

MARKETING

Music Lessons Inc.

Rival Businesses Vie to Teach Do Re Mi to Toddlers

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AT SOME of Kindermusik's music classes for toddlers, the session begins with a big group rendition of "Clap, clap, clap hello." At Music Together, it's "Hello, everybody, so glad to see you." At Music for Young Children, they sing "When the sun peeks from behind the clouds, the Sunbeams sing and play."

The rival "hello" songs are just one feature of a little marketing battle heating up across the nation. Forget about the nice music teacher in the basement down the street: Today's parents are sending their toddlers to national programs, some with slick handouts and even Web sites.

There has probably never been a better time to sell parents on music lessons. In recent years, a flood of research has shown that music can raise IQs and boost standardized-test scores. Meanwhile, guilty working parents are leaping at any opportunity for developmentally wholesome ways to spend money on their preschoolers.

There are even a few classes in which moms and dads sing to their fetuses through megaphones and play a glockenspiel on the mother's tummy. Lovenotes, as the course is called, was founded by Sister Lorna Zemke, a professor of music at Silver Lake College in Manitowoc, Wis., who has been teaching it since 1986. "We hope to build healthy families, and we also hope to stimulate the child's intelligence," she says.

Lori Martinez of Las Cruces, N.M., called her local Kindermusik teacher about classes before her daughter, Marielle, was born. She says she felt that exposure to music would aid little Marielle's development, "stimulating creativity, possibly even stimulating intelligence." At the age of 19 months, Marielle is now a music-lesson veteran.

With the various programs vying for business, the competitive atmosphere can be a little disharmonious. Teachers defect from one program to another. Officials of one business leave to found their own programs, precipitating sniping from both sides.

Right now the General Motors of toddler

music classes is Kindermusik International, founded in 1974 and based in Greensboro, N.C. Its student body starts with newborns and goes all the way up to age seven. Parents who enroll their kids in Kindermusik classes get professionally produced song books, picture books, story books, art banners, compact disks and carrying cases along with lessons.

Some 150,000 children are taking Kindermusik classes in 50 states. The company, with 70 employees, had about \$10 million in revenue last year and almost broke even,

very popular with parents, because they learn so much about child development in the program," explains Lynne Ransom, its program director.

While Kindermusik offers curricula for different ages, Music Together groups kids of all ages together. Now it's planning a separate class for babies eight months old and younger. Like the other programs, Music Together trains and licenses teachers. But unlike Kindermusik, Music Together teachers are licensed to teach in specified territories. They pay a \$50 application fee and

Tunes for Tots

	FOUNDED	STATES	STUDENTS	MOST POPULAR CLASS	HELLO SONG
Kindermusik	1974	50	150,000	Kindermusik Beginnings (18 months to 3)*	Clap, clap, clap hello. Clap hello together.
Music for Young Children	1980	25 (based in Canada)	19,800	Sunbeams (5 and 6 year olds)	When the sun peeks from behind the clouds, the Sunbeams sing and play.
Harmony Road	1981	43	16,000 to 18,000	Toddler Tunes (18 months to 3)	Good Morning, Good Morning it's such a good day.
Music Together	1987	31	15,000	Offers only one class	Hello everybody, so glad to see you. Hello to (name), so glad to see you.
Musikgarten	1993	50	NA	Family Music for Toddlers (18 months to 3)	Sing Hello to (name) (name) (name).

*Changing to Kindermusik Our Time later this year

Note: Numbers of students are estimates. Some programs have many hello songs

Source: The programs.

according to its chief executive officer, Michael Dougherty. He is now on the prowl for \$5 million in venture-capital financing.

Mr. Dougherty insists that there is a "major philosophical difference" between his and other programs. "Most music programs are designed to instruct children in how to make music," he explains. "In our case, music is used as a vehicle to promote the social, emotional, cognitive and physical learning as well."

Music Together, based in Princeton, N.J., with teachers in 31 states, is playing some of the same marketing tunes. "It's

are required to pay for training and instruments. Then they pay the firm \$27.50 a student, which covers the cost of song books and tapes.

Lorna Heyge, who was a founder of Kindermusik, left to start another concern, Musikgarten. She fears the field is becoming too commercial and worries about the future. "It's just too bad if it just gets stuck in a trademark war," she says.

Commercial or not, nobody in the business is making a killing. "We're working in art and education. It's not a highly profitable area. It's not selling cars or comput-

(over please)

ers," says Kenneth Guilmartin, who founded Music Together with royalties from "Happy Birthday to You," which was published by a company he once worked for.

Luring teachers is the key to a program's success in the preschooler-music game, because teachers do most of the selling to parents. But developing teacher loyalty is complicated. Ms. Heyge left Kindermusik after a dispute over the direction of the company, which she felt was getting too commercial. She had a devoted following, and when she started Musikgarten in Greensboro, in 1993, teachers followed.

The result is that some teachers have taught both Kindermusik and Musikgarten classes. "Sure, I'd prefer if everybody taught every product of Kindermusik," says Mr. Dougherty of Kindermusik. "But we're in a very competitive marketplace. Personal relationships with some of our teachers and Lorna may override their perception of quality."

Music Together's Mr. Guilmartin says that "a lot of Kindermusik people are coming over to us lately." Meanwhile, some Music Together teachers are also using Music for Young Children, one of several programs that are primarily focused on the keyboard. Based in Kanata, Ontario, it teaches children with an eye toward instru-

mental lessons later. The program's 700 teachers work in Canada and the U.S.

"Even our children who are as young as three are composing," says founder Frances Balodis. "None of the other programs have the same extensive composing aspect that we do."

Music for Young Children sponsors an annual composition festival and last year had 11,000 entries. Kids in the Sunshine and Sunbeam divisions, aged three to six, are required to submit four measures of music. ("I like pizza, pepperoni and two cheeses," go the lyrics of one award-winning entry.)

The programs change from time to time, occasionally catching teachers off guard. Leslie Kowalski, who runs the Musical Beginnings Studio in Mesilla, N.M., was upset recently when Kindermusik announced it would change its curriculum for toddlers just after she had bought additional teacher's material.

"Why should they change something that was not broken?" she asks. She logged on to Kindermusik's chat room. "I was so angry my fingers hurt," she says. "I cried tears, I was so mad."

Mr. Dougherty says the material had to be updated. "Our teachers wouldn't put their child in a car seat that was made 10 years ago," he says.