

[EASY READER](#)[PENINSULA PEOPLE](#)[SOUTH BAY PEOPLE](#)[STAFF](#)[ARCHIVES](#)[COUPONS](#)

## Kids Get Free Music Laced With Learning

by Robb Fulcher

Eat at Pete's restaurant and coffeeshop on Pier Avenue was packed Tuesday morning with about 20 small children singing, clapping, rowing imaginary boats and turning their arms into airplane wings for "musical storyteller" Emily Baum.

The animated Baum, known as "Miss Emily" to the kids, was giving it her all, using every technique in the book to hold her audience rapt for an interactive 45 minutes filled with short, lively songs about everything from foxes in boxes to the alphabet.

Armed with a headset microphone, a modest boom box and a portable electric keyboard, Baum performed standing and sitting on the floor, using her hands for pantomime or holding up bright, plump visual aids. She danced, she whistled, she went clickety-clack like a train on a track.

The audience ranged from pre-toddlers to about age 8 for this installment of the weekly 10 a.m. "Free Musical Storytime" at the eatery at 509 Pier Ave. While most of the kids took active roles in the show, others sucked pacifiers and bounced on the laps of their adult chauffeurs, and a couple even grabbed each other in spontaneous bear hugs.

Precious few coffees and sandwiches were sold during story time, but that was fine with Audrey Buccoleri, who along with husband Peter owns the restaurant, formerly called Espresso Wash Caf.

"We do this to get people in, and to create a sense of a community gathering place. We live in Hermosa Beach, we want this to be a family spot," she said.

"This is the fifth week we've had this and we didn't know what to expect, but it's been really cool. We have all ages, from 7 months to 7 years, and Miss Emily always has all their attention," Buccoleri said.

"The music is what keeps the children engaged for such a long period of time," Baum said after wrapping up the show and giving hugs, high fives and decorative stickers to the kids. "It's not just the story, it's the music that goes along with the text."

Baum learned to grab and hold the mercurial attention of children when she served as a kindergarten teacher at Point Vicente Elementary School in Rancho Palos Verdes, before taking a leave of absence to concentrate on giving private piano lessons and writing children's songs.

"I will really miss teaching next year," she said, "but doing Storytime twice a week I get my kid fix."

Baum also appears 10 a.m. Saturdays in Redondo Beach, at Bright Beginnings & Beyond, 229 Ave. I, where she has held the free Storytime shows since April.

Back in 1994 she held Storytime at the former Sponda coffeeshop in Hermosa and at the former "First Night" New Year's Eve celebration.

### Music and smarts

"Music helps children learn math and science and develop their spatial reasoning abilities," Baum said, offering a view that is shared by large numbers of educators.

Researchers at the University of California, Irvine and the University of Wisconsin have found that piano lessons for preschoolers significantly increased their abilities in math, science and spatial reasoning, and listening to Mozart improved their performance on IQ tests taken immediately afterward.

Educators maintain that music teaches "pre-reading" skills by helping kids understand rhythm, narrative flow, repetitive patterns, and such seemingly simple things as the left-to-right movement of figures on a page.

A program called Goals 2000, adopted by the U.S. Congress, has sought to include the arts as core school subject matter alongside math, literature and geography.

The kids who are coming back to Storytime week after week may not be thinking about math or spatial reasoning, for that matter. Like most audiences, they just want a show, and Baum obliges.

After Tuesday's show, a girl with blond bangs and a big smile stopped to get the storyteller's attention.

"My name's Emily, too," she told Baum.

Emily Baum and Emily's Piano Studio in Hermosa Beach are reachable at 937-0150, and her web site is under construction at [www.pianolessonsbyemily.com](http://www.pianolessonsbyemily.com). ER

