

Jessica Fichot

STUDY GUIDE



Grades K-6



MARIAN LIEBOWITZ

ARTIST MANAGEMENT

I. INTRODUCTION



<http://www.jessicasongs.com/>

Accompanied by her accordion, toy piano, and fiery band, L.A.-based chanteuse and songwriter **Jessica Fichot** draws from her multi-ethnic French, Chinese and American heritage to create an intoxicating multilingual fusion of French chanson, Shanghai jazz, gypsy swing, and folk. With 3 acclaimed albums under her belt, Jessica has charmed audiences in China, Mexico, Canada, and across the US and Western Europe. Featuring scorching performances from her bandmates on clarinet/sax, upright bass, and guitar, as well as her own beautiful vocals in French, Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, and English, Fichot's music is truly a dazzling trans-world journey.

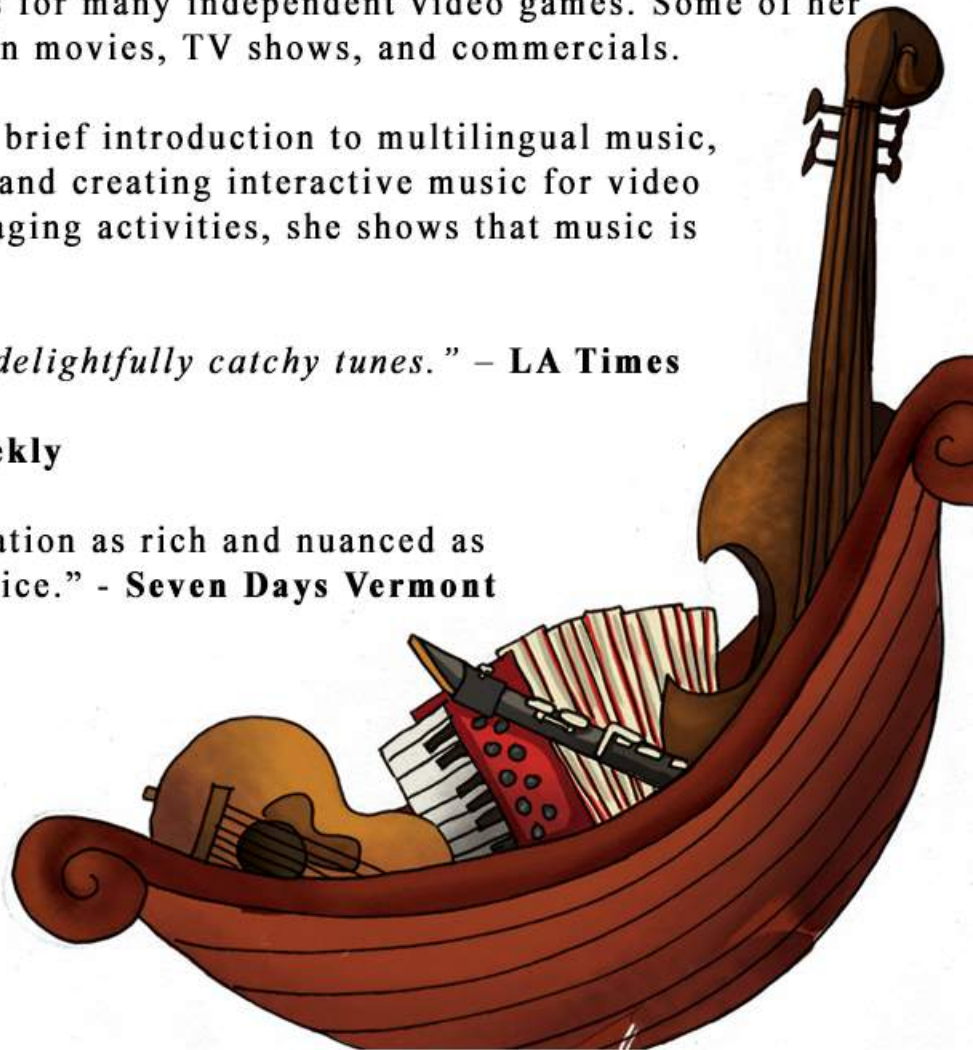
Jessica Fichot is also an active composer, who has written hundreds of children's songs for musical theater, and for ESL programs published all over the world. She also creates interactive music and sound effects for many independent video games. Some of her original songs have been featured in movies, TV shows, and commercials.

Jessica's outreach programs give a brief introduction to multilingual music, songwriting for children's stories, and creating interactive music for video games. Through fun songs and engaging activities, she shows that music is indeed a universal language.

"Brings an art-song sensibility to delightfully catchy tunes." – **LA Times**

"Enchantingly original." - **LA Weekly**

"A mélange of multicultural inspiration as rich and nuanced as her gorgeous expressive singing voice." - **Seven Days Vermont**



II. INSTRUMENTS

Accordion: A box-shaped instrument played by compressing or expanding the bellows while pressing buttons or keys. Jessica's accordion is a piano accordion, with a right-hand configuration similar to the keyboard of a piano. The accordion originated in Germany in the 19th century, but thanks to the waves of immigration from Europe, it is widely used across the world: from Russian folk to Forró in Brazil, norteño in Mexico, and chanson in France.

Clarinet: A woodwind instrument with a single-reed mouthpiece. Sound is produced when air is blown into a reed and flows in the instrument. The most common clarinet is the Bb (soprano) clarinet. An exceptional flexible instrument with a wide range, it is used in classical music, marching bands, klezmer, jazz, etc...

Guitar: A fretted musical instrument with 6 strings ("Every Angry Dog Growls Before Eating"), the guitar is typically played by strumming or plucking the strings with either a pick or with fingers of one hand while pressing the strings against frets in the other. A guitar can be acoustic (classical, steel-string and archtop) or electric.

Percussion Instruments (various): A wide variety of instruments that are sounded by being struck, scraped, rubbed, or shaken. They can be pitched or non-pitched. Jessica uses shakers, spoons, claves, and a güiro.

Saxophone (or "sax"): A woodwind instrument made of brass and played with a single-reed mouthpiece (like the clarinet.) The Bb tenor saxophone is used in Jessica's band, but soprano, alto, and baritone are also commonly used. First gaining popularity in military bands, it is now especially popular in jazz.

Loop Pedal: A hardware device used to record and play a section of music in real-time, allowing a single musician to create multiple layers to live music.

Toy Piano: With a keyboard similar to a regular piano, the toy piano's distinctive sound comes from the hammers hitting small metal rods (as opposed to strings on a piano.)

Upright Bass: The largest and lowest string instrument in the modern symphony orchestra, it is related to the violin, viola, and cello. Is it played with a bow (more typical in classical) or by plucking the strings (more typical in jazz, folk, etc..)

Vocals: Our voice is our most easily accessible instrument! Ranges are soprano, mezzo, and alto for women, tenor, baritone, and bass for men. Children's voices are typically classified as either soprano or alto.

ACTIVITIES

- Can you remember the names of all the instruments on stage? The types?
- What instrument has the highest range? Which has the lowest? Let's collectively check our vocal range.



III. LANGUAGES IN MUSIC

Jessica grew up in France to a French father and Chinese mother. She spoke French at home and both French and English in school. She has lived in Los Angeles for many years and has used songs as a way to improve her language skills, in particular in Spanish. People often see language as a barrier, but in music, it can be a fun way to access different sounds in your voice. And songs can be a fun way to memorize some words in other languages.

Activities:

** Let's learn some words in other languages together!*

- **French:** "bonjour!" ("bon"+"jour"), "salut!" (similar to the English word "to salute.")

- **Mandarin Chinese:** Chinese has many different dialects that sound very different from each other, but Mandarin is the official language of mainland China. Chinese is a tonal language: the pitch with which the syllables are uttered affects the meaning of the word. For example, in Mandarin 妈 (mā) means mother, 马 (mǎ) means horse, 麻 (má) is a type of plant, and 骂 (mà) is to scold. The same syllables pronounced with different tones have different meanings.

Learn: "你好" (hello: you+good), "谢谢" (thank you.)

- **Spanish:** Spanish and French are both Latin languages and can often sound similar. Ex: "blanc" - "blanco" (white), "tousser" - "tosser" (to cough), "batterie" - "bateria" (drums). "chanson" - "canción" (song).

What are some other Latin languages?

** Can you teach the band a few words in other languages?*

** Can you recognize the language in these song excerpts?* (band plays excerpts of songs in French, Mandarin, Spanish, Russian, etc...)

Aside from certain words that you may recognize, can you note some other characteristics in these foreign language songs? Perhaps this comes from the pronunciation of the words or the musical style? Some songs in French can be very wordy; Chinese traditional songs often follow a pentatonic scale (5 note scale), etc... Jessica often sings the Chinese songs at a higher pitch/register.

IV. SONGWRITING & STORIES

A **songwriter** is a musician who composes music and writes lyrics for songs. A songwriter can also be called a **composer**, but composing usually refers to music only (not words.) A song has a melody (usually sung), **lyrics** (words), and can feature an accompaniment (by a single instrument, a band, an orchestra, etc...) A songwriter can also be a **performer** who performs/sings their own songs - but not necessarily.

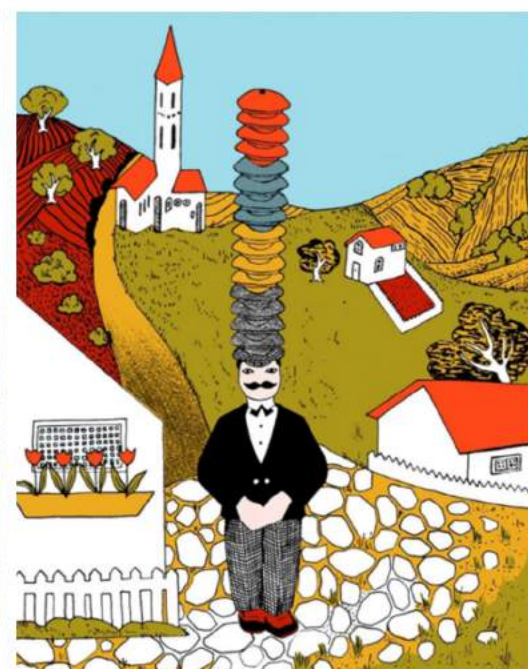
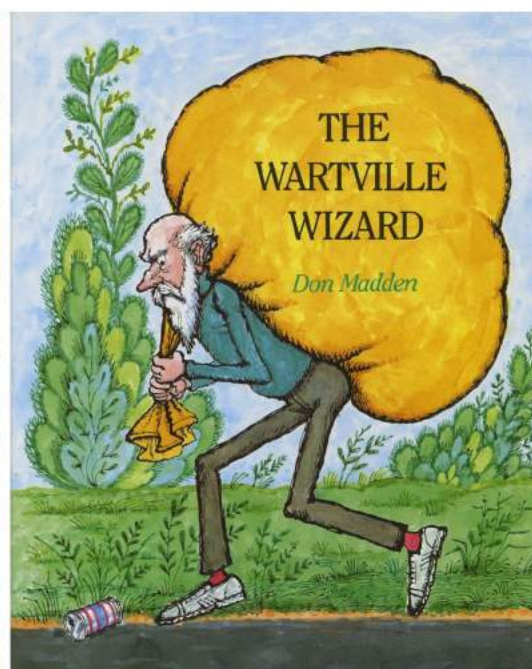
Songwriting is one of the most accessible crafts in music: anyone who can write a song! It doesn't mean it's easy, though ;) Inspiration can be found in many ways: nature, film, stories, your life, other music... One of Jessica's first musical jobs was to write songs for children's musical theater, some of which were based on famous children's stories.

Reading List: *Where the Wild Things Are*, *The Wartville Wizard*, *The Princess and the Pea*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Charlie the Caterpillar*, *Caps for Sale*.

* Jessica's band will play a song inspired by a story you may know. Can you guess the book it was inspired by?

* Let's think of a story that you read in class. Think of where you could integrate a song. Who would sing the song (a character? the narrator)? What would the song be called?

* Optional: As children read selections of "Caps for Sale", the band will play instrumental music to accompany the story.



V. INTRODUCTION TO VIDEO GAME MUSIC

In addition to writing songs and performing, Jessica also composes music and creates sound effects for independent video games. Composition of music for video games is unique because the music is **interactive**, meaning that it changes depending on the actions the player makes in the game (whereas in film, the music is **linear**: it will not change no matter how many times you watch the movie!) The interactivity of the music in games is one of the most interesting aspect of composing for video games. Game music often features **loops** (sections of music that repeat) and **layers** that fade in and out depending on the player's actions.

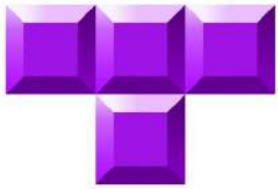
Some game examples:

* Minecraft

Activity: Can you name the game this music is from? (band plays one of Minecraft themes)

Note: Minecraft is the most popular games of all times. Note the music from Minecraft is "**atmospheric**" - it sets the mood of the game.

Music in games is often very different than music in a song: it is not always a good idea for the music to be "catchy", as it may sound too repetitive.



* Tetris

Activity: Listen to the band's performance of the music: Do you notice what is changing? How do you think the change in the music is reflected in the game?



* Super Mario (1985)

Super Mario was first released in 1985, but it has had many sequels and versions. The "Overworld" theme for Super Mario is one of the most recognizable themes in video games. The 1985 Super Mario had 6 main **themes** that alternated depending on the players actions: Overworld (the main theme), Starman Theme, Flagpole Fanfare, the Underworld Theme, the Underwater Theme, and the Castle Theme.

Activities: The band will play 4 of the Super Mario themes: Overworld, Starman, Flagpole, Underwater..Now let's play a game: can you identify the theme and make the accompanying action? (Overworld: walking, Starman: point at star, Flag pole: raise a flag, Underwater: swimming.)

* **Growbot** (optional, if appropriate tech is provided)
Jessica is composing the music for a video game called "Growbot." The music is atmospheric, with traditional instruments like the piano and the clarinet often layered with sounds of nature, synths, modified vocals, and sounds of children's toys.



TEACHING STANDARDS

This study guide references the various musical and cultural aspects you'll find in Jessica Fichot's educational outreach performances, as outlined in the Visual and Performing Arts Content Standard for California Public Schools. Programs can be adjusted to approximate age levels.

1.0 Artist Perception

Processing, Analyzing and Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to Music

1.2 Identify and describe basic elements in music (e.g. high/low, fast/slow, loud/soft.)

1.3 Identify common instruments visually and aurally in a variety of music.

2.0 Creative Expression

Creating, Performing, and Participating in Music

2.1 Move or use body percussion to demonstrate awareness of beat and tempo.

2.2 Use the singing voice to echo short melodic patterns.

3.0 Historical and Cultural Context

Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of Music

3.1 Use personal vocabulary to describe music from diverse cultures.

3.2 Sing and play simple singing games from various cultures.

3.3 Use personal vocabulary to describe voices and instruments from diverse cultures.

4.0 Aesthetic Valuing

Responding to, Analyzing, and Making Judgments About Works of Music

4.1 Create movements to music that reflect focused listening.

4.2 Participate freely in musical activities.

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

Connecting and Applying What Is Learned in Music to Learning in Other Art Forms and Subject Areas and to Careers

5.1 Identify similar themes in stories, songs, and art forms (e.g., patterns, texture).

5.2 Identify and discuss who composes and performs music pieces, and works of visual art.

CONTACT



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