



## SONG AND RHYTHMS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

*Art Form:* Music

*Style:* Folk

*Culture:* American

### *Technical Needs*

- Sound system, OR
- two standing microphones and one large sturdy table (or a small sturdy table and two desks)

### *Meet the Artist*

Carol Weston, a teacher who now educates by performing, has extensive experience performing for children. She has conducted music workshops for people working with children, taught guitar classes to teachers for classroom use, and is currently a guitar instructor at the Old Town School of Folk Music.

Carol has also presented musical programs for school children throughout the Midwest, and performed as a singer for adults in such clubs as the Drake Hotel's Avenue One and the Lake Point Tower Club in Chicago and the Carlton Club at the Ritz Carlton Hotel.

### *About the Performance*

*Songs and Rhythms*, designed especially for younger students with little exposure to music, introduces students to the basic concepts of singing along, clapping to a rhythm, and rhyming words in a song. Students sing along, clapping and moving to both familiar and new songs, sometimes accompanying Carol on small instruments she brings with her. She also introduces the guitar and banjo, completing this introduction to music with discussions of singing, rhythm, and playing instruments.

Children have the opportunity to use rhyming words to enhance their verbal skills and increase their cognitive development, and to gain self-awareness through their active participation in familiar songs, rhythms, and body movements.

### *Contextual Information*

All the pieces in this program are strongly rhythmic, traditional American folk ballads. The verses of the songs all follow regular patterns of rhythm and rhyme. Rhythm and rhyme are taught through songs, demonstration, and sing-along and clap-along activities. Carol sings three main types of songs:

1. **Fill-in-the-blank puzzles.** Carol will ask for a color, and then a word that rhymes with that color, and she will put both words into the verses of the song. Older students will have the opportunity to guess the right color based on the preceding rhyme (for example, she will sing “I lost my shoe, and it was \_\_\_,” at which point students can guess “blue”).
2. **Response songs.** Carol plays and sings a verse that asks the students to clap at the right time, and then to stamp their feet at the right time, and then to sneeze at the right time, and so on.
3. **Cumulative songs.** As Carol sings the verses get longer and longer, accumulating the words from previous verses. One common example of a cumulative song is The Twelve Days of Christmas.

On stage, Carol plays the banjo and the guitar, which are acoustic string instruments. Her guitar and banjo have several parts in common. Each has a body, or sound box. The banjo’s sound box is round and looks like a small drum, while the guitar has a larger, curved sound box. The guitar and banjo also both have a neck, a head, and strings. The neck is the skinny part along which Carol’s other hand runs to make the strings tighter or looser to change the pitch. The head is the top of the instrument, where the strings are connected to little screws that she turns to tune the instrument. She also provides other basic instruments for children to play along with her at the end of her performance. The kazoo, tambourine, rhythm sticks, and mbira (thumb piano) are all incorporated into a big finale.

Finally, Carol introduces students to the limberjack, a doll that dances on a paddle. The limberjack, like all the basic instruments and songs she uses in her performance, comes from American traditions that can still be seen in Appalachia and other rural areas of the country.

## Vocabulary

- Acoustic:** Not amplified; acoustic instruments play on their own and do not need electricity
- Appalachia:** An area in America around the Appalachian Mountains where people from the British Isles settled
- Banjo:** An instrument that has a round body, a long neck, and five strings played by plucking the strings
- Beat:** The pronounced rhythm that is the characteristic driving force in jazz or rock music
- British Isles:** England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, countries on two islands just off Europe.
- Folk music/folk songs:** In America, the term folk songs often refers to the ones from Appalachia
- Guitar:** A guitar is played by plucking or strumming the strings; some kinds of guitars use electricity
- Head:** The top of a string instrument where the strings are attached
- Limberjack:** A doll that dances on a paddle; limberjacks are a part of the Appalachian culture
- Mbira:** Thumb-piano; the mbira was originally an African instrument but the folk culture of Appalachia started using it as well
- Melody:** A sweet or agreeable arrangement of sounds
- Neck:** The long, skinny part of a string instrument, along which a performer runs his/her hands to change the string's tightness
- Rhyme:** matching of words that sound alike
- Rhythm:** The aspect of music comprising all the elements (such as accent, meter, and tempo) that relate to forward movement
- Sound box:** The hollow bottom portion of a string instrument; it makes the strings sound much louder

**String instrument:** Any musical instrument that is played by plucking or strumming strings; the strings are stretched tight, but they cannot be struck (like a piano, which is a percussion instrument)

**Tempo:** the speed of a piece; quickly (presto) or slowly (largo)