



SOUND ARTS

MUSIC

YEARS 5-10

lessons at the click of a mouse

ADVENTURES IN SOUND

PROJECT TWO: DRUM SOUNDS

Music Strands:

- Developing Practical Knowledge in Music
- Developing Ideas in Music
- Communicating and Interpreting through Music

Achievement Objectives

- Exploring how sound is made using a variety of conventional and unconventional musical instruments
- Expressing and arranging original ideas in sound
- Developing, refining and sharing performance skills.

Curriculum Levels:

Levels 3-4 (easily adapted to lower levels)

TEACHER INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project is to allow students to explore the sound possibilities of the instruments, perform the discovered sounds, and then refine these sounds to create a musical composition. Students will be encouraged to pay some attention to presentation techniques so as to make the performance as interesting and exciting as possible for the audience.

MATERIALS

DRUMS

- Bongo Drums
- Snare Drums
- Side Drums
- Tom Toms
- Congo Drums
- Bass Drums
- Drum Machine

Many of these drums will be available in your community (brass, pipe and rock bands). Schools commonly have available the following:

- Handy Drums (single skin drum with plastic surround and handle)
- Hand Drums – tunable and untunable
- Tambourines with a skin cover

BEATERS

- Drum Sticks
- Rubber Beaters
- Wooden Beaters
- Wire and Hair Brushes

GETTING STARTED

Ensure each member of a group can have one drum each.

This may mean that the project is completed group by group on a rotating basis.

Sounds can be made in any way at all with the only restriction being that the drum is not to be damaged in any way. Suggest that drums can be played with the hand as well as a variety of beaters. Drums may also:

- be scraped with finger nails
- played with brushes
- scraped with cardboard

Challenge students to use their imaginations.

ACTIVITY ONE – EXPERIMENTATION

Allow time for group and individual experimentation. Suggest that group could be made as well as individual sounds. Get the group to play their discovered sounds to the class for comment. Further examples can include:

- Strike a handy drum and wave the drum backwards and forward to disperse the sound.
- Play many different sound by stroking or striking with different beaters and implements.
- Try a continuous roll using two sticks or beaters.
- Put media such as small gravel on the surface of the drum and strike so the gravel makes a sound as it vibrates on the surface of the drum.
- Sounds can be made by hitting the rim or side of the drum.
- Increase pressure gradually by pushing increasingly harder down on the skin of the drum while striking it. This will increase the pitch of the drum.

ACTIVITY TWO – REFINING OUR SOUNDS

The group task is to refine their sounds to create a musical composition called ‘drum music’. Discuss the following with the students as ways they can refine and compose their music.

- Sounds can vary from loud through to soft.
- Sounds can vary from short through to long.
- Sounds can vary from high through to low.
- Silence can be used to break up the sounds.
- Sounds can be made individually in succession or together.
- Simple rhythms can be used to add interest.
- Two or more simple rhythms can be played after each other or together to create a more complex ‘poly rhythm’.

PROJECT TWO: DRUM SOUNDS

After compositions have been completed, have groups play their compositions to the class. Follow this with discussion as to how effective the music was and how it could be improved. List the musical/sound elements that make up the composition on the board to aid the discussion and challenge the listeners as to its content. Allow time for further practice and then have the revamped composition played again to the class.

Challenge the students to perform the composition to the class to make it as exciting as possible for the listeners. What will they have to do to achieve this? Discuss. **eg**

- *The audience could be seated in a circle with eyes closed and the drummers could surround them for the performance. Take care that loud drums are not banged close to the ears of the listeners.*

Set each group the task of writing down their composition so they can remember it and others can play it. Use graphic notation to represent the different drum sounds. Remember that any form of graphic notation can be used and this can be invented by the students.

ACTIVITY THREE – FURTHER ACTIVITIES

- In your own group or combined with other groups, make up a dance to go with the drum music.
- Search for CDs and Videos of drummers and drum dances to play to the class.
- Invite drummers to demonstrate their instruments to the class – pipe band drummers, brass band drummers, jazz drummers, rock and hip hop drummers ...
- Invite your local music store owner or a rock band drummer to demonstrate a drum machine and/or electric drums to the class.
- If you have a computer application such as Garage Band, have students explore the drum loops of the programme.
- Combine your drum music with metal sounds and tuned percussion sounds.
- Use library books and search the web for instructions on making different types of drums.
- Combine skin drum sounds with metal drum sounds.
- Arrange drums from lowest to highest pitch and plan a composition based on three main levels of pitch – high, middle and low.
- Introduce the idea of rhythms. Compose drum music using several repeated rhythms. If four different rhythms are used, have the group go through the four rhythms in sequence and then combine two or more rhythms. Make up a dance to go with each rhythm.

- Challenge groups to compose new music for drums that does not have any rhythm at all but rather concentrates on pitch and volume, **eg**
 - *high, middle and low sounds*
 - *loud, medium and soft sounds*
- Conduct library and web research to find out the place of drums in different cultures around the world.
- Add voice sounds and/or chants to the drum music previously composed.
- Add melodic wooden sounds from xylophones to the drum music. Use the pentatonic scale (remove every f and b) so no note clashes with any other.
- Evaluate the music performed. Why were some more exciting and interesting than others? Concentrate on the following elements of music and compose further drum music to incorporate these different elements:
 - *fast, medium and slow*
 - *loud medium and soft*
 - *high, middle and low pitch*
 - *silence of differing lengths.*