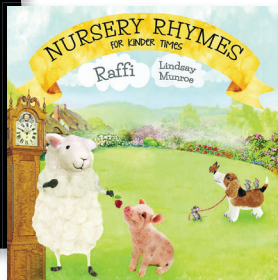
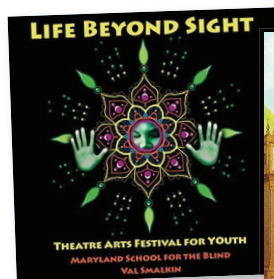


# Multimedia Review

## MUSIC



**For Children of All Ages.** Performed by You and Us. CD. \$25. 33 min. Emerald Sketch. 2022.

At first, the phrase “trauma response” as the description for an album of children’s music is a little intimidating, but under the creative expertise of clinical art therapist and musician Nicole Porter, the resulting collection of songs is just what little listeners need right now. Covering topics like safety and staying connected with friends and family, the songs and interludes are presented in gentle, non-threatening pop, rock, and country melodies. For example, Porter’s beautiful vocals in “Safety and Security” tell the story of the pandemic but with clams as the main characters and purple algae as the dangerous virus. **VERDICT** Good for family listening or sharing in groups where children are struggling with the today’s challenges.—*Veronica Schwartz De Fazio*

**Life Beyond Sight.** Produced by Val Smalkin and the Maryland School for the Blind. CD. \$10. 20 min. Small Kin Music Fun. 2022.

A songwriting workshop, led by Smalkin and held at the Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) for teens who were born blind, inspired students to write lyrics for three of the five songs on this EP. The lyrics are set to music composed and performed by professional musicians or organizations. “Not with My Eyes” features chanteuse Jamie Leonhart and reminds listeners that blind people can “see” using other means (including their hearts) and should be valued and treated with respect. “Dance of Freedom,” with music by Dave Kinnoin and Jimmy Hammer, is an upbeat tune sung harmoniously by the West LA Children’s Choir. “Lifeboat to Sanity,” performed by Sahffi Lynne, speaks of the power of music to bring calm to every listener. Two tracks are instrumental pieces.

Orlando Enrique Fiol, a professional musician born blind, uses a jazz vibe to flesh out the tune “Not with My Eyes” as a piano solo. A graduate of MSB, Alexander Gringalus-Kern also tickles the ivories, playing Johann Sebastian Bach’s “Invention No. 1 in C Major.” **VERDICT** A stirring production that will bring awareness to the school and showcases the talent of young musicians from the Maryland School for the Blind. An excellent choice for all libraries.—*Stephanie Bange*

**Magic Beans.** Performed by Eric Herman and the Puppy Dogs. CD. \$13.99. 42 min. Butter-Dog Records. 2022.

It has been six long years, but Herman’s ninth album was worth the wait. Inspired by the idea that something seemingly small and insignificant can become something unexpected and enormous, the dozen original tunes are fresh and sure to please kids and their parents. Herman is accompanied by “Puppy Dogs” Dave Petty (guitar, bass, percussion) and Ben Macy (piano, keyboard, accordion), who offer banter, silliness, and harmonies in several songs, adding depth, lightness, and wacky humor. A variety of musical styles (including psychedelic pop) and tempos (upbeat and ballads) are found not only among the songs, but also within them. Standout selections include the opener “Googly Eyes” (a humorous number that imagines how things, such as the Statue of Liberty and the *Mona Lisa*, would be improved by sticking googly eyes on them); “Merry-Go-Round” (the lyrics compare life with riding a merry-go-round); “My Brother” (a fun song about a tricky brother who always causes trouble); and “Remember” (a bittersweet celebration full of memories

of Grandpa). **VERDICT** A surefire crowd pleaser to take along on that next family road trip.—*Stephanie Bange*

**Nature Child: A Dreamer’s Journey.** Performed by Sylvia. CD. \$15.98. 46 min. Red Pony Records. 2022.

The 1980s country music pop singer/songwriter Sylvia Hutton’s latest is a concept album of 12 songs about pursuing your dreams. Intended for children and families, the musical styles include lullabies and ballads (“Nature Child,” “Good Night, Sleep Tight My Little One”), soft rocking country tunes (“Imagination,” “Every Time a Train Goes By”), and a galloping jig (“Dancing Over an Emerald Isle”). Sylvia’s beautiful voice hasn’t lost any of its brilliance or luster, as she sings lead and all harmonies to her lyrics. With music composed by several different people, an impressive lineup of instrumentalists backs Sylvia. As a concept album, several misfires were noted. The program order seems inconsistent, affecting the lineup’s punch (“It’s a New Day” comes near the end of the album just after “Good Night”). Gimmicky openings with sound effects contribute to an over-produced sound. Some numbers feel forced and over-rehearsed for today’s families, making listeners wonder about its kid appeal. **VERDICT** An admirable effort, but this one misses the mark.—*Stephanie Bange*

**Nursery Rhymes for Kinder Times.** Performed by Raffi and Lindsay Monroe. CD. \$11.99. 26 min. Craft Recordings. 2022.

When Pam Gittleman, a preschool music teacher, reimagined beloved yet outdated nursery rhymes with lyrics that nurtured a sense of caring and compassion as well as promoted social and emotional intelligence she had the ideal partner in mind—Raffi. In 1997, Raffi developed “Child Honouring,” a holistic philosophy with a “Covenant Honouring Children” that is a promise to love, respect, and be kind to children, making him the perfect performer to join forces with Gittleman in this endeavor. Raffi took on the roles of the album’s composer, producer, and vocalist and brought aboard Lindsay Monroe, his frequent musical collaborator. The result is new lyrical versions of 15 old rhymes including “Three Kind Mice,” “London

**KEY:** ★ Excellent in relation to other titles on the same subject or in the same genre.  
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