

# THE ENCOUNTER

The Journal of the Kodály Educators of Texas,  
an Affiliate Chapter of the Organization of American Kodály Educators



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## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Jason Mincy  
KET President



It's that wonderful time of year when we, as music educators, come together to learn, grow, de-stress, collaborate, network, energize, socialize, and encourage each other through our shared experiences and passion for music education!

Thank you for everything you do as a music educator for the students in the state of Texas!

I am beyond blessed and thankful for my journey as a Kodály-inspired teacher... It was Dr. Susan Harvey at the MSU KodályTeacher Institute who encouraged me to take my levels; I can not thank her enough for that encouragement. She is also the one who introduced me to KET and helped guide me onto the board! My first KET President was Katherine Johns- what an amazing soul and person she is... this journey from webmaster to secretary to president-elect to president has been amazing! I can't believe my two years are up and I will soon hand over the reins to Loren Tarnow.

My journey as a Kodály teacher continues thanks to Julie Boettiger and all of the staff members at the Fort Bend Kodály Institute who have allowed me to share my experiences and knowledge with new and future Kodály-inspired teachers! As a member of KET, I cannot tell you enough how important it has been to meet so many like-minded individuals who have not only become friends but also mentors! I encourage every KET member to attend our meeting and social event at TMEA- take the time to meet a Kodály teacher, it will change your life!

See you in San Antonio!

## Kodály-Inspired Sessions at TMEA!

### KODÁLY-INSPIRED SESSIONS & EVENTS

FEBRUARY  
13-15

#### THURSDAY 13

- \*LEIGH ANN GARNER 10:00-11:00
- \*LEIGH ANN GARNER 1:00-2:00
- **KET Social: Afternoon 'ti' with Ket**
  - » 2:00-4:00 / GRAND HYATT, BONHAM B FL 3
- REBECCA LAKES 2:30-3:30
- **ELEMENTARY DIVISION BUSINESS MEETING**
  - » 5:15-6:15 / GRAND HYATT 4TH FL TEXAS ABC

#### FRIDAY 14

- **KET GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**
  - » 10:00-11:00 / CC 220
  - ▶ Performance by Cornerstone Elementary School (Fort Bend ISD), Joshua Arnoldy
- \*LEIGH ANN GARNER 11:30-12:30
- VICKI SUAREZ 11:30-12:30
- RACHEL HAMANN 1:00-2:00
- **VISIT THE KET BOOTH/EXHIBIT HALL 2:00-4:00**
- \*LEIGH ANN GARNER 4:00-5:00

#### SATURDAY 15

- \*LEIGH ANN GARNER 8:00-9:00
- GEORGIA NEWLIN 9:30-10:30
- \*LEIGH ANN GARNER 11:00-12:00
- JULISSA CHAPA 12:30-1:30

AFTERNOON  
'ti' with KET



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13  
2:30-4:00PM  
GRAND HYATT, BONHAM B FL 3  
tea coffee pastries

KET  
General Meeting

Friday, February 14

Door  
Prizes!

10:00-11:00

CC 220

Officer  
Elections

Performance by  
Cornerstone Elementary School (Fort Bend ISD)  
Joshua Arnoldy, Director

# THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MUSICAL MOTHER TONGUE

by **Julissa Chapa**  
**KET Member Advocate**



## **Interested in Serving on the KET Board?**

The following positions are  
open for election:

President-Elect, Treasurer,  
Higher Education Liaison,  
Co-Region Representatives,  
and Social Media  
Coordinator

Kodály's educational philosophy highlights the integral connection between language, music, and cultural identity, emphasizing their role in fostering unity within a community. The belief that instruction should begin with a child's musical mother tongue, the folk song repertory of their cultural heritage, was central to his approach to music education. By rooting education in this musical foundation, Kodály sought to preserve Hungarian cultural traditions and deepen a sense of identity. He famously asserted, "Language is the first subconscious of Hungarian-ness" (Kodály, 1974, p. 130), underscoring the profound link between language and cultural belonging.

His emphasis on language in culture was shaped in part by Hungary's long history of political suppression (Young, 1964). Over the course of its history, Hungary's central location in Eastern Europe made it a frequent target for invasions (Szabad, 1992; Young, 1964). The Magyar people, now known as Hungarians, fell under the rule of the Austrian Empire in the sixteenth century. The monarchy sought to suppress the Hungarian language and culture, promoting the country's assimilation into Western European norms under the pretext of Austrian national unity. By Kodály's birth in 1882, the Hungarian language and culture had been deeply marginalized, a reality that persisted throughout his life. Successive regimes, including Nazi Germany and later Communist Russia, imposed varying levels of oppression on Hungarian cultural identity (Eöszé, 1962; Young, 1964).

Although he was not overtly political, Kodály's deep interest in history and literature led to his determination that language was the keystone of a people's spirit, even more fundamental than music itself (Rich, 1988). Throughout his career, Kodály's convictions reflected a deep commitment to ensuring Hungarian voices were heard, recognized, and shared with the world (Eöszé, 1962; Young, 1964). The voice of the Magyar, however, had been heavily attenuated by outside influences. The authentic Hungarian sound could only be rediscovered through folk songs, as these uniquely captured the natural rhythmic and melodic inflections of the Hungarian language (Kodály, 1974; Young, 1964). In 1905, Kodály and Béla Bartók began collecting in Galanta, Kodály's hometown, asking his classmates to sing songs from their childhood. This process expanded beyond the music—it was a means of capturing the essence of Hungarian identity. This identity was vibrant and energetic, characterized by balanced form, straightforward rhythms, and lack of reliance on predetermined harmonic progressions (Kodály, 1974; Young, 1964).

Kodály's dedication to the Hungarian language and culture shaped both his ethnomusicological work and his vision for music education. Kodály's core pedagogy was simple: Music is for everyone and should be taught using the children's musical mother tongue. While European music education focused on producing instrumental virtuosos, Hungary prioritized developing complete musicianship through singing. Although Kodály had not envisioned his ideals applied outside of Hungary, his philosophy of music education captured global attention. Hungary, a small, homogeneous nation nestled in Central Europe, represented a distinct cultural and musical identity. In contrast, North America offered a vast and diverse landscape of cultures and musical traditions. He

## Chapa, cont.

predicted Americans might struggle defining their folk music, stating, "Now, I know for Americans it is a difficult question, what is American folk song... since the Americans are descendants of all nations on the Earth, its folk music is probably the richest in the world" (Strong, p. 59).

In 2024, the United States Census reported that 22.5% of the United States population speaks a language other than English at home. In Texas, one of the most diverse states in the United States, 35.4% of households reported speaking another language at home. As Kodály anticipated, this richness of linguistic diversity presents an opportunity for Kodály-inspired educators to adapt and innovate within America's pluralistic society. László Vikár, Kodály's pupil, advised teachers to undertake collecting the rich repertoire of American folk music by focusing on a single community and gathering as much living material as possible from that community (Brunner, 2011). Vikár explained, "It's a very large and very, very heavy work for many people. But this would be the only way, I think, to follow the ideas of Kodály in North America" (Brunner, 2011, p. 27). Vikar predicted it would take many years and involve many people. With so many mother tongues in the United States, this feat indeed requires a collective effort.

The foundation for this work has already been established. TMEA provides an excellent opportunity to explore the wealth of song collections already available to us, including resources featuring songs from other countries in various languages. These collections serve as valuable tools for connecting diverse cultural traditions. As culture and language evolve through immigration and generational shifts, however, children in the United States often experience a blend of identities distinct from those in their heritage countries. We have the exciting privilege to ensure America's dynamic children's voices are heard, recognized, and shared. Like Kodály, we can gather childhood songs from our communities and incorporate them as living material in our classrooms, honoring the many musical tongues shaping our American musical heritage.

As you walk the exhibition hall this February, look out for some of these culturally and linguistically diverse song collections (use either the link or the QR code). [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/16Tjit76MIXtp2wQ1R5btHSNAUW8k\\_y4JIKOarFw6vec/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/16Tjit76MIXtp2wQ1R5btHSNAUW8k_y4JIKOarFw6vec/edit?usp=sharing)



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# FOLK SONG HISTORY

with Kathy Kuddes

- Request a Folk Song to Learn About
- Kathy will Research its History
- We will Post Her Findings in *The Encounter!*



## Share Your Work and Inspire Other Educators in *The Encounter*

Articles are accepted on a rolling basis. For consideration for our next edition, please email your submission to Dillon Downey at [dtdowney2@dentonisd.org](mailto:dtdowney2@dentonisd.org) by **March 3, 2025!**

## Want to Learn More About a Folk Song?

We are deeply grateful to Kathy Kuddes for offering her time to a new series about the history of folk songs! Please quickly submit requests for songs you would like to learn about using the form at <https://forms.gle/Kii64W2syp6USAsW7> (also linked in the QR code to the left).

## FOLK SONG HISTORY WITH KATHY KUDDES:

### CHICKAMA CRANEY CROW

by Kathy Kuddes  
KET Member



Thank you to those who have suggested songs to be researched for this column. Each song is a fun and unique journey of discovery. This game song has been particularly fun to investigate!

The earliest published reference I found was in the William Wells Newell collection *Games & Songs of American Children* first published in 1883. The discussion of this game and the known variants consumes a full three and a half pages under the heading "Hawk and Chickens."

The first description of the play, cited as coming from New England, is a "hen with her brood" who create a circle with one child, representing the "Old Buzzard," placed in the center. The Hen says to the Buzzard:

*Chickany, chicany, crany, crow.  
Down in the gutter  
To get the hog's supper -  
What o'clock is it old buzzard?*

During this period of the game the Buzzard pantomimes the building of a fire with sticks. The final question is repeated by each child in the circle. The Buzzard answers each repetition of the question with a random time until they elect to respond with "twelve o'clock." At this point the circle stops moving and the dialogue between Hen and Buzzard continues as follows:

"Old buzzard, old buzzard, what are you doing?"	"Picking up sticks."
"What do you want the sticks for?"	"To build a fire."
"What are you building a fire for?"	"To boil a chicken."
"Where are you going to get the chicken?"	"Out of your flock."

## Kuddes, cont.

A chase ensues until the "Buzzard" catches one of the children from the ring and brings them back to the "fire" and acts out preparing the chicken for cooking. Another dialogue takes place between the Buzzard and the captured chick regarding how they will be prepared for eating (e.g. "Will you be pickled or salted?") The answer determines which part of the room the chick is sent to, and the game begins again.

Newell notes that in Georgia a Witch takes the place of the Buzzard and the opening rhyme is stated thus:

*Chickamy, chickamy, crany, crow.  
I went to the well to wash my toe,  
And when I came back my chicken was gone;  
What o'clock, old witch?*

The rest of the game proceeds much like that described above until the witch announces the time to be "twelve o'clock." Then the following conversation between the Hen and the Witch goes something like this:

"What are you doing old witch?" "I am making a fire to cook a chicken."  
"Where are you going to get it?" "Out of your coop."  
"I've got the lock." "I've got the key."

During the chase portion of the game the Hen attempts to protect her chicks by interfering with the Witch's path to the other children. Once a child is caught, they are removed from the game and the whole play begins again.

Newell claims the Southern version of the game to be older than the New England version and known in some regions as "Fox and Chickens." He also claims that both the game and the dialogue are "marvelously identical, from Russia to Italy" and proceeds to outline variations from Germany, Venice, Finland, Scotland, New York and the "Pennyfaunisch Deitsch."

In 1885, WH Babcock included "Chickamy, creamery, crow" in an article of game songs and "myth-dramas" he collected in Washington, D.C. The text and play described is nearly identical to the New England variant above, but with the use of the Witch instead of the Buzzard. Babcock states, "it is found in many if not

all parts of this country and can be traced to distinct importations from England at least as far back as the last century." In addition, this author suggests that the text of the opening line may have come from a childhood mispronunciation of "a chicken, a chicken, a crane, or a crow." This text is found in *A Treasury of Georgia Folklore* (1972) by Ronald G Killion and Charles T Waller. Babcock also suggests that the whole drama connects to the many ancient children's stories of an old "crone" in the woods who captures stray chickens (or children) much like the story of Hansel and Gretel.

Another early source comes from *Traditional Games of England, Scotland & Ireland Vol. 1* published in 1894 by Alice Bertha Gomme. She cites Miss Chase from Crockham Hill in Kent with the following text:

*Chicamy, chicamy, chimey, O,  
Down to the pond to wash their feet;  
Bring them back to have some meat,  
Chicamy, chicamy, chimey, O.*

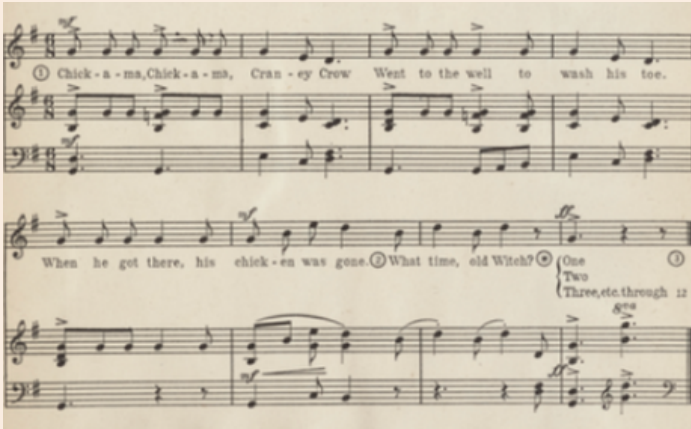
This variant does not include the dialogue or the chase and the game description is simply children "singing" as they go around in a circle. While Gomme does use the term "sing" no melody is provided in either of these early collections.

The rhyme turns up in a wide variety of sources without an associated tune, but often with a reference to it being sung. This probably suggests that it was simply entuned by small children as they played without definite pitch or melodic focus.

The earliest publication of a tune to accompany this game appears to be in *Play Songs of The Deep South* published in 1944 by Altona Trent-Johns.

This collection appears to be the source for all the later song collections that included both a tune and a game description. This also provides the most familiar version of the opening line as it was reproduced in a wide variety of educational song collections. One final observation is that versions of this game appears in collections devoted to both Anglo-American and African-American children's games, suggesting that such activities traveled freely across and between communities around the county.

## Kuddes, cont.



The KET member who suggested this song for research asked specifically about the meaning of the text. Given the information I have uncovered, it should be understood that the text is talking about the adult in the drama, who goes to the well to wash their feet, discovers that one or more of their chickens is gone and challenges the Witch regarding their whereabouts.

All of the earliest versions of this text say "*I* went to the well to wash *my* toe, and when *I* got back (or there) *my* chickens were gone." This leads me to believe that the intention was that the Mother Hen or Mother was meant to state that she went to the well to wash up and returned to find one or more of her chickens (or children) gone and confronts the Witch (or Buzzard) in response. Since the Trent-Johns source used he/his and was the primary source for so many of the more modern collections it has made its way into our classrooms with this confusing text suggesting that Chickama Craney Crow was a character in the drama and not a declamatory statement.

Feel free to use whatever set of pronouns feel comfortable and safe for your classroom. I would also suggest that if your community is uncomfortable with games and songs including Witches chasing children you might wish to adjust to using the Buzzard and chickens in order to continue to use this fun and useful game song in your curriculum.

If you would like to do some research on your own, the many sources I located are listed below. I'm working on a detailed article about "Tideo" for our

next edition, but if you have a song you would like to see researched in the column, please use the link below to submit it for consideration!

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