

BETSY DIAMANT-COHEN is the Children's Programming Specialist at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore. She is also the creator and author of *Mother Goose on the Loose* (Neal-Schuman, 2006). For more information on *Mother Goose on the Loose*, visit www.mgol.org; bcohen@portdiscovery.org. Betsy is reading *Schooled* by Anisha Lakhani and *Rambo and the Dalai Lama: The Compulsion to Win and Its Threat to Human Survival* by Gordon Fellman.

CHERIE STELLACCIO is General and Vocal Music Specialist in the Music Education Division, at the Peabody Institute, Conservatory of The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore; cherie.stellaccio@jhu.edu. Cherie is reading *My Stroke of Insight* by Jill Bolte Taylor and *Composing a Life* by Mary Catherine Bateson.

Do a Duet

Partnering with Music Schools

Under the banner of Children's Book Week, the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore has partnered with the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University to create a unique program for children and their families.

Every fall semester a new crop of junior-year music education majors at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University enter Cherie Stellaccio's music and language class, a three-credit course designed to assist Peabody students to meet Maryland's reading requirement for teacher certification. While proficiency on their instruments is a matter of course in this conservatory setting, the students generally enter their junior year with little comprehension of what music education is. While enthusiastic, they enter their junior year without a clear understanding of Maryland's strict requirements for teaching. The possibility that they may have to teach reading at some point in their careers seems remote to them. Yet all education students, whether for general education or art education, have to take a minimum of six credit hours of courses in reading in order to be certified to teach any subject in the state of Maryland. These courses include techniques and methods of teaching reading as well as an overview of children's literature. To offset the student's lack of enthusiasm, Cherie has found that the quickest way to engage their interest is to connect them immediately to the world of children's books, starting with the simplest books for toddlers and moving to books for young adults as the semester progresses.

Stellaccio's announcement of the students' first assignment, to walk three blocks to Baltimore's downtown branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library (EPFL) to get a library card and take out a children's book, is generally met with startled looks. With a reminder to "Take your student I.D. and don't forget a document containing your name and a local address," they set off to the library's children's section in search of their first book, one that illustrates a well-known children's song. Their homework requires them to critique a book in terms of its appeal to children, to describe how the book's illustrations support the meaning of the text, or seeing whether the book includes both upper- and lowercase letters. Later, in the classroom, the students will stand up in front of their peers and praise the virtues of a book or expose its shortcomings, and explain how it might be used in a creative, educationally sound way in the classroom. In these sessions students might inform their classmates about the joys and virtues of books like *One Frog Too Many* or *The Big Sneeze*.

The first sign of a developing partnership between the EPFL and the Peabody Conservatory came when Stellaccio's students told her that Selma Levi, the head librarian in the children's section, had asked for a copy of the assignment instructions so that books meeting the weekly criteria could be pulled from the shelves. Since then, Stellaccio sends the librarian a copy of the course syllabus each semester; when her students arrive in the children's

room, they find the finest of new children's literature and old favorites prominently displayed in an area set aside for them.

Another piece of her students' course requirement is to observe a reading class in session. The second sign of a developing partnership came when Stellaccio realized that her students, now comfortable in the children's section of the library, were observing groups of children participating in the library's early-literacy programs.

In September 2005, Betsy Diamant-Cohen, children's programming specialist for the EPFL, spoke with these students, and asked them for the name and phone number of their professor. She then contacted Stellaccio and arranged to meet to discuss partnering possibilities as

well as common interests. While Stellaccio was training students to become teachers, Diamant-Cohen was arranging programs for children and caregivers that were designed to promote early literacy. Diamant-Cohen told Stellaccio about the EPFL's Children's Book Week celebration and asked if her students might offer a musical program for the public. Stellaccio suggested using the Lloyd Moss book *Zin! Zin! Zin! a Violin* as the basis for a live-performance interpretation. With the book-performance project, a collaboration truly began.

A date and two performance times were established for performances at the central library during the community-wide Children's Book Week Celebration. EPFL agreed to provide the space, amplification equipment,

and advertising. Down the street at the conservatory, Stellaccio relayed the information to students, got them organized into small performing groups, recruited assistance in transporting large instruments, and set forth her expectations for the presentation. Requirements included dressing professionally and taking responsibility for organizing and rehearsing their presentations, which had to include instrumental or vocal performance and could not exceed the time limit set by the library. Following the performance, students had to submit a log of meeting and practice attendance, individual descriptions of their contributions to rehearsals and the presentation, and a detailed description of what they and the audience had gained from the experience.

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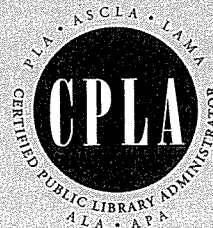
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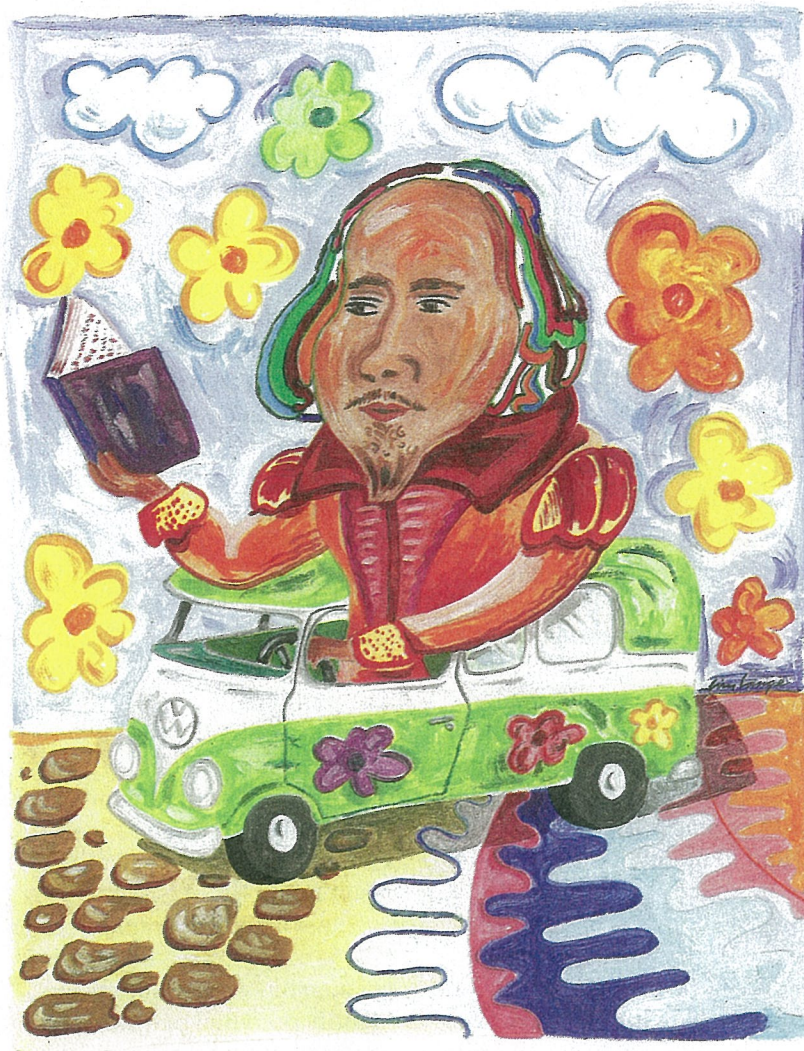
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The first performance took place in November 2005. The students each gave their names, their home states, and the names of the musical instruments they were holding. Then each student played a few notes on the instrument to show the children how it sounded. A student narrator read aloud from *Zin! Zin! Zin! a Violin*, facing the audience and holding the book open while she read so that the children in the audience were able to view the illustrations as well as hear the story. Each time a musical instrument was mentioned, a Peabody student would play a

short selection on that particular instrument. Following the cumulative nature of the story, after each instrument played a solo selection, all of the instruments that had been heard up until that point joined together to play a brief selection. At the story's end, the entire "orchestra" was playing together.

The children watched attentively as the story was being read, and they asked many questions about the instruments when it was finished. When the formal part of the program ended, some children rushed over to the musicians to ask more ques-

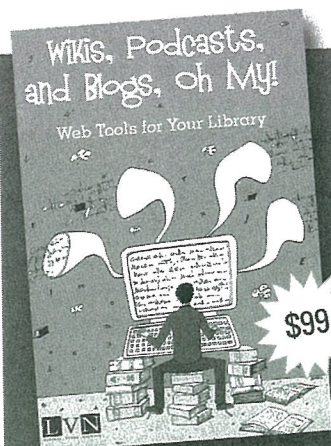
tions and to touch their instruments. The Peabody students were not expecting this and at first, they were taken aback. Rather than saying "no" outright, however, they handled the requests with good grace by sharing instruments that were not fragile. A second class of Cherie's repeated a similar program later in the day.

Based on the positive responses to this program, it was repeated at the 2006 Children's Book Week celebration. Marjorie Priceman, illustrator of *Zin! Zin! Zin! a Violin*, had been invited to EPFL as a Children's Book Week visiting illustrator. During the week she spoke at some EPFL branches, and on Sunday she attended the Children's Book Week celebration at EPFL's central library. There she saw the Peabody students' performance and afterward spoke briefly about her book. She surprised the audience by mentioning that she had never before seen *Zin! Zin! Zin! a Violin* performed. Having the illustrator on hand for their performance was a treat for the Peabody students as well as for the families who attended.

Both the Peabody and the EPFL consider this collaboration to be successful. Stellaccio sees many benefits for her students. After this brief, real-life experience, the importance of early literacy and how it develops goes from the theoretical to the practical. As future music educators, the students learn how to plan interactive music lessons. Preparing this program for preschool and elementary children forces the students to step out of their comfort zones. New possibilities for integrating music with literature and for making books come alive for children are illuminated.

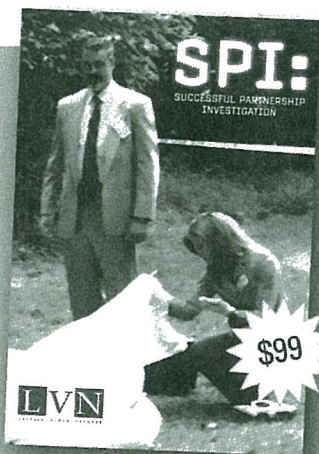
In end-of-semester course evaluations, students articulate their own ideas about how they benefited from the collaboration. They typically

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express relief that they were able to keep the attention of preschool children for twenty to thirty minutes, and their amazement at the children's fascination with the musical instruments. They also express astonishment at learning about the vast number of children's books with a musical theme or relationship that are available at all grade levels.

Many students indicate that until they made their weekly treks to the library to select the assigned books, they had not ever considered the public library as a resource for teaching music. Overall, the students begin to view themselves not just as future teachers of music, but in the broader sense as teachers of children, who can do their part to contribute to the greater good of school and community. The students also appreciate the unanticipated opportunity to perform, which is important to them as future teaching musicians. They recognize public libraries as places for them to perform and to initiate musical programs designed for children.

This collaboration has also benefited the library. Through the participation of the budding musicians, the children of Baltimore have experienced a picture book in a new way; instead of simply hearing it, they have been able to experience it with many senses. The children embrace the post-performance personal interactions with the musicians when they ask questions, touch the instruments, and, in some cases, try playing the instruments. Such positive experiences can kindle a child's lifelong interest in music and musical instruments. And, there is no cost for the performances.

Librarians enjoy seeing *Zin! Zin! Zin! a Violin* presented in this new and unusual way. This type of program reminds librarians that they

can do much more with books in place of simply reading them aloud. Stories can be drawn, sung, acted out, presented as a flannel-board program, performed by puppets, turned into a creative dramatics activity, set to music, tasted, and turned into a game. By seeing this presentation of *Zin! Zin! Zin! a Violin*, librarians are reminded to try to present books in creative ways that take multiple intelligences into account. By observing the rapt attention of the audience, they are reminded that the child who may find it difficult to sit still for a traditional storytime might be mesmerized by other types of book-related activities.

The *Zin! Zin! Zin! a Violin* program partnership was easy to form. It did not require an outlay of money and was beneficial to all concerned. The partnership succeeded because both the Peabody and EPFL were willing to step out of the box and take a chance with each other. They were willing to try a new idea, not knowing in advance what the end result might be.

There are a few simple steps to take in order to create a similar partnership at your library. First, identify potential partners. If college students come into the children's department looking for books, find out who their professor is and make contact. Ask what you can do for them and tell them about the types of things that you do. Together, you may be able to find unexpected ways in which you can support each other's educational goals. Don't be shy about taking the initiative to contact new people and be willing to extend a lunch invitation to brainstorm possible projects. All it takes is being open for opportunities to partner. Do what you can, when you can, with the time you have. The results can be spectacular. ■