



## 10. Under One Sky: Music is Cultural

Hello. I'm Amy McConkey Robbins and this lesson is the final one in our Auditunes sequence. Every known culture has a collection of songs that are unique to it. Most of these fall into the category of folk songs, or music that comes from the people themselves and is handed down generation to generation. These songs help build unity and identity. They provide a means of expression and allow us to celebrate as well as to mourn. You have heard the saying that "music is a universal language." But, that's not entirely true because traditional music from Asia sounds very different from traditional music in the Western world. Their tonality is based on different scales or pitches. So a more accurate statement should be "music is a universal trait."

We are fortunate at St. Joseph Institute to have children who come from many parts of the world and bring with them their languages and cultures. As you may remember, the listening and spoken language approach relies heavily on family involvement. We encourage non-English speaking families to use their native language when interacting with their child, because that provides the highest quality of auditory input, necessary for auditory development, input that is fluent, complex, and natural. In school, we speak American English, because that is our culture and the culture in which these children now live. Over time, some actually become bilingual.

When working with these culturally- diverse families, we encourage them to sing their cultural songs with their child throughout the day and to teach us one or two that we can incorporate into our own song collection. Some of these are then used in the classroom. It gives a child a sense of pride and acceptance with his or her American peers.

In my practice, I have a family whose mother is bilingual, Spanish and English. She had been reluctant to speak Spanish to her son with cochlear implants when he was little, because she had been told his profile was too complex. Now that he's six and his sister nine, Mom is using a lot of Spanish at home, has enrolled them in community Spanish-language cultural classes, and has taught them many songs from her cultural language. They all serenaded me on my birthday, doing so spontaneously in both Spanish and English. I'm so excited to watch his progress as he, a child born profoundly deaf, becomes more and more fluent in Spanish. And music plays a major role in that.

My music therapy colleague, Chris Barton joins me in hoping that this AudiTunes series has provided you with enough resources to aspire to

*Do Music. REAL Music. Every Day!*