



Play with Sounds

Exploring Musical Instruments and making Instruments

This workshop is an extension of “Play with Sounds”. It further develops the children’s knowledge of music through the exploration of percussion instruments from around the world, hearing every day sounds as music and ultimately learning how to construct their own musical instruments out of raw materials.

The activities described could be used in conjunction with “Play with Sounds” workshop, or as a separate workshop in itself.

It is suitable for children from the ages of five to twelve years old. Some aspects of the workshop may be more suitable for children who are at the older end of this range, but ultimately the activities described below are flexible and can be adapted to suit the needs of the children involved.

The overall aim of this workshop is to develop the children’s awareness of the sounds in their environment and how these sounds can be utilised to make music. They will learn how to transform everyday materials into musical instruments and develop an understanding of how everyday sounds can be heard as music. The children will be encouraged to analyse and explore the different sounds they hear day to day- perhaps at school, in the park or even on a bus. They will explore and investigate ways that everyday objects can be used as instruments- such as drumming on a table.

The children will be introduced to different percussion instruments from around the world; before learning how to make their own. The emphasis of the workshop is on raw materials, so paper, wood, tins, straws and plastic tubes will all be used to construct instruments. The children will experience a sense of achievement as they perform as a group with their instruments in the final workshop session.

Developmental aims and objectives

- The children will come away will develop an increased knowledge of the world around them as they are introduced to musical instruments from diverse cultures. The workshop leader will encourage discussion about the origins of the instruments. This will in turn encourage the children’s conversational and social skills.
- The children’s will develop co-ordination and agility as they experiment with the percussion instruments. They will also refine and develop their fine motor skills as they learn to manipulate raw materials into instruments.
- The children’s musical skills will improve as they play their self made instruments as an “orchestra.” They will learn listening, turn taking and performance skills as well learning how to work as a team- i.e. as an orchestra.
- The children’s knowledge of composition, musical terminology and observational skills will develop as they learn how to distinguish between loud and soft, high and low etc. through the play with sounds musical games. (See full “Play with Sounds” workshop plan for more details)
- Concentration and listening skills will develop as the children are encouraged to analyse and observe the sounds they hear around them.

Example Workshop Plan

Lesson One to Two

The first three lessons of the workshop will focus on the "Play with Sounds" musical games. This is the time when the children talk about and explore the different sounds in their everyday environments. The children learn to recreate these sounds using their voices, their bodies and everyday objects such as drumming on a table. The children learn about sound parameters and the link between music and movement through musical games.

Lesson Three and Four

The children start to learn basic composition skills. They are guided to compose their own simple pieces of music and then to play them using percussion instruments from around the world.

From lesson five onwards the children will compare and contrast the instruments they are constructing with their percussion instrument equivalents from around the world. The workshop leader will encourage the children to explore, and discuss. For example, the teacher will ask the children to compare a pair of South American maracas with a shaker they are making out of tin and dried beans. The teacher may include pictures of South American people playing maracas in her lesson, or a globe, showing the children where South America is.

Lesson Five

The children begin to construct their own percussion instruments using raw materials. This lesson focuses on using rocks and stones, spoons, coconut shells and tins as instruments.

Lesson Six

The children will learn how bottles of different shapes and sizes can be used to make music. They will learn how to make a wooden xylophone and will construct a "glockenspiel" using spanners of different shapes and sizes.

Lesson Seven

This lesson will focus on making shakers out of tins and bottles. The children will experiment with the sounds that nut's, dried beans and dry leaves make inside the tins and bottles. They will explore how to make a chime bar.

Lesson Eight

This lesson will focus on constructing wind instruments. Using plastic tubes and straws to make whistle, flute and trumpet like instruments.

Lesson Nine

Using paper as an instrument- what sounds does it make when we scrunch, hit or blow on it? Preparation for "Home made Instrument" orchestra performance begins.

Lesson Ten

The children perform as an orchestra, using the instruments they have been making for the past lessons.