

Shake, Rattle and Learn

Music and Interpretation

Workshop Objectives:

After this workshop, the participant will be able to:

- list 5 reasons why to use music in interpretive programs
- list 3 ways to use music in your programs without the use of one's own musical talent
- list 3 ways to use your own musical talent in your programs (if you possess such talent)
- use a brainstorm technique to create lyric ideas
- use creativity and the re-sentencing method to form rhyming lyrics

Music is the universal language known by all of mankind.

“Awareness and appreciation are the prerequisites for developing an environmental ethic, and involvement is the key to learning these skills. Such involvement in music can be achieved through (1) listening, (2) performing, and (3) creating.” – Jean Hoem

Why use music?

- Low tech., low budget, low time consumption, high fun
- Singing naturally energizes
- Novel way to present key ideas and terms
- Involves whole brain learning
- Fosters creativity when students are encouraged to compose additional lyrics or songs
- When using movements with music, coordination and rhythm are encouraged
- Reaches kinesthetic learners
- Promotes listening skills
- Use of rhyme and meter aids in memory retention of concepts
- Very easy (even for those who are musically challenged) when familiar tunes are used

Ideas of how to use music

- Interpret music – local music, folk music
- Tell a story – Tracy Minton; tells story of Tom Dooley with songs about each milestone in his life. Some of the songs are about Tom Dooley while others are not (“Marching Home” – about coming home from war, “Amazing Grace” – after his death, etc...)
- Invite people to play at your park as a stand-alone program or to supplement your own
- Play a song they can participate in – response, sing-a-long, movements, etc ...
- Write a song where new words are written to an existing melody (lyrical lessons)
- Write an original song that can be altered or created along with the lyrics
- Have students write words as poetry that you then set to music
- Have students draw what they hear in the music

- Have students make natural instruments (rocks-in-a-box, thistle whistle, acorn cap, grass)
- Have students play their natural instruments
- Tell a story and have participants make sound effects (swamp symphony)

- To create lyrics – have students list words on board that relate to specific topic, then start putting the words together to create lyrics
- Sounds of animals – play animal sounds and get students to describe or draw the animal they believe would make that sound
- Listen and act activity – play a song and students are to react whenever they hear a particular word or phrase (“whale” – students do arm movements like the spouting of water from a whale)
- Use music at the end of a program to reinforce concepts taught or covered in the program
- Percussion
 - Call and response – one person does something and the audience emulates it
 - Recycled percussion – have participants use recycled percussion instruments
 - Participants can make recycled percussion instruments to use and take
 - ☐ Rattles/Shakers - Empty containers such as soda bottles, film canisters, etc. filled with different items such as beans, rice, sand, bird seed, etc.
 - ☐ Claves - Old broom handles cut to length
 - ☐ Drums – Coffee cans with lids, Water cooler containers, etc.
- Use of instruments: you don’t have to be musically talented to use – there are options
 - Percussion – play without much music talent needed – you and/or the participants can use these
 - Guitar – play and sing together (easiest – chord strums)
 - Harmonica – play, sing, play, sing
 - Trumpet, Saxophone, piano or keyboard, etc...
 - Classroom made instruments
 - ☐ straw kazoo (drinking straw cut to a point)
 - ☐ acorn whistle (blow through acorn cap)
- Using recordings
- Using existing songs

Tips for writing lyrics and music

- Get participants involved – they sing, shout or do movements
- Get participants to write lyrics – if time allows
- Include humor – “leaf turns into a dinner bowl”
- Make it memorable – repeat a key phrase
- Simple is usually better – repeat a key phrase
- Play with words and word pronunciations
- Write down as many words as you can think of that are related to the topic
 - This gives you many to choose from when writing the lyrics
- Start out by writing a simple poem
- Rewrite lyrics to familiar nursery rhymes or songs
- Write several sentences that cover the topic you want to write lyrics about

- Change the order of sentences and reword them to get the last word of sentences to rhyme

Music Resources

- Written songs – carnivorous plants, bats, animals, snakes
- Recordings
- Songs without music – sung or chanted
- Rhymes or poems said aloud
- Invited musicians – professional, personal connections, music teachers from schools, students in music programs
- Internet
 - <http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/Vines/2400/> - the personal web site of Remy Rodden from Canada who maintains a list of performers and articles concerning music in environmental education
 - <http://www.acornnaturalists.com/store/> - store with many environmental education resources including a whole section on art and song
 - <http://www.songsforteaching.com> - another great resource for using music to teach almost any topic including environmental topics
 - <http://www.songsthatteach.com> - Sara Jordan publishing. Site with many educational song resources. They also have a bi-weekly email newsletter.
 - <http://www.rhythmweb.com/homemade/index.html> - homemade percussion instruments
 - http://www.plt.org/cms/pages/21_46_19.html - Project Learning Tree – Billy B “Energy & Me” – Energy learning kit available

“Music doesn’t teach, you do. The songs are merely tools to help you do your job and help your students get involved in the learning.” – Joan Maute

BIRD BOOGIE – Falls Lake SRA program

Activity Instructions:

1. Discuss six birds common to your park.
2. After discussing an individual bird, play the bird call.
3. Demonstrate the dance step for that particular bird to the students.
4. Play the associated song and have the students perform the bird dance.
5. Repeat with each bird.

The information below is listed in the following order for each bird:

Bird; Dance Step; Music; Dance Instructions

Turkey Vulture; The Turkey Vulture Twirl; “Messenger” by Scott Fitzgerald; Have students imitate a turkey vulture’s flight by holding their arms out in a V-shape. Then walk in a circle with outstretched arms and slowly tilting their arms and bodies from left to right.

Humming Bird; Humming Bird Hustle; “Love is in Control” by Donna Summer; Have students form a straight line and flap their arms as fast as they can. Have them move only three steps each time, and move in the following pattern: Left, one-two-three; Right, one-two-three; Forward, one-two-three; Backward, one-two-three; Hover, one-two-three. Repeat those steps during the song.

Mallard Duck; The Mallard Waddle; “In the Mood” by Glen Miller; Have the students tuck their hands under their arm pits and bend their elbows in toward their body. Then have them squat slightly and take short steps, shaking their rear-end after approximately every fourth step.

Barred Owl; The Barred Owl Bop; “Hooch” by Everything; Have the walk in a circle, flapping thwir arms (in a slow swooping motion) as if flying towards their prey. Each time they hear the line “Who’s got the hooch”, they should extend their arms forward, forming their hands into talons or claws and squat down as if catching their prey.

Wild Turkey; The Turkey Strut; “Her Strut” by The Silver Bullet Band; Have the students form a circle. When the music starts, have them place their hands behind their backs using their fingers to form tail feathers. Next, they should bob their heads forward and backward, and take long pronounced steps, (raising each knee high in the air) as they move forward in the circle.

Bobwhite Quail; The Bobwhite Boogie; “Boot Scootin’ Boogie” by Brooks and Dunn; Have students form a circle and face to the right. Have them place their hands on their chest and fold their elbows toward the side of their body. The group should move in a circle taking short steps, and each time they hear the words “boot-scootin’ boogie”, they should turn their backs toward the center of the circle and step back three to four steps. This represents a covey of birds forming a protective circle as they begin to roost.

CALLS OF THE WILD – STORY TIME

In “Calls of the Wild”, each participant is assigned an animal. They are given a card with a picture of the animal and directions on how to make the animal sound (this can be done verbally if you do not have cards pre-made). I have used this to teach which animals are diurnal, nocturnal or crepuscular. The cards are color coded to match a large sun, moon or setting sun that I hold up. When they see the sun or moon that matches their animal, they make their assigned sound. You can take it a step further and tell a story with each group of animals making their sounds at the appropriate times during the story. A modification of this is to tell a story with all the animals in it. When the participant hears their animal name, then they make their animal sound.

BABY BATS

Many species of bats live in colonies. Sometimes there are millions of bats in a single colony. The mother bats leave the roost in the evening to hunt for food. They leave their babies in the safety of the roost. When the mothers return, there can be thousands of baby bats all waiting for their mothers. How does the mother find her baby? She finds him by sound, much like she uses echolocation. Each baby has a distinct cry or call. The mother listens for that call to locate her baby. To simulate this, use several empty film canisters. Fill each canister with different materials: a penny, paperclips, small nails, sand, marbles, etc.. . Make sure each one has a distinct sound. The baby bats that you get to volunteer will shake the canisters all at the same time to simulate all the babies crying for their mothers. Then you will have a mother bat, or several mother bats that have corresponding canisters. The goal is for the mothers to recognize their baby’s call (match the canisters with the same sounds). The easiest way to determine if the volunteers are correct is to number the baby canisters and letter the mother canisters. Have a sheet of paper with the correct numbers matched with letters.

Another option is essentially playing the game 'marco polo' and trying to find your kid. You blindfold the mother bats and have them find the baby bats by voice. It impresses on the kids how good a bat's hearing must be to differentiate between all those (sometimes tens of thousands) of voices.

THE LIVING TREE

We are going to make a living tree out of people to show what is going on inside the tree! (The number of people you get to volunteer for each tree part below depends on the total number in the group, but you will need enough in each ring so they can hold hands around the children in the inner rings.)

The center of the tree trunk is called the **heartwood**. This is dead wood, not rotten. It is just no longer actively doing anything for the tree. This is the part of the tree that provides strength for the tree. Who thinks they would make good heartwood? Pick one person. To the group: what kind of sound and motion do you think the strong heartwood would make? (Let the groups come up with the sounds and movements if you can; something like Grrrr! And imitating a muscle man with arms bent up in the air.) Let the child practice once.

Next from the center we have the **xylem**, which brings water and nutrients from the roots to the leaves. Which 2 people think they would make good xylem? What sound and motion do you think xylem would make? (starting out crouching down, have them say “xylem up” as they stand up) Older xylem cells become part of the heartwood. Have them hold hands and practice once.

Then we have the part that grows and produces new cells. This is called the **cambium**. Pass around the tree cookies and show where the cambium was each year. The light lines show the year’s early growth and the dark line outside the light line is that year’s later growth. So one light line and one dark line make up a year. How old is your tree cookie? (count dark rings) I need 5 volunteers that would make good cambium. So, the cambium is the growing part of the tree, what sound and motion should this group make? (chant “growing, growing, etc.” while circling in one direction, make sure they are holding hands) Let them practice. Cambium produces new xylem, cambium and phloem cells.

How do the roots and the rest of the tree get the food or sugar that the leaves produce? It goes down the tree through the **phloem**. I need 8 volunteers that think they would make good phloem. What sound and motion (standing up have them say “phloem down” as they squat.) Let them hold hands and practice.

There is one last part that protects all of this activity going on inside, what is it? The **bark**! I need the rest of you to come up here and be bark (need at least 11 people, ask adults if you need to!) What sound and motion should the bark of the tree make (chant “I protect, I protect . . . circling in the opposite direction of the cambium.)

Now, we are ready to make our living tree. (Let each group practice one more time individually) Let’s hear the heartwood; the xylem; the cambium; the phloem; the bark. Now everyone together!

For younger kids use the terms bark, roots, leaves, branches, and trunk- words any school age kid can handle. Offering it at two levels will make it appealing across the elementary and middle school spectrum. Umstead State Park’s version for older children uses tap root, lateral roots, bark, xylem, phloem, cambium, heartwood, sapwood, leaves and seeds.

LETS WRITE LYRICS

Select a topic: Pollution, Animals, Plants, etc. . .

Have participants give you related words.

Write them down on something so everyone can see them.

After you have many words written down. Start to make sentences with the words listed. You can do one or two as an example and then have the class come up with ideas out loud (synergy) or do in smaller groups. If you want your sentences to rhyme, try writing several sentences first, and the rewording them to get rhyming words at the end of the sentences.

After the sentences are created, you can put them to music. You can use an existing melody, or make your own. If you have a tune in mind, when the participants are developing their sentences, you can tell participants how many words or even syllables to use in each sentence to match the tune.

SOUNDS OF ANIMALS

Have participants listen to (recorded) sounds of sea animals. The participants are asked to become sailors on early sailing ships and try to sleep, but hearing the unusual sounds they are unable to sleep. The participants are then asked to write, describe or draw a picture of what may have been making the noises.

Reading or singing some sea chanteys, especially some that relate to “monsters” may bring out more creativity. This activity helps participants better understand where the stories of sea monsters originate.

This activity can also be used for other animal sounds. Play calls from the different owls and have participants match the calls with pictures, draw pictures or tell how big they think the owls are. Play frog calls and do the same. Strange bird calls, etc. . .

DRAWING MUSIC

Play music and have participants draw on paper what they hear. Several classical music pieces should work well for this. You can prompt them as to what the music was written about, or leave it to them without any suggestion to see what they come up with. Many music pieces are written around natural themes like thunderstorms, rivers or wind.

A modification to this activity is to interpret music through body movements instead of on paper. In this one, have participants create body movements for different parts of the music. If participants are apprehensive, you can start out seated with only hand and arm movements.

NURSERY RHYME TIME

Recite a few common nursery rhymes. Then let each participant pick one of the rhymes and rewrite the words to it. You can do it individually, paired up, or in groups.

Give them the topic: Pollution, Animals, Plants, Water, Etc...

Give them examples:

(pollution)

Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water,
Jack fell down and broke his crown,
Because he drank the water

(pollution)

Yankee Doodle went to town, a-riding in a Chevy
Couldn't see the street in front, because the smog was heavy
Yankee Doodle clean it up, Yankee Doodle dandy
Yankee Doodle pick it all up, and with the broom be handy

(pollution)

Twinkle, twinkle little star,
How I wonder where you are.
Through this dirt, soot and grime,
It's no wonder you don't shine

(environment)

"When the Saints Go Marching In"

Oh when the vines, begin to sway . . . Oh, how I want to be in that forest
When the rains, begin to fall . . .
When the ants begin to march . . .
When the deer, begin to snort . . .
When the birds, begin to sing . . .

(springtime)

when the flowers, begin to bloom . . .
when the trees, begin to green . . .
when the air, begins to warm . . .

(fall time)

when the leaves, begin to change . . .
when the leaves, begin to fall . . .

With this one, it is easy to have participants come up with an additional line on-the-spot, and then sing it. You can also change the place – Oh, how I want to be in that marsh or swamp etc. .

Percussion

Mexican maracas and African gourd axatse are two examples of rattles and shakers - simple percussion instruments that produce sound when shaken. These instruments are simple to make. Put a handful of buttons, dried peas, beans, or rice into a container such as a yogurt container, coffee can or a pop can. Be sure to replace the lid firmly. Shake the container. How does the sound of the shaker change when different materials are placed inside it?

You can make a good jingling shaker by threading bottle caps on a metal coat hanger or by nailing a series of nails through three bottle caps each, then nailing the nails to a broom- stick.

To make simple drums, use coffee cans or other similar container. Use the plastic lid as a drum head, or make your own using old vinyl pool liner and securing with a large hose clamp. You can also drill or cut sound holes in the container.