



All in the Family

**“The things that children say and do may be
God’s way of calling you.”¹**

Vivaldi a la Samba

by Helen Kemp

Several years ago I was teaching at the University of Dayton where a group of children was enrolled in a relaxed summertime music enrichment program for one week. Little did I guess that I would be the one who would be enriched! The extreme diversity of musical skills of the group was at first a dilemma. Where to begin? What about educational goals?

Let me tell you about two of the children:

Character 1. The Virtuoso, a gifted 9-year-old violinist, disciplined, proper and solemn.

Character 2. The Casio Player, whose baseball cap was a permanent part of his head. He had received a small Casio keyboard for his recent 8th birthday. He couldn’t play melodies very well, but he loved the buttons that created the beats, the percussion rhythms of the samba and the rumba.

After two days of musical experiments, I told the children they could share in a program for their parents and friends on the last day of music camp. They could think up something to do alone or with someone in the class.

Now that was the beginning of a beautiful friendship! After every class, I began to hear strains of the Vivaldi Violin Sonata with a most unusual accompaniment. It sounded like UM pah pah, UM PAH pah—a rather strange combination. When I went into the hallway to investigate, I saw Virtuoso and Casio Player deeply involved in a music lesson I could never have taught.

What was Casio Player learning? Rhythm, volume, dynamic changes, listening skills, focus, concentration—and he was hearing a wonderful Vivaldi piece over and over and over. What about Virtuoso? He was the teacher. “Slower here, . . . now turn the volume down. Now make the beat go with this part!” He was sharing his gift and his discipline, and they were making music!

It is true, we learn constantly by *observing the positive possibilities of persons*. Our teachers are sometimes small ones.

¹Brian Wren, from “When Children Pray.” Written for the Children’s Choir, July 1993, Montreat Conference Center, Montreat, NC. © Hope Publishing Co., Carol Stream, IL 60188. Reprinted by permission.

*Making
music, in
fact, is the
very best way
of learning
about music.*

—Richard Baker