



Hand gesture games – always and everywhere at hand!

By Ingrid Weidenfeld

The hand gesture games of Wilma Ellersiek are a world of their own. Often it is only at second glance that it becomes clear how beneficial they can be when used in the nursery, kindergarten and early years of school.

How is it possible that such a thing should exist? A toy that is always available, that costs nothing and never gets dusty? Can that really be true?

Yes, it can be. Already the baby starts playing with it: It's his own hands. Our hands are at our disposal all our lives. And they are a miracle of creation, because of all we can do with them and through them! From very rough work in the field or on a construction site to the very finest sewing and embroidery, everything is possible. The hands can help us to understand; if words are missing, gestures can express that which is perhaps denied to the mouth at the moment. Even if the words are available, we humans use our hands often enough to give emphasis or a certain colouring

to what is said with gestures. So why not also use gestures to give small stories a pictorial expression? Children react strongly to everything that moves. When they are not sleeping, they are always moving themselves. That means development, progress. Without movement, learning is not possible. Everything that the baby learns in the first year of life originates in movement: sitting, standing up and finally walking. With incredible stamina, sequences of movements are repeated until the muscles have developed enough to provide the necessary strength to lift the body upright.

There is something else that belongs to this learning process: It is the role model. The upright, standing and freely walking person is the first model that every healthy child wants to imitate. For some years to come, the movement model will continue to be an incentive to participate in or reproduce the movement event. In this way the children learn to use ●●●

- their hands more and more skillfully until one day they will be able to safely guide the pen while writing, until they are able to thread a needle and will have acquired many more fine motor skills.

• From finger games to hand gestures •

Since kindergartens have existed, children have always been offered finger games. There was no question whether this »makes sense« or not, it was almost like taking a breath, it was just part of it. And the children always enjoyed imitating these little games, playing »with it« at home, in the garden or on the road, wherever they were and felt like repeating the mostly cheerful games. As already mentioned at the beginning: The hands are always available as playthings. And how wonderful: these games are accompanied by language, mostly with verses that rhyme and are rhythmically structured so that they easily pass the children's lips. Almost always the content of the words is not very »instructive«, maybe even meaningless, but it is precisely these meaningless words that stimulate the child's imagination enormously, so that many a quatrain turns into a »short story« in no time at all.

With the strong desire to instruct children as early as possible, so that they should have good conditions later in life, the finger games gradually disappeared from the kindergartens. They simply fell into oblivion, because retrievable learning content was considered much more important than imaginative play. Music was and is likewise affected by early – too early? – learning. For years, nothing was more important than sending four-year-old children to music school in the afternoon with a bright red bag to teach them to read music. The question is allowed here: What does reading music have to do with making music? Are the black dots on black lines really music?

• Developmentally appropriate musicalisation in early childhood •

Wilma Ellersiek (1921–2007, professor of rhythms at the State University of Music and Performing Arts in Stuttgart) answered this question not with words but with deeds. From her profound knowledge of children's development, physically, mentally and spiritually, it was clear to her that you cannot make children musical by reading musical notation. She therefore devised a very special programme for early musicalisation appropriate to the child. Wilma Ellersiek developed lessons from small children's verses, fairy tales and children's songs taken from folklore, with rhythmic speech as well as small and large motor movements, which were conceived for mother and child together. Although this kind of early musical education inspired both young and old, Wilma Ellersiek was not yet satisfied with it. Intuitively she sensed that the language had more musical potential than was contained in the folk verses and fairy tales. So she began to write her own »speech-movement games«.

It was not long before the term »hand gesture game« appeared. When heard superficially and with the word »finger play« from old sources still in one's ear, the hand gesture game was and is still often lumped together with the finger play. But they are actually different things. In finger plays, the individual fingers are given names or activities and »counted« but a hand gesture play can conjure up a whole cosmos of images in front of the viewer. In contrast to finger plays, the entire upper body moves in hand gestures – often only in nuances, but it is exactly these nuances that make the decisive effect. Remaining true to the original idea of bringing children into a rhythmic-musical experience through movement and language, Wilma Ellersiek »composed« each game with musical parameters: rhythm, beat, melos, dynamics, harmony etc. For the content of her games, she chose primarily events in nature. •••

●●● In two of her eight books alone, games are collected that deal exclusively with the seasons. Wilma Ellersiek has also thought of the animals. She was able to grasp the essence of each animal linguistically and even more so in the finely tuned movements, and thus to present the audience with a lively and true experience of images, speech and sounds before their eyes and ears.

● **Touching games for the little ones, complex games for the big ones** ●

Wilma Ellersiek also had the youngest children at heart, and for them she developed rhythmic-musical touching games. As long as children are not yet able to imitate the sometimes complex hand gestures, they enjoy the tender touches that adults give them. Head, torso, arms, hands, legs and feet are thought of here – a true blessing for children in our times, which are so poor in touch and relationships. And if you think that touching games are only suitable for babies, you are very much mistaken: Right up to primary school age, children enjoy and love this tender, respectful physical attention.

From touching games, one can seamlessly move on via self-touching games to hand gesture games, to those that only require simple movements and can be initially imitated by a child as young as two years old. The »stories« invented by Ellersiek also belong to the so-called »crib phase« (for children from 6 months to about their third birthday, depending on the nursery facilities). These are also rhythmic-musical hand gestures, but they are kept short and simple in content, so that the children can already grasp them in their thoughts. Through the moving, lively example of the adult narrator, the children



experience the stories as spatially real events. It is not uncommon for the little ones to search for the dog or mouse that has disappeared as a hand gesture behind the adult's back.

In kindergarten, the whole range of hand gesture games is then possible – from narra-

tive stories, which are loved by the »big ones«, to syllable games and long games with very complex movements. Some games are still very suitable for teaching in the elementary school, especially when they are used in foreign language teaching (many games have already been translated into English, French, Korean, Russian, Spanish and other languages). Through the »archetypal gestures« of the objects Wilma Ellersiek searched for and found, which she chose as the content of her games, the children grasp the meaning of the game through movement, even if they do not understand the language at first. Thus the games are of great value especially for kindergarten children with an immigration background, because the games make it much easier for them to learn the language of the new country. ●

About the author: Ingrid Weidenfeld studied rhythemics and violin at the State University of Music and Performing Arts in Stuttgart. In the department of rhythemics she had Wilma Ellersiek as her lecturer. As an »Ellersiek Specialist« she now gives courses on the Ellersiek Games far beyond the borders of Germany. In 2001 she began the publication of Wilma Ellersiek's work in book form at the publishing house Freies Geistesleben in Stuttgart. In 2012 Ingrid Weidenfeld started a professional development training course in rhythmic pedagogy according to Wilma Ellersiek, which has since found a permanent home in Stuttgart.

Further information: www.handgestenspiele.de



Pum and Pom

Small Rhythmic Story for Fists in a few languages



Pum and Pom, each brother
Is fond of the other.

Pum and Pom, they walk together:
Walk – walk – walk – walk,
Into the world they walk.

Turn around and walk together:
Walk – walk – walk – walk,
Back, back home they walk.
And from their quest they rest.

They're jumping now; just see how.
Pum over Pom, Pom over Pum,
Pum over Pom, Pom over Pum,
Pum – Pom – Pum – Pom,
Hop – hop – hop – and stop!
Now once again, to and fro,
Pum and Pom jump no mo'e.

They're climbing now; just see how.
Pum on Pom, Pom on Pum,
Pum on Pom, Pom on Pum,
Pum – Pom – Pum – Pom,
Higher – higher – way up high.
Oh, my!
They sit there dizzily,
All fearfully.
Thud!
They lie in the mud!
Pum and Pom do not stay,
They run – run – run away!

Pöm und Pam (Deutsch)

Pöm und Pam, die beiden,
mögen sich gern leiden!

Pöm und Pam,
die wandern, wandern
einer mit dem andern,
in die Welt hinaus.

Kehren um
und wandern, wandern,
einer mit dem andern,
zurück, zurück nach Haus
und ruh'n ein Weilchen aus.

Jetzt springen sie. Seht nur, wie:
Pöm über Pam, Pam über Pöm.
Pöm über Pam, Pam über Pöm.

Pöm – Pam – Pöm – Pam
und hopp und hopp und hopp und stopp!
Noch einmal hin und her,
Pöm und Pam springen nicht mehr!

Jetzt steigen sie. Seht nur, wie:
Pam auf Pöm, Pöm auf Pam.
Pam auf Pöm, Pöm auf Pam.
Pam – Pöm – Pam – Pöm
steigen, steigen
in – die – Höh'! O weh!
Sie werden schwindelig,
ganz fürchterlich.
Plums!

Da liegen sie im Dreck. –
Pöm und Ppam, die laufen weg, die laufen weg!

Пим и Пам (русский)

Пим и Пам, два друга,

любят поиграть друг с другом!

Пим и Пам идут, идут, друг с дружкой идут
в дальний путь, чтоб на мир взглянуть.

Повернули, и идут, друг с дружкой идут
идут друзья в обратный, обратный путь.

А дома можно отдохнуть.

Вот прыгают они. Только посмотри:

Пим через Пама, Пам через Пима.

Пим через Пама, Пам через Пима.

Пим-Пам-Пим-Пам

хопп, хопп, хопп и стоп!-

Еще разочек так и сядь,

Пим и Пам прыгать больше не могут никак!

Вот лезут они. Только посмотри:

Пам на Пима, Пим на Пама.

Пам на Пима, Пим на Пама.

Пам-Пим-Пам-Пим лезут, лезут, выше, выше!

Уух! Кружится голова!

Держатся едва.

Держаться нету сил! Плюх!

И вот лежат в грязи.

Пим и Пам бегут, бегут, гляди!

Анна Селедчик, Кира Бабиц, Настя Боковец

Pim I Pam (Hrvatski)

Pim i Pam,

prijatelja dva

Uživaju u igrama

Pim i Pam hodaju , hodaju

Jedan s drugim putuju

Daleko u svijet.

Okrenu se i hodaju, hodaju

Jedan s drugim putuju

Nazad kući hodaju

Malo se odmaraju

Sad odjednom skaču

evo vidi kako.

Pim preko Pama, Pam preko Pima

Pim preko Pama, Pam preko Pima

Pim-Pam, Pim-Pam,

i hop i hop i hop i stop.

Još jednom tamo I tu

Pim I Pam miruju.

Sada se penju! Vidi kako:

Pam na Pima i Pim na Pama

Pam na Pima I Pim na Pama

Pam-Pim-Pam-Pim

Penju se, penju u visine , oj

Vrti im se strašno, joj

Pljas!

U blato su pali !

Pim i Pam

u bjeg su se dali,

U bijeg su se dali.

Sunčica Vulelija und Mirjana Radanović

Pomme et Pamme (Français)

Pomme et Pamme
ces deux là
s'aiment bien.

Pomme et Pamme
se promènent:
comme ils marchent, comme ils marchent
bien loin, bien loin, très loin !
puis s'en retournent.
et... comme ils marchent, comme ils mar-
chent
et rentrent à la maison.

Puis se reposent
un bon moment!
Oh ! Comme ils sautent!
Pomme par dessus Pamme,
Pamme par dessus Pomme,
Pomme par dessus Pamme,
Pamme par dessus Pomme,
Pomme, Pamme,
Pomme, Pamme
et hopp, et hopp et hopp....et stop!
Et en avant!
Et en arrière!
Enfin Pomme et Pamme Mett'(ent) pied à
terre! (prononcé : piétatèrr)
..... (on reste les poings couchés)

Puis ils grimpent!
Mais pour de vrai!
Pamme sur Pomme,
Pomme sur Pamme,
Pamme sur Pomme,
Pomme sur Pamme,
Pamme, Pomme,
Pamme, Pomme,
ils grimpent, ils grimpent,
ils grimpent... jusqu'en haut.
Oulala! Ils ont vite le tournis!
Oulala! Ils sont tout étourdis!
Et plouf! Ils tombent dans la boue!
Pomme dit à Pamme:
Vite, on rentre chez nous!

Aus dem Deutschen ins Französische von Serge Maintier

(Korean)

핼과 팼

핼과 팼

둘이는 정말 좋아해

핼과 팼

먼 길을 떠났어

타박 타박 타박 타박 타박 타박

그리곤 집으로 돌아갔어

타박 타박 타박 타박 타박 타박

아, 피곤해

좀 쉬어야지

핼과 팼

둘이는 재미있게 뛰었어

핼이 뛰고 팼이 뛰고

핼이 뛰고 팼이 뛰고

핼 팼 핼 팼

한번 더

이젠 그만

핼과 팼

둘이는

나무위로 올라갔어

핼이 오르고 팼이 오르고

핼이 오르고 팼이 오르고

핼이 오르고 팼이 오르고

아, 어지러워

겁이나네

아이크!

흙탕물 속에 떨어졌잖아?

핼과 팼

집으로 돌아갔어

Aus dem Deutschen ins Koreanische
von Herrn Byeon

Bam i Bum (Polskie)

Bam i Bum, oni razem
bardzo się lubią!

Bam i Bum
razem wędrują, wędrują,
jeden z drugim
w świat daleki, nóg nie żałują.

Już wracają,
wędrują, wędrują,
Jeden z drugim,
z powrotem, z powrotem do domu.
Tam chwileczkę odpoczęli.

Teraz skaczą, zobacz jak:
Bam przez Bum, Bum przez Bam
Bam przez Bum, Bum przez Bam
Bam – Bum – Bam – Bum
hopsa, hopsa, hop i stop!
Jeszcze raz tam i tu
Bam i Bum nie skaczą już!

Teraz wspinają się, zobacz jak:
Bum na Bam, Bam na Bum
Bum na Bam, Bam na Bum
Bum – Bam – Bum – Bam
wyżej, wyżej,
w górę! Ojej!
W głowach im wiruje,
oj, jak bardzo.
Plask!
I już leżą w błocie –
Bam i Bum biegną z powrotem.

Aus dem Deutschen ins Polnische von Beata Borkowska

Pom y Pam (Español)

Pom y Pam, los dos
buenos amigos son.
Pom y Pam andan un camino
largo, largo,
siempre juntos van.

Marcha atrás!
Andan su camino
andan vuelta a casa
vuelven a su hogar!
Ahora, ¡a descansar!

Se ponen a saltar, ¡mirad!
Pom sobre Pam, Pam sobre Pom,
Pom sobre Pam, Pam sobre Pom –
Pom – Pam – Pom – Pam
Uno y dos y tres, y stop.
Para allí, para allá
Pom y Pam no siguen más.

Se ponen a escalar, ¡mirad!
Pam sobre Pom, Pom sobre Pam,
Pam sobre Pom, Pom sobre Pam –
Pam – Pom – Pam – Pom.
Suben más alto.
¡Cuidado!
Ya se marean,
y mucho además.

¡Cataplum!
En el suelo están.
Pom y Pam
corriendo se van.

*Aus dem Deutschen ins Spanische übertragen
von Michael Kranawetvogl*