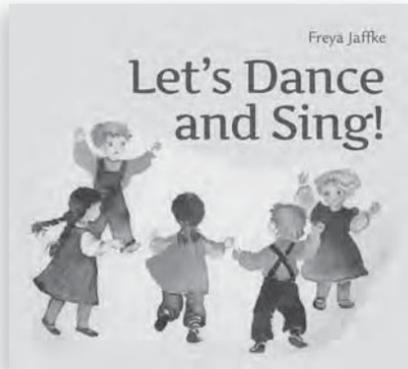


Let's Dance and Sing!

by Freya Jaffke, translated by Nina Kuettel
WECAN (2017)

Reviewed by Nancy Blanning



It is a joy and privilege to celebrate the publication of master early childhood teacher Freya Jaffke's *Let's Dance and Sing!* (*Tanzt und singt!*) in English by WECAN. Some of these songs and games came to North America years prior to the new translation with teachers, such as Ronna McEldowny, who apprenticed with Frau Jaffke in Germany. After Freya Jaffke gave a

weeklong workshop in Spring Valley, New York, in 1987, Susan Howard's late-night translation wizardry produced the first photocopied version of "Rhythmic Games for Harvest Time," part of which you will find printed elsewhere in this issue of *Gateways*. The rhythms, the playfulness, and the engaging language were hallmarks of these first renderings. And now the complete collection of these delightful games and songs is available as a fully-illustrated paperback book.

This new volume contains an assortment of rhythmic games for the seasons: harvest, lantern time, winter festivals, spring awakening, and summer. Games and dances for "anytime" with gnomes and giants as well as hardworking tradespeople also populate these pages. There is inviting material to enrich daily circle times.

In addition, this book is graced with Freya Jaffke's practical suggestions on how to structure and conduct the circle time itself. She is known

for her common-sense insight into the essentials of the Waldorf early childhood classroom and wise perception of the nature of young children. There are many gems included in this section, which may seem self-evident upon first reading; a bit of consideration to her statements reveals the depths of her practical wisdom, gleaned from decades of working with young children. For example, in discussing the teacher's gestures during circle, she observes: "Every movement we use in a presentation should be performed with inner participation. The children need to sense that we are engaged with our whole being. It is also beneficial if the movement originates from exact observation of a human task or work activity, the characteristic movement of an animal, or some process in nature, which will make it seem compelling and real."

She also emphasizes the importance of the teacher's speech: "It is possible to express the character of something by placing special

emphasis on the consonants, for example with words like rumble, scurry, rustle, or hop. If you are unsure of the text or have not thought it out in advance, the children will have a tendency to start misbehaving. Total familiarity with the verses and poems frees you from depending on a written text and instead allows you to concentrate on the children. It will immediately cause the children to feel protected by you and they will joyfully join in with the activity."

Regarding the children's speech, she advises: "We always allow the children to live in the game without *requiring* them to speak or sing along. They are not consciously aware of whether they are singing or speaking along with us, provided we do not call their attention to it."

Let's Dance and Sing! and its companion WECAN volume, *Play with Us!* now create a full body of classroom material, only tantalizing hints of which we have had in the past. Both volumes are now available through WECAN Books. ♦