



SOUND ARTS

MUSIC

YEARS 5-10

lessons at the click of a mouse

ADVENTURES IN SOUND

PROJECT SIX: SONIC CIRCUS

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

This project gives suggestions for designing and performing a 'carnival of sound' to other classes and parents. A large area such as a school hall should be used but a classroom cleared of furniture or a corridor could also be adequate. Sound environments are constructed around the outside for the audience to be guided through or allowed to explore at their leisure.

It is suggested that lighting and textural effects are added to the environments to add excitement to the presentation of the circus.

PLANNING THE SONIC CIRCUS

Part One

This section of the circus will consist of prepared music played to the audience who are seated in a central position. Examples could include:

- *metal music composed previously (eg music for triangles)*
- *drum music composed previously, including a dance*
- *wood music composed previously*
- *paper music composed previously*
- *any music composed in previous projects.*

Additions could include:

- **A soundscape for ghetto blasters** – four to six ghetto blasters each playing contrasting styles of music, moving around the audience. Ensure the music is totally contrasting in style such as rock, jazz, hip-hop, electronic, folk, country ...

Aim for contrast using different volumes, density and style in the presentation. The 'players' could be static and then move around the audience as well as closer and further away and/or combinations of both. The soundscape for ghetto blasters could also be combined with other music previously played.

• **A soundscape for electric current.**

This soundscape is created by home and workshop electric appliances and workshop tools and could include:

- *electric toothbrush*
- *egg beater*
- *vacuum cleaner*
- *electric carving knife (no blades)*
- *electric can opener*
- *electric fan*
- *electric drier*
- *electric coffee grinder*
- *electric drill (minus bit).*

Aim for contrast in volume, density, pitch, length and silence in soundscape created by these 'instruments'.

Part Two

This section will consist of several mini sound and sensory environments constructed around the outside of the area that the audience can be guided through or explore in sequence. Environments could include:

- **A New Zealand Kitchen Breakfast Scene.** Morning rush in the kitchen could include radios on different stations, the rustle of a newspaper, kitchen appliances, talking, toast being buttered, sound of cornflakes ... Sounds could be recorded and a static display created or real actors could act out the scene as the audience passes through the kitchen.
- **A Beautiful Garden Walk.** A garden area could be constructed using paper and cardboard/ pot plants, tub plants, flowers etc. to create the impression of being in a beautiful garden. Recorded and/or live sounds are used to enhance the realism of the environment. Sounds could include bird sounds, gentle wind sounds, insects, water dripping, crunching of feet on leaves (dead leaves could be placed on the path). The impression should be of serenity and calm – the exact opposite of the kitchen scene.
- **A Violent Storm.** A covered and dark environment with the sounds of thunder, howling wind, driving rain, creaking of trees, snapping branches, roaring streams, lightning flashes... Some sounds could be made live such as cardboard being flapped to create thunder while other sounds could be created and pre-recorded.
- **A Jungle Environment.** Thick vines created from paper and cardboard plus luxuriant trees and plants. Sounds could include jungle animals, birds and insects.
- **A City Environment.** This could be constructed from cardboard used for buildings. Sounds could include sirens, cars, motor bikes, buses, crowd noises, paper boys, construction sites ...



PROJECT SIX: SONIC CIRCUS

- **A Tunnel environment** for the audience to crawl through.
- **A Room of Paper** to walk through.
- **A Haunted House Environment** .

ACTIVITIES

Start with a class discussion to plan the type and number of environments that will be constructed. List these and divide the class into interest groups to plan each environment in greater detail. Groups report back to the class who comment and provide suggestions for improvement.

DIVISION OF LABOUR

- Each group will be responsible for constructing at least one environment.
- Some division of labour may be necessary within each group with some students concentrating on the construction of the environment while others collect and record sounds. Some group members could concentrate on devising mimes or dramatic sequences that could take place within the environment.

TEACHER SUGGESTIONS

- Have a mixture of both live and recorded sounds.
- Have contrasting sounds in terms of pitch, dynamics, density and volume. Don't forget 'silence'.
- Have different levels in the environments so the audience ...

... will have to crawl, squeeze, climb etc.

- Use lighting for special effect. Black light (UV) could be used in conjunction with dazzle paint that will glow brightly.
- Have hanging mobiles of different textures for the audience to brush past.
- Have mimes or dramas in some of the environments.

PRESENTATION OF THE SONIC CIRCUS

Although there are many ways this could be done, the following is one suggested sequence.

- The audience are seated in the middle of a dimmed hall and invited to close their eyes and listen to a presentation of the prepared music, **eg** *music for drums followed by music for paper, followed by music for metal followed by a soundscape for ghetto blasters.*
- The audience are then guided through the sound environments by class member guides. Start at different parts of the hall and then assemble the audience back in the centre once they have experienced the environments.
- The sonic circus then concludes with another presentation of prepared music such as 'soundscape for electric current'.
- The audience are then invited to re-explore the environments at their leisure.