeg files. Submissions may be sent to PamBridgehouse@hughes.net and may be edited to accommodate space limitations.

The Purpose of Music EdVentures, Inc. is to search for and practice ways of making music and interacting with people that preserve and celebrate the dignity of both. As a guiding principle, this purpose will focus our work on:

1. Practices that foster interactive, facilitative learning environments.
2. Strategies that empower the learner within the context of music experience and study.
3. Networks that encourage collaboration between diverse disciplines, professionals, and interest groups.

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Visit the MEI Website
www.musicedventures.org
Read articles, get ideas, and learn more about Music EdVentures, Inc. -- a great way to teach and a fun way to learn!

Support the Mission of MEI with your membership dues!

$35 Regular  $50 Sustaining  $100 Patron  $10 Student

Make checks payable to MEI (USD)
Include your name, address, phone and email.

Send to  Anna Langness, Treas.
1179 Lilac St.
Broomfield, CO 80020

SAVE THE DATE
2012 MEI CONFERENCE
March 1-3 (Th-Sat)
Vancouver, BC