

As Seen In the



Classical Learning – McLean resident teaches students music and much more.

[By Eileen Keane/The Connection](#)

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When founding the Classic Tales 'n Tunes program in 2002, Jody Katz of McLean made it her goal to foster a learning environment for young children that relied on the use of music, literature, and movement to nurture the child's learning process. Having studied the work of major theorists in child development, Katz sought to create a program that combined important learning devices to utilize each student's potential.

"I wanted to offer a new kind of program that truly integrated arts in education, using expressive arts like music and movement as a medium for learning," said Katz. "People learn by doing, and the arts provide an open-ended means for students to imagine and experience what they are learning."

Equipped with an interdisciplinary degree from Cornell University, Katz knew the importance of the arts as a part of a child's developmental progress. However, Katz does not choose just any children's music to use in the classes at Classic Tales 'n Tunes. While creating the curriculum for one lesson, Katz carefully reviews nearly 2,000 songs and 50 books so that only materials of the highest quality are used.

"I am passionate about the need to keep high quality music and literature available for our future," Katz said.

Recommendations for those books and songs on the class Web site were a feature Cassandra Rice, an Arlington mother, appreciated. Rice's daughters, 5-year-old Bryce and 3 and a half year old Seneca spent the past three years taking classes with Katz.

"When they say enrichment, it truly is," said Rice, who heard about the classes from a friend. Her children have been involved in many different types of classes, but with Classic Tales 'n' Tunes, they get variety.

"She introduces sign language, Spanish, movement, music — she gives them a little bit of everything," Rice said. Rice's youngest child will begin preschool this fall. "We'll see how the semester goes and if she can handle it, we'll go back [to Classic Tales 'n' Tunes] in the spring." In pursuing the best in educational materials, Katz plays music only by renowned artists, rather than those churned out by unknown studio musicians. Katz approaches her selection of literature in the same way.

"The books we use are selected for their literary or artistic merit, rather than those written by a national franchise organization to sell other brand name products," Katz said.

Arlington mom Cynthia Brown's 3 and a half year old daughter Elizabeth took classes once a week for close to two years. Brown learned about the program from another parent.

"It's the first real structured class setting," Brown said. "My daughter, she just loved it, as a parent, I thought it was a blast."

Brown said the classes offered a good mix of stories, music, fun and Spanish, which Elizabeth speaks with her nanny. She also got a chance to socialize with other students, two of whom she still keeps in contact with.

More
The next session at Classic Tales 'n Tunes begins this fall with classes being held four days a week at locations in Arlington and Falls Church. For more information or to register for classes, visit www.classictnt.com or call 703-848-9808.

Elizabeth won't rejoin Classic Tales 'n' Tunes this coming fall because she is headed to preschool. Brown found the classes an excellent precursor.

"It was a good introduction to classroom structure," Brown said. "When she started, she didn't know what it was to sit on a blanket for story time; I credit Jody for that."

ANOTHER DISTINCTIVE aspect of the Classic Tales 'n' Tunes program is the required attendance of a parent or caretaker for each child at the classes. Katz believes in the importance of the guardian's presence, as it allows the children to flourish while in the proximity of both their peers and caretakers.

"The caretakers provide a bridge between the home and the classroom and model good social skills, offer encouragement, guidance and comfort," she said.

In addition, the caretakers may learn something themselves, whether it be a new way to use arts in a child's development, or even a few words in a new language. The classes at Classic Tales 'n' Tunes are integrated with both Spanish and American Sign Language (ASL) components that not only expand the child's learning progress, but also ensure that children of any background or capacity are able to participate in the classes. The classes are of mixed ages, with children as young as 18 months and as old as 5 participating. Katz sees the children of different ages being in the class together as a unique opportunity for social growth.

"Young children usually begin as quiet observers, transition to participating followers, and eventually emerge as confident leaders. In the class, they have the opportunity to practice all three different social roles," Katz said.

Lori Sher, another Arlington mother had her almost 3-year-old daughter Sadie in the class for about a year after finding out about them from a neighbor.

"I liked that it was more than one type of class," Sher said. "There was dance, music, stories, activities and it was not too long which is good for their attention span."

Sher said her daughter can recite songs from the class that she learned in circle time. Her daughter loved the classes so much, Sher is planning to have Katz do Sadie's birthday party in November.

Throughout class time, the children participate in a circle time, listen and contribute to the music and readings, and utilize their developing motor skills, all while learning about the theme of the day. At the end of the class, caretakers and children work together with a parachute to learn the importance of cooperation and to continue increasing their cognitive skills. While the adult/toddler format of the classes may seem familiar, Katz notes several ways in which the program at Classic Tales 'n' Tunes is different to other styles of child care.

"Classic Tales 'n' Tunes is an integrated arts program which uses the expressive arts of music and movement as a medium for the development of language, social, psychological, motor and cognitive skills. Children are introduced to a variety of musical genres and different languages through a variety of activities in a predictable routine that is geared towards building the attention spans of young children."

After the success of the two Classic Tales 'n' Tunes programs located in Arlington, Katz created a third location in Falls Church, and recently hired two new teachers to expand the growing program. Danielle Eva will instruct classes at the Classic Tales 'n' Tunes location at the Arlington County Lubber Run Center. Educated in Vocal Performance at Duquesne University, Eva recently relocated from New York City, where she taught music and directed a children's choir.

Susan Hayes joins Classic Tales 'n' Tunes after 25 years of teaching in several states and countries. Hayes will instruct from the new Falls Church location at the Falls Church Community Center.

"She's bringing on new people because there's such a demand for the class," Rice said. "Our kids love it, love it, love it."