

Look, Play, Sing, Do: Music and Fun for Everyone

GARY H. PATERSON

Elephant Jam, Sharon, Lois and Bram. Piano Accompaniments by Frank Metis. McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1980. 128 pp. \$11.95 paper. ISBN 0-07-092398-1.

Watch out! The *Jungle Books* "New Series" is upon us! First, it was Dennis Lee's *Alligator Pie*. Now, from Pachyderm Music, we have *Elephant Jam*, a collection of songs, games and activities from the popular group Sharon (Hampson), Lois (Lilienstein), and Bram (Morrison). This trio has produced three records to date: *One Elephant*, *Deux Éléphants*, *Smorgasbord*, and *Singing 'n Swinging*, and many of the songs on these records along with proven recipes for fun and participation are reproduced in *Elephant Jam*.

Just browsing through this book is sheer delight. Full-page colour photographs of various combinations of Sharon, Lois, and Bram and their elephant mascot in action with children help to create the illusion of a live performance. Large, brightly coloured reproductions of children's art are matched by the whimsical and more delicate pastel watercolours which ornament the margins of some of the musical pages, together with smaller black-and-white photographs and line drawings which serve as explanatory diagrams for the action songs. All of the illustrations loudly proclaim the celebration of unlimited fun and the joy of living.

There are six sections in *Elephant Jam*, beginning with nonsense song, tongue twisters accompanied with directions for delightfully crazy actions referred to as "silly sits and wacky walks." The second section suggests ideas for activities in more open areas: skipping, hand clapping, rhymes and jingles, team and circle games. "One Finger, One Thumb-Stand Up, Sit Down" provides a whole variety of songs with accompanying finger actions to illustrate the lyrics. More games in section four: some of these, such as "Quick Numbers: a Game" and "Murder: a Game" are not musical. "I've Travelled This Wide World All Over" presents a world tour in song and game from "Tingalayo," a West Indies song, to "Hail to Britannia" to "Chirri Bim" (Eastern Europe). The final section, "Everyone Come and Sing," is more emphatically a mini-songbook, including several rounds, spirituals, and original songs.

Judging from the children in the pictures, *Elephant Jam* seems geared to the 5-8 year old range, but of course the songs without the elaborate actions could appeal to a younger audience and, as mentioned in the introduction, "This book is for children, and also for those who love and care for them . . . a little bit of everything for everyone."

At first glance, then, *Elephant Jam* seems to have everything that will bring back those pre-television years when the family gathered around the piano and sang, danced, and participated in an experience of togetherness. Perhaps this accounts for the preponderance of songs which came out of the campfire repertoire of one or two generations ago. On the other hand, if you are looking for fresh and exciting material in all sections, you will be in for disappointment. Pare away the directions for actions and the illustrations in section one, for instance, and there is little that is more recent than "Michael Finnegan," "A Peanut Sat on a Railroad Track," or "Long Legged Sailor." Similarly, among the songs in section six, the suggestions for rounds include nothing more imaginative than "Three Blind Mice," "Row Row Row Your Boat," and "Frère Jacques."

Another disappointment is the overbalance of American songs. "Turkey in the Straw" or "Jenny Jenkins" could certainly have been replaced by something more individually Canadian. Of course, the group's famous homage to bilingualism, "One Elephant, Deux Éléphants," is included, but very little else that is Canadian besides "Lots of Fish in Bonavist' Harbour" and "Monté sur un éléphant." The section on songs around the world would seem to be a delicate attempt to de-emphasize Canadian material.

The musical settings by Frank Metis are accessible to pianists with even limited abilities. They are effective, although some of the chord repetitions on unaccented beats tend to cloud the background. As in Edith Fowke's *Sally Go Round the Sun*, the more familiar or simpler songs contain the melody line only; chords for guitars or autoharp accompany both melody line and the fully arranged songs.

Elephant Jam can provide parents and teachers with a valuable refresher to many songs that may have been forgotten with childhood. The ideas for actions and games will bring new life to these songs and, used with or without the records, this attractive book will give the entire family hours of pleasure through participation and expression.

Gary H. Paterson teaches Victorian, Modern, and Children's Literature at King's College, University of Western Ontario. He holds a A.R.C.T. in piano and is an enthusiastic amateur performer and recitalist.