BRITISH CANADIAN CHILDEN'S TRADITIONAL

SINGING GAMES

by

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Preface

It is with a sense of almost great disbelief that I have finished this project in its present form. It began more than 30 years ago, when I first went to Hungary to learn about the Kodály method of music education. I started then to look for Canadian children's traditional songs to be able to provide a framework for a music education program here that would be based on the musical characteristics of our children's songs. During these years, as I pursued my teaching career, I was able to create a collection from a variety of sources from several different places, then to develop an analysis program that would suit my purpose of determining the common melodic patterns in the collection.

I say that the project is complete in its present form for two reasons: first, there are more variants that will be possible to add, once the transcriptions of the variants of the Memorial University Folklore and Language Archive collection have been updated, and a more current collection of children's songs and singing games has been undertaken; second, it then will be necessary to develop a music education curriculum whose literacy program is based on the musical characteristics of the variants in the collection. Then one can measure whether this type of program is more effective in building music literacy skills, compared with a program that contains musical materials from a mixture of cultural traditions.

Acknowledgments

I wish first to thank the following for their extraordinary involvement in my learning about the Kodály Method in Hungary: Dr. Richard Johnston, Professor, University of Toronto and Director, Royal Conservatory of Music Summer school, where Zoltán Kodály observed my teaching in 1966 and subsequently supported my study in Hungary; Elizabeth Szönyi, Anna Hamvas, Kati Forrai, Márta Nemesszeghy, Klara Kokas and Ferenc Tóth who helped me to understand the methodology; László Vikár, who taught me folk song analysis and Endre Fülei-Szántó who taught me to speak Hungarian.

For my research of children's singing games, of great assistance since 1971 was Dana Tenny, Librarian, "Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books," Boys and Girls House, Toronto Public Library. Variants from the books found in that collection are designated by an asterisk in the list of "Abbreviations and Sources of Singing Games." The variants of that collection are included with permission. Between 1970 and 1973, I was privileged to have had access to Helen Creighton's personal files of children's songs and singing games. In 1982, Renée Landry, Archivist, Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies, made available additional variants from Helen Creighton's collection that had been transcribed by Kenneth Peacock. From 1987, Clara Murphy, Philip Hiscock, and more recently Patricia Fulton, Archivists, Memorial University Folklore and Language Archive, provided access to their taped collection of variants collected to 1972. Variants that I transcribed there are included in this publication with permission. Subsequently, Edith Fowke sent copies of the tapes she had recorded of children's songs and singing games in Toronto schoolyards in the late 1960s. Many of these variants are also included in addition to those printed in her book, "Sally Go Round the Sun." I am extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to study materials

from such rich resources.

At The University of Western Ontario, 1975-87, I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of graduate students in the encoding of the melodies for computer analysis, and the assistance of Susan Turner, Donna Benjamin and June Countryman for the musical transcription of the melodies for the collection. This work of encoding and manuscript preparation was continued at Lakehead University since 1987 by Martha Halenda (with support of an OWSP grant), and Astrid Klock, supported by a Regional Research Grant. Melodies and the first verse of all the variants were prepared in Finale by Dylan Benson, supported by a similar grant. Darlene Chepil-Reid has edited all the Finale files and created the Index of Appendix C, with the support of a departmental Graduate Research Grant. David Hawkins has prepared the final draft of the melodies and the Index of Appendix C. Christophe Malek, Computer Science student assistant, adapted the SNOBOL files to a PC from the VMS system. Sheila Wilson, "typist extraordinaire," has completed the manuscript, creating the figures and tables with the utmost patience and expertise. Finally, my utmost thanks to my family, friends, and colleagues, and in particular, to my husband Peter, for your support and encouragement during all the stages of this project.

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FO_____

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*Halliwell, J.O. (1870). *Nursery rhymes and nursery tales of England*. London: Frederick Warne & Co.

*See volumes in the Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, Boys and Girls House, Toronto Public Library, Toronto, Canada.

JAFL *Journal of American Folklore*

*Kerr, J.S. (1912). *Kerr's guild of play: Containing 49 singing games*. Glasgow: James S. Kerr.

*Kidson, F. (1916). *100 singing games*. London: Bayley & Ferguson.

*Linley, G. (1860). *Nursery rhymes of England*. London: Brewer & Co.

*MacBain, J.M. (1932). *The standard book of traditional songs and tunes for little folks*. London: Evans Brothers Ltd.

MUN

Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's Newfoundland

MUNFLA

Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive, St. John's Newfoundland. [MUNFLA: singer(s), place, date, tape number (e.g., 68–43), accession number (e.g., C530), and collectors names. Author's own transcriptions]

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Oral Tradition

Osborn-Seyffert, A., Collector.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

This collection is the result of a search for Canadian children's traditional songs. I returned in 1970 from Hungary after a three-year study of the Kodály Method of music education. There, the growth in musical development and knowledge is based on the musical characteristics of traditional Hungarian children's songs. A collection and analysis of these had been published by Kerényi (1951) as Volume I of *A Magyar Népzene Tára.* Melodies were grouped manually according to similarity of melodic fragment that formed the nucleus of each melody. From their collection songs were selected for teaching and, through trial and error, musical motives or phrase patterns were selected to begin to develop the instructional approach for schools. To plan for a music education program in Canada, identifying and analysing the traditional songs of English-Canadian children to discover what are their common melodic patterns became a paramount objective. It certainly had become evident that the patterns of our songs were different from those of Hungarian children's songs.

I first became engaged in this search while in Hungary when I obtained from a library Alice Bertha Gomme's two volumes of *The Traditional Singing Games of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1964), first published in 1894 and 1898, respectively. I recognized many of the games that I had learned in childhood, and was amazed to find so many that I did not know. Gomme printed many variants of individual singing games. Then I found Iona and Peter Opie's *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (1951) which is an annotated edition, presenting one typical example of each rhyme followed by extensive references to books containing the rhymes as they first appeared in print. The Opies did not print melodies with the rhymes but there were references to melodies contained in the earliest printed editions. After I returned to Canada, I found many of these early sources in the "Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books," (1476–1910) in the Boys and Girls House of the Toronto Public Library. Between 1971 and 1976, I examined their entire collection to find books containing variants of singing games and nursery rhymes with melodies.

At that time, while I was teaching in Halifax, I met Dr. Helen Creighton and researched her personal collection for variants of singing games and children's songs. I also visited the then "National Museum of Man" to obtain copies of variants from Creighton's collection that had been transcribed by Kenneth Peacock. Edith Fowke's book *Sally Go Round the Sun* (1969) provided variants that she had collected in Toronto schoolyards in the 1960s. Since then, I have listened to all the tapes of this material and transcribed additional variants that are included in the present collection.

Most of the collections that I examined presented their contents arranged alphabetically by title of the song or game, so I began to collate variants of nursery rhymes and singing games in a similar manner, in two separate collections. I soon began to realize that it was impossible to determine whether melodies for the nursery rhymes had been composed by the editor or by adults, generally, for children, so I set the nursery rhymes aside. The singing games in print had been collected from British oral tradition, so I restricted my inclusion of variants of these from books published in Britain before WWII, found in Canadian libraries.

For purposes of study and analysis, I transcribed the singing games variants in the same "key," with common final note **G** above middle **C** or **G4**. For each title I sorted variants according to similarities in melody and text, included the game descriptions as they appeared in the original sources, as well as historical or bibliographic references. Generally, the variants from British books were included first, then those from Canadian oral tradition, the ordering that I have retained for the present volume. It became evident that there were many similarities between melodies, so I started to create tabulated transcriptions of common melodies to observe only the differences between them. As this collation and analysis was ongoing, I was preparing the melody, text, and game description of each variant as it is printed below.

In the midst of this, for my doctoral research at Ohio State University, I developed a computer-aided methodology to extract the melodic phrase patterns and to compare them. I adopted a system called MUSICODE-A, developed by Dr. Ann K. Blombach (1977), to encode the melodic information, and used SNOBOL4 for the analysis program. I examined several computer-aided methodologies for analysing melodies, but none was found suitable for my purpose (See Osborn, 1986). Because of the strongly rhythmic

nature of the songs in the collection, to compare phrase patterns of specific lengths to find the most common patterns in each phrasal position seemed to be the most useful approach. To classify the songs according to tune families or melody types has been one of the traditional methods of organizing and comparing folk song melodies. I had examined this and other approaches to analysis and classification while preparing my dissertation (Osborn, 1986), and decided that none would provide useful information for my purposes. Later, in 1989, I became aware of the work of the German Folksong Archive of Freiburg, most specifically in the volumes of the *Melodietypen des deutschen Volkgesangs* (1976) edited by Supan and Stief. For reasons mentioned above, their approach to analysis would not have been appropriate for my purposes.

For my dissertation, the computer-aided methodology for my analysis program was developed on the basis of Bartók's "grammatical principle" for grouping variants (Bartók, 1951, 1967). I selected a sample of 53 variants that were in a variety of sections, numbers of phrases, phrase lengths, time signatures, and key signatures. From the sample, phrases of 36 4-phrase variants of two measures each were isolated, compared and the resulting patterns were printed out, with a list of the phrasal position and reference to the variant source(s) of each pattern. The greatest challenge had been to compare melodies in different time signatures. The solution had been found in the earlier tabulated transcription that revealed the beat in each measure on that contained the most consistent pitch information between variants in different time signatures. A general description of the processes undertaken in the development of the analysis program is described in the Appendix B as well as in Osborn (1986, 1988a) and Osborn-Seyffert (1988b, 1989, 1992, 2001).

I then learned about the extensive holdings of the Memorial University Folklore and Language Archive in St. John's, Newfoundland. In 1988, I was able to transcribe 66 variants of 27 singing games from 31 tapes that had been recorded between 1964 and 1972 and added these to my collection. Finally, the Opies' book *The Singing Game* (1988) was a great aid in understanding more about the historical background of the games. Their research certainly confirmed my belief in the authenticity of the singing game tradition. The Opies include many accounts of the games as they were sung and played throughout history that attest to the popularity and the great enthusiasm with which the games were played and continue to be so to the present

day. Here, again, the Opies print only one variant melody of each game that had been collected in Britain to the mid-1970s. None of these variants is included in this collection, but reference is made to many of them.

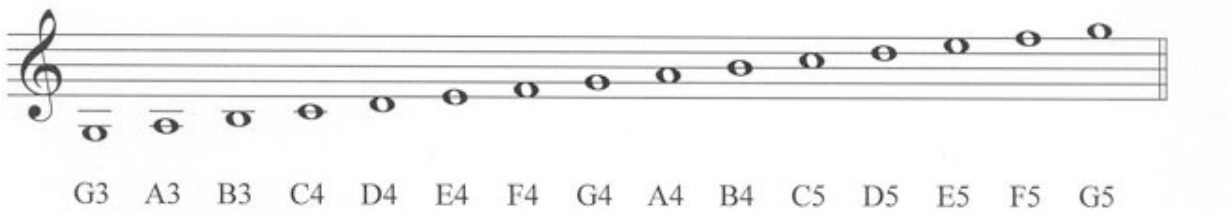
The Collection

The present collection, then, is organized for the purpose of musical study and analysis. There are 321 variants of 57 different singing games with approximately 50%, or 160 variants from Canadian oral tradition. Of the 57 different titles, eight of these (with 17 variants) are from Canadian oral tradition only, and nine (with 28 variants) are from British published sources only, that are in the holdings of Canadian libraries. Therefore, approximately 85% of the variants are from both traditions. A complete list of The Singing Games, with those from only Canadian or British sources noted, is in the Table of Contents (pp. ii-iii).

As mentioned above, variants from British sources generally are included first, followed by the Canadian ones. Variants that are similar are numbered (for example, as 1.A, 1.B, and so on, for each variant of a particular melody of a singing game). There is an Introduction to each singing game in which common musical characteristics and relationships to other singing games' variants are described. The Introduction includes comments from the collectors, in particular, from Gomme's *The Traditional Singing Games of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1899, 1898) and from the Opies' *The Singing Game* (1985). There, and particularly in the Opies' book, will be found extensive commentaries on the age and historical relationships of the singing games. At the beginning, when I began to sort the variants, I observed some common characteristics of the melodies, texts and games of different singing games, not only of variants within a particular singing game. As the collection grew, the connections between singing games in other aspects as well became much clearer. Many of these relationships have been clarified further by the Opies' research and as well, now, by the pattern analysis program. At the same time, the analysis program also has revealed other relationships between the melodies of different games that would challenge some of the Opies' conclusions with respect to historical antecedents. For this present collection, all of these observations are mentioned with the hope that additional research may clarify these relationships. The focus here is primarily on the common musical characteristics of

the variants that have been included. For those seeking a deeper knowledge of the singing game tradition, the Opies (1985) collection provides an invaluable resource.

The main body of the collection contains the melody, verses, and game description of each variant. For variants from printed sources, the texts and game description for each variant are presented in the format of the original publication, maintaining its punctuation, grammar, and spelling. For the variants from the Memorial University Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA), the key in which the informant sang is indicated in brackets at the beginning of the melody. All melodies were transcribed by the author and printed to end on **G4** final for ease of comparison, as indicated below. As well, for some variants, changes were made in the placement of bar lines from the original transcription of a melody. This provided consistency enabling



patterns of variants with the same structure to be compared. These changes are noted throughout the collection.

The Appendices

Appendix A

Appendix A presents an in-depth analysis of the characteristics of some of the distinct groups of variants of the collection. The majority of the 321 variants are in single sections of 4-phrases in two measures each. There are a small number of variants in four measure phrases, and one in three measure phrases. These contain a rather unique set of tunes, so they are described first. The next part presents a description and summary of the characteristics of the 2- to 6-phrase variants. There is a group of singing games that

traditionally contains a marriage formula verse. Some of these variants also are derived from or beholden to the "Cushion Dance," that dates from the later middle ages. Each of the characteristics of these groups of variants is described and summarized in Figures listed on page i. Since there are no set boundaries between singing game variants for all the groups and their characteristics that are mentioned above, the final descriptive summary is of variants that contain more than one section. Each section could contain either two or four measure phrases, be a 2-phrase variant, or be the marriage formula verse variant, and so on. The summary contains information about all of the above groups where present, as well as the proportion of the total number of variants of that particular singing game that are multi-sectioned variants. Throughout the collection, these interconnections and characteristics are described for the variants of each singing game. These summaries in Appendix A enable the characteristics of each distinct group to be examined together in greater detail.

Appendix B

Appendix B contains a summary of the results of the pattern analysis. First, there is an overview of the analysis program and a description of the processes involved in obtaining the output. Then there is a description of how the output was interpreted to obtain the results whose information is organized in a series of Tables: Table 1 summarizes the total number of patterns in the collection and their distribution by phrasal positions; Table 10 presents the highest ranked number of **FIRST STRONG BEAT PITCH PATTERNS** of each phrasal position**.** The list of Tables is on page i.

Appendix C

Appendix C provides the full output of the analysis program in the form of an INDEX of Individual **FIRST STRONG BEAT PITCH PATTERNS**. All **STRONG BEAT PITCH PATTERNS** are presented in musical notation, beginning with patterns whose **FIRST STRONG BEAT PITCH** is **G5**, proceeding to end with patterns beginning on **A3**. The titles of the singing games and phrasal position(s) in which the patterns occur are listed for each pattern. The Index provides the possibility to find any pattern and its phrasal position(s) in any variant(s) in the collection.