

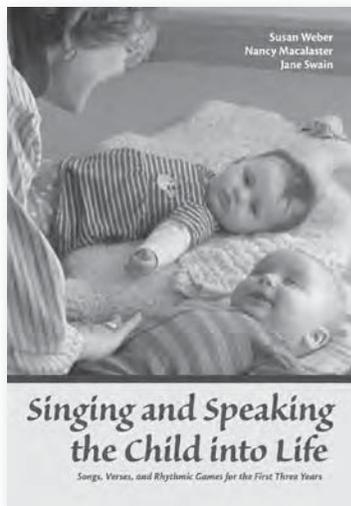
Singing and Speaking the Child into Life

by Susan Weber, Nancy Macalaster,
and Jane Swain

Review by Nancy Blanning

The first wonderful thing about this new WECAN publication is the title. As we Waldorf educators penetrate more deeply into our understanding of human incarnation, we discover that sound and speech are formative forces. These forces literally affect the shaping and forming of the human body. Beautiful, reassuring speech and gentle human singing invite the child into life and healthy incarnation. Thoughtless, superficial, hasty speech or raucous music offer no help and can even be damaging. With this truth in mind, Sophia's Hearth director Susan Weber and core faculty Nancy Macalaster and Jane Swain have created a valuable resource for the parents of young children. It also has much to offer all Waldorf early childhood educators, irrespective of what age group we may work with.

The book is arranged in three sections. The first is a rich summary of child development from birth to age three. This readable and comprehensive survey gives a warm and rich picture of sensory, motor, and speech development. Parents will find this reassuring and informative. Few resources bring this content so accessibly and with such warmth and sensitive understanding of the young child. This summary is "gold" as well for educators. No matter what our age grouping of children, it is essential that we know what stages of development the children have passed through or are journeying towards. The



quotations from Rudolf Steiner and other Waldorf authors confirm that the maturation achieved in these early years lays an essential foundation for that comes later. Literally, these first years give the grade school years their "ground to stand on."

The second section is a collection of songs, rhythmic verses and hand gesture games, lap games, and nursery rhymes. These games and rhymes are almost a dying heritage. This collection offers examples from the cultural tradition that today's young parents may have not encountered in their own childhoods but can reclaim

for their own children. There are also examples of Ellersiek hand gesture games that are new and lovely. This collection will be a good place for new parents to start building their own repertoire of songs and spoken verses.

Concluding the book is a section with supplementary articles by Jane Swain, a movement specialist and trained physical therapist. Here is a more precise explanation of early infantile reflexes, hand development, circle games, and speech. These help to take the introductory section even deeper.

This book has been long anticipated. Deep thanks to the authors for bringing their years of experience and deep consideration about what supports children toward health, confidence, and joy in living in a body here on earth. ♦