

“One Little Song,” One Big Idea

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Cover of Kid Pan Alley's new album *One Little Song Can Change the World*.

Kid Pan Alley's new album delivers message – respect others

By Roger Piantadosi

Kid Pan Alley, the homegrown Rappahannock County organization that has written close to 3,000 songs with more than 50,000 children from Virginia to Hawaii over the last two decades, has just released its fourth album – and not a moment too soon.

Meaning, if you've worried at all the past year or two about the future of the world, you need to hurry up and borrow your kids' ear buds, and queue up Kid Pan Alley's *One Little Song Can Change the World*. Turns out that "out of the mouths of babes" isn't a meaningless cliché after all, especially if you've been unimpressed lately with what comes out of the mouths of grown-ups.

One Little Song is a bracing and essentially buoyant collection of 10 songs about respect – respect for others, for one's environment, one's community and oneself – written with a surprisingly sophisticated worldview by children working with Kid Pan Alley (KPA) songwriters over the past several years.

"These are powerful songs about how we should treat each other," says KPA founder and artistic director Paul Reisler, the Kid Pan Alley songwriter most often working with kids in KPA's multi-day songwriting residencies in elementary schools around the country. "These songs speak of the dreams and aspirations of the children about how they want their world to be."



COURTESY OF KID PAN ALLEY

Children performed on stage at a public Kid Pan Alley concert at Rappahannock County Elementary School

For *One Little Song*, Reisler and co-producer Ryan Benyo have taken the kids' astonishingly wise and delightfully direct lyrics and added some totally fetching arrangements executed by top-notch musicians. The vocalists are both familiar and new to KPA's fans: Lea Morris, Ysaye Barnwell, Jevon McGlory, Heath Francis, Alison Rapetti and Justin Hopkins. Singer-songwriter and Mary Chapin Carpenter sideman **Jon Carroll** drops by to have some fun with *Don't Put Me Down*, or *My Dog*, and the truly unique folk singer **Vance Gilbert** outdoes himself on "Best Friends."

With help from a few special guests – harmonica guru Howard Levy and saxophonist Marshall Keys among them – the Kid Pan Alley Band has never sounded better nor more clearly deserved to be called out by name: That would be Reisler and Steve Van Dam on guitars, Andy Waldeck on bass, drummer Nate Brown, singer Morris and, in particular, trumpeter John D'earth and trombonist Mark Maynard.

Kid Pan Alley nowadays incorporates the songs from *One Little Song Can Change the World* and others into anti-bullying/character-building assembly programs, and continues to hit the road for the songwriting residencies it hopes will "inspire and empower children to work together to become creators of their own music, and to rekindle creativity as a core value in education."

There are two of those residencies in Fauquier County in November (November 14-16 at **Pearson Elementary** in Catlett) and December (December 4-6 at Warrenton's **Brumfield Elementary**), and each ends with a free concert open to all, at which the kids perform the songs they've written.

For more information on the school performances, please contact the schools directly. Also, Kid Pan Alley's album is available **online** at www.kidpanalley.org/store, and in Drum & Strum Music Center, located in Warrenton.