Vocal Union Training: Developing Musicianship through Movement
July 2011

Developing Pupils' 'Active' Listening Skills:

We are constantly surrounded by music- on the radio, television, in supermarkets, shopping centres and restaurants. In these contexts it is easy for us to become '**passive consumers**' of music: a situation whereby we are aware of the music but are not emotionally involved with it. As music leaders it is our role to help our pupils to develop '**active listening skills**', therefore lending children the skills in which to engage with the music in a detailed way. The following activities can be used at the beginning of a music session in order to help pupils become more musically alert and aware. Using movement is a useful tool as it reinforces pupils' musical perceptions and also gives the music leader visual feedback as to the way each child is interpreting the music.

1/ The Bossy Signal Song

It's the Bossy Signal Song
The Bossy Signal Song
Are you ready, are you steady?
Open your ears and off we go...

Stand up (C-G)
Sit down (G C)
Tickle your toes (CCCC)
Tickle your nose (C'C'C'C')
Come and make a circle (GFEDC C)
Find your own space (C E G C')

Game 1: The children listen to the song and perform the actions. Introduce the signals gradually (eg. 1 or 2 new signals per session).
Game 2: Transfer the melodic signals to a tuned instrument (eg. set of chime bars). This game requires the children to internalise the melodic shape of each signal.

2/ The Letter Game:

Ask the children to walk around the space with a partner, stepping the beat of the music. When the music stops shout out a letter of the alphabet. The children respond by creating the shape of that letter with their bodies.

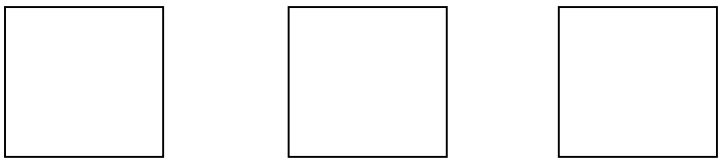
Teaching points: This is a useful activity for developing pupils' spatial awareness, body awareness and cooperation and social skills.

3/The Group Shapes Game: Travel around the space in response to the music. When the music stops ask the group to create a joint shape eg. circle, square, line, diamond.. This game can be made more challenging by changing the rhythmic nature of the music so that it invites the children to move in different ways (walking, jogging, skipping etc.)

Teaching Points: More challenging activity, developing pupils' spatial awareness, quick reactions and inviting pupils to work cooperatively as a group.

Developing pupils RHYTHMIC SKILLS through movement:

1/ Bus Ticket game: Give each child a rhythm card. When they hear their music being played – stand up and step the pattern on their bus ticket. When they hear a trill played on the piano, swap tickets with a friend.



Jogging walk skip-ty

Teaching Points:
Developing pupils' ability to aurally discriminate between rhythmic durations, relating rhythmic patterns to notation.

2/ Rhythmic Sequences:
Create a movement sequence based on the rhythmic durations that you are studying.
Eg. In two lines facing

Walk forward towards partner x4
Walk back from partner x4
Skip past your partner x4
Rotate 180 degrees using 4 sets of **jogging** steps.

- Ask the group to notate the sequence using rhythmic flashcards.

Teaching points:
To explore rhythmic durations as part of a musical sequence; spatial awareness; pulse; learning to dictate a rhythmic pattern using notation.

3/ Adding a Rhythmic Ostinato to a known song:

Ask pupils to compose a 4 beat rhythm pattern and to perform it using body percussion. Use this as an accompaniment to a familiar song eg. Bobby Shaftoe.

Teaching points: Coordination, two-part hearing, rhythmic composition.

The Billy the Skeleton Story and Dance

Fossils from 'The Carnival of the Animals' by Saint-Saens

Billy the skeleton works all day at the factory making skeleton shoes. He uses this piece of music to wake himself up in the morning and starts each day with a skeleton dance.

1/ Rhythm work: Practise the dance by articulating the rhythm patterns in the music using different parts of the body.

2/ Pitch game: Each child lies down in their own special grave with their arms folded. Play ascending/ descending scales on a tuned instrument at different speeds. The children respond by moving in and out of their 'graves' at different speeds.

3/ Explore the structure of the music: The children lie down in their graves and listen to the recording. Ask the children how many times they hear the dance being played. There is also a famous tune to listen out for- do they know what it is?

The children perform the skeleton dance to the recording. During the contrasting middle sections the children sink back into their graves. They are then woken by the return of the rhythmic pattern and perform the dance again until the music stops.

Teaching Points: exploring rhythmic patterns within a creative context; identifying and moving to recurring rhythmic patterns; listening imaginatively and in detail to a piece of classical music.

Exploring the expressive nature of SILENCE:

It is important to allow children the opportunity to experience the wonder of silence. Children often associate silence with being told to 'be quiet'. However, silence is far from being a restrictive nothingness. In stories, poems and music it is often used to add suspense and anticipation…

Eg. 'Daddy Fell into the Pond' by Alfred Noyes

Everyone grumbled. The sky was grey
There was nothing to do and nothing to say.
We were nearing the end of a dismal day,
And there seemed to be nothing beyond,
then……
Daddy fell into the pond (splash)!

Game 1: Perform two versions of the poem to the children, the first with a silent pause after the word 'then', and the second version without. Can the children spot the difference? Discuss with the children what affect the added silence has on the story.
Game 2: Ask the children to step the beat of the poem and to freeze and balance during the silence. They must listen carefully to know when to take the next step following the silent pause.

Experience measured silences (RESTS) within songs and rhymes:

- Mark the rests in a song with an **action**.

See the candle light (blow)
See how big and bright (blow)
See the candle in the window
Blow it out at night (blow)

Sing the song, tapping an imaginary candle (tube or clave) on knee to the beat. 'Blow out the candle' in the rests. This song can be performed as a round.

- **Count** the number of rests in a song.

- Once the children are able to find the rests in a song independently they may enjoy the challenge of **notating the rests**. Using a 'heart sheet', mark where the rests occur in the song with a 'Z' symbol.

More advanced activities with **rests**:

- The Step and blow game: listen to music played on an instrument. Step to the rhythm of the music and blow on the rests. When you hear a trill, go and sit by the appropriate rhythm card.

- Creating a sound and silence duet: rests are so integral to some songs/ pieces of music that they form a part of their own within the musical texture.

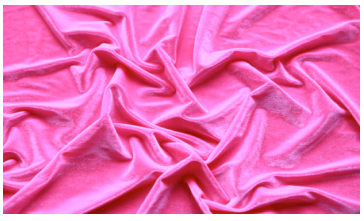
Eg. Creep (sh), mouse (sh), creep (sh, sh), the
Cat has gone to sleep (sh, sh), the
Dog's away, the mice do play---
Creep (sh) mouse (sh) creep (sh, sh
Trad song.

Game : In pairs person A moves a drum to the rhythm of the song and person B taps the pattern of rests on the drum, therefore creating a distinct second part.

Exploring ARTICLUATION in music:

Articulation describes the transition between sounds. E.g. whether the sounds are spiky and detached (staccato) or smooth and flowing (legato). A exploration of this topic allows pupils to engage expressively with music.

Staccato



Legato

Pass the bag: pass two different bags around the circle. The first should contain a spiky item (eg. pineapple) and the second a soft smooth object (eg. piece of silk). Ask the children to describe how the objects feel using expressive language.

Smooth and Spiky walks: Take a walk around space. Imagine that the floor is covered in pineapple skins causing you to hop from one foot to the other. Now imagine that you are

sliding your feet through smooth silk. Accompany these alternating movements with spiky and smooth sounds played on a percussion instrument.

Introducing children to the musical symbols and terminology: Introduce the children to the words 'staccato' (spiky) and 'legato' (smooth). Staccato sounds are represented by dots and legato sounds are represented using smooth lines:

So stac-ca-to So le-ga-to

Exploring articulation in a song: Choose a song that is familiar to the children. Perform the song staccato and then legato. Ask the children to invent accompanying actions eg. When singing the song 'Zum Gali Gali' , make smooth work actions during the legato phrases and detached work actions during the staccato phrases. Explore a range of 4 –phrase songs in this way.

Zum gali gali gali, Zum gali gali
Zum gali gali gali Zum x2

Let us sing with joy as we work,
Let us work with joy as we sing x2