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Teaching Music Concepts through Games

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Teaching Music Concepts through Games

by Gennie Eldridge

In Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements of

Honors MUSC 481.0

Ouachita Baptist University

Presented to

Mr. George Keck

Fall, 1974

B I L L O F R I G H T S

Let me grow as I be
And try to understand why I want to grow like me;
Not like my Mom wants me to be,
Nor like my Dad hopes I'll be
or my teacher thinks I should be..
Please try to understand and help me grow
Just like me!

Gladys Andrews, Creative Rhythmic
Movement for Children, 1954, Prentice-Hall,
Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

Teaching Music Concepts Through Games

By Gennie Eldridge

The purpose of this Honors Project is to derive games and visual aids to help a child learn different musical concepts. From my own experiences of being a student and from teaching piano, it is my opinion that the more creative and versatile a teacher is, the more a child will learn. By using a little imagination and/or improvising on already well-known games, such as BINGO, any teacher can make his or her teachings more of a learning experience for the child. It is a well-known fact that children dislike practicing, but by presenting different concepts in a way that challenges them, yet makes the learning fun, it is surprising how much they will want to learn on their own. All of the games I have presented in this project have been tested in my own teaching. The children enjoyed them, and I thought they taught them a very workable knowledge of many concepts of music.

The maze of intervals which came from Frances Clark's method book Pencil Play A and the "drop-the-needle" game which I got from Mr. George Keck's music literature class are not my own ideas. The other games are. Using creative material such as those presented in this project not only gives a child a better out-look on music, but also makes teaching much more fun and more of a learning experience for the teacher. I found

that the more the children enjoyed learning, the more the teacher enjoyed teaching.

In the activities that are presented, I have given the purpose of the game, in which I have stated what the children will learn from it; the materials that are needed to perform the game; and how the activity is to be used. Sometimes there is more than one variation to the game. They all can be made easily and economically.

These games are primarily centered around the beginning piano student, but they can also be used in a public school classroom. In that case, they would give some variety to the limited time spent in teaching music in the classroom and if taught by the regular classroom teacher would make teaching music much easier.

Creating ideas are not hard. Studying different method books and using logic in how a certain concept should be taught, the ideas will come easily. It should be just as exciting for the teacher to present a new concept as it is for the child to learn it.

I. MUSICAL LADDERS

Purpose: To teach children about tetrachords and how every key (example--the Key of C) relates to the other keys by use of tetrachords in the circle of fifths.

Materials: the fifteen musical ladders and crayons.

How to use: Use one of the musical ladders to show that it makes up an octave. Talk about the division of the octave into two tetrachords and show how the two tetrachords are just alike. Have the child write the scale degrees of the Key of C on the ladder. Let him color one tetrachord with another crayon. He can experiment with the tetrachords by using four fingers of each hand and placing them on the ladder, then transfer the technique to the keyboard. Now, let the child write the scale degrees of the Key of G on another ladder, and let him see whether there is anything alike on that ladder with the Key of C ladder. When he sees that the second tetrachord of the Key of C is like the first tetrachord of the Key of G, have him color it the same color. If he can see the pattern of the circle of fifths, let him continue the sharp keys by himself. The same can be done with the flat keys, for example, matching the first tetrachord of the Key of C with the second tetrachord of the Key of F. When all the ladders are completed have the child go back and circle all flats or sharps that fall on a black key with a black crayon and if they fall on a white key (example--C^b) circle with a contrasting crayon. This will give him more familiarity with the keyboard.

Further Use: These ladders can be used when the child starts to transpose. After giving him a one chord piece of which he has already made a pitch picture, have him transpose that piece to all fifteen keys by using the musical ladders to help him.

II. "PIANO" GAME

Purpose: To teach different musical terms, people, and signs to a child through an interesting means.

Materials: The game boards (made out of poster board), strips of paper labeled with a musical term, person, or sign to be drawn, and popcorn kernels for marking.

How to use: This game is similiar to the game of BINGO. Each child is given a board and some popcorn kernels. The teacher draws apiece of paper for the child to find. If someone has it, the child must first say something about the term or sign in question before he can put a kernel of popcorn down. When a child has completely filled a vertical or horizontal line, he shouts "Piano" and wins. To make the game more complicated, let the child cover the whole board before one can shout "Piano".

III. FLASH CARDS

Purpose: A method used to teach musical terms, signs and key signatures.

Materials: Flash cards made of poster board.

How to use:

Method 1: The flash cards are used similiar to the normal flash card method of holding up a card and having the children raise their hands to be called on inorder to tell the answer. The child with the most correct answers wins the game.

Method 2: This method is derived from the childhood game of "Mother May I?". Have the children line up in a straight line across the room. The first child in line is shown a card. If he misses the answer the next child in line gets a chance to answer it. You go down the line giving each child a chance to answer. The child who gets to the "finish line" first wins the game.

Method 3: The cards used for this method of teaching is on the individual basis. The term or sign is on the front side of card, and on the back the definition or answer. The child can drill himself by seeing whether he can answer the card. If not, he can turn the card over and read the correct answer.

IV. SOFT/LOUD POSTER

Purpose: The poster is to teach the concept of soft and loud by using pictures of animals or other familiar objects to help the child distinguish between loud and soft noises.

Materials: Pictures of animals and other objects (drum, horn, etc.)

How to use: To explain the concept of loud and soft, have the poster motivate the child's ideas. Explain why the baby chick would be soft and the donkey loud. Let them name other animals or objects which remind them of soft and loud noises. Next, take turns at the keyboard and see whether they can make up sounds, either loud or soft, that reminds them of an animal or object that is called out by another child. This enables the child to become creative at the keyboard.

V. SCALE DEGREES POSTER

Purpose: To teach scale degrees going up and down.

Materials: The poster

How to Use: This can be used when teaching an octave scale. It can also be used to teach whole and halfsteps. Have the child play a scale (Key of C) going up. Let him see that each note sound is a degree higher in pitch. Next, let him play the C scale up and down in order to see that each note sound is a degree lower in pitch.

On a second poster or a chalk board, place the scale degrees on a staff all mixed up, so the child can name the scale degree. This is a lead to teaching intervals.

VI. INTERVAL SPEED RACE

Purpose: A fun and competitive way of learning intervals and becoming familiar with the note order of the keyboard.

Materials: A stop watch, time chart and keyboard.

How to Use: After learning intervals, try this race. It lasts for several weeks, and children enjoy it. First, have a time chart with the intervals of seconds up, seconds down; thirds up, thirds down; fourths up, down; fifths up, down; sixths up, down; sevenths up, down; octaves up, down; and chromatics up and down, along the top. Next, write the child's name along the left side with four squares under each interval. Have a child start with seconds up. Start him at the bass end of the piano with the lowest note and time him to see how fast he can name the interval all the way up to the top of the keyboard. Record his time in the first of the four squares under the designated interval. Each child follows in turn. This is one drill, because of competition, which the child will practice at home, in order not to become beaten by other students. Do each interval in this manner. By the time you have done this four times one will not only be surprised at the progress in time they have made, but also one will be recognized that they find no trouble in recognizing notes on the keyboard, in addition to improvement in sightreading and playing skill.

VII. HAUNTED HOUSE GAME

Purpose: To teach a better working knowledge of intervals.

Materials: The keyboard.

How to Use: This is a fun way of practicing intervals as a group. Have as many children as there are octaves on the keyboard, each having an octave. Begin on C, with each child playing his C. Call out an interval and have them play it. As they become better acquainted with this game they will play simultaneously and it will sound like a haunted house (they named this game themselves). This game usually shows who needs help on intervals.

VIII. MAZE OF FOURTHS

Purpose: To see whether a child can recognize intervals on a staff.

Materials: The poster.

How to Use: This can be done with any interval. Draw a maze with a particular interval making a path from start to end and other intervals mixed in with it. Have the children try to find their way through the maze. It adds a variety to learning intervals. This could become a crossword puzzle instead of a maze.

IX. LINOLEUM STAFF GAME

Purpose: To teach a child to recognize notes on the staff.

Materials: A staff on a long piece of linoleum, moveable clef signs, a puck (note) and a broom stick handle.

How to Use: Have a child stand with the puck and broom stick handle at the opposite end from the clef sign. Have another child stand in front of the staff. The child on the end will push with the broom stick handle the puck and where it lands, either on a space or a line, have the child in front name the note. Change the moveable clef signs so the children will have experience naming notes on both clefs.

X. HIGH/LOW POSTER

Purpose: To teach the child the concept of high and low.

Materials: The poster.

How to Use: Like the soft/loud poster, explain the concept first, then

have the children come up with their own ideas of high and low.

You can use this concept with the help of the body. As you play a song that is high, have the children reach up high; if it is low, have them squat down; if it is in the middle, have them stretch their arms out in front of them. This helps them to be aware of pitch and to recognize whether it is high or low. At first, make the distance between high and low large, but as the child gets more advance make the distance smaller until it is only a half step apart. This will help them in ear training and musical dictation in the future.

XI. INNER TUBE

Purpose: To teach rhythm.

Materials: An inner tube.

How to use: Have the children line up in two lines behind the inner tube. As either the teacher plays the piano or a record is played, have the first child in each line hold hands with the other so they won't fall off, and bounce up and down on the inner tube, keeping time to the music. Change the speed and type of music so they can experience different rhythms and tempos. As they progress in this, have them bounce just on the primary beat, then on both the primary and secondary beats. This creates a sense of rhythm for the children by using their bodies.

XII. POSTERS OF INSTRUMENTS

Purpose: To teach the child about other kinds of musical instruments and how they are used.

Materials: Pictures and information about musical instruments.

How to Use: This can be used like an "instrument of the month" idea.

Have a picture of an instrument placed on a bulletin board and study this instrument in class. Sometimes have it there so the children can examine and play it. Also have records with that particular instrument playing. It can be used with other things besides instruments. It can help the children to learn about quartets, trios, orchestras, etc. If it is changed on a certain day, you will be surprised at how many of the children will go to the bulletin board and see the change.

XIII. DART BOARD GAME

Purpose: A different method in helping children learn musical concepts.

Materials: A dart board made out of cork and some darts, and a heavy piece of cardboard.

How to Use: Have the dart board divided into sections, with each section worth different amount of points and the "bull's-eye" worth the most points. Place it on the floor on top of a large size of heavy cardboard. Let each child throw a dart, one at a time. According to the number of points he landed on, ask the child a question. For example, if he landed on an answer worth three points then that question would be easier than a question worth nine points. These questions can be changed each time it is used. In most cases they should be about things already studied, like a review.

XIV: COMPOSER OF THE MONTH

Purpose: To teach the children about different composers, their lives and their works.

Materials: Pictures, information and works of composers.

How to Use: Post every month on a bulletin board a new composer.

Talk about him in class, telling all of the interesting things that children remember. Learn some of his works so that they will be able to recognize a piece by that composer. It is really surprising when they hear a piece that they have studied, that they will call out the name of it and the composer.

XV. DROP THE NEEDLE

Purpose: To help the children recognize works of composers, or different instruments or important works.

Materials: Recordings of the above mentioned.

How to Use: Like in music literature class, you would use this to help the children learn to recognize a wide repertoire of composers and works. You would "drop the needle" on a familiar place on a piece and see whether the children can recognize it. If so, see whether they can tell the name of the piece, the composer and maybe something about it. It is necessary to start this early in a child's musical experience. This may be the only musical training he may receive, so this will make his overall education more broad.

XVI. THE KEY CLUB

Besides musical games and visual aids to make music interesting, I think the over all concept of learning how to play the piano should be made interesting. That is why I came up with the Key Club. It gives credit for lesson requirements and extra achievements. It covers many areas and is a learning and motivation technique in it's own right. The following is a letter that is given to the parents of the students and information about the levels and requirements of the club and a practice record sheet that keeps up with each child's assignments. Since this project deals primarily with the beginning student, I am presenting only the first level.

The children enjoy this club and will work hard toward this. In all, the same material is probably presented, maybe more, as the usual "gut and dried" piano lesson, but it is presented with variety and catered more toward the child and keeping him interested while he learns.

Dear Parent:

1. As a member of my studio _____ is eligible to participate in the studio sponsored Key Club, and earn awards based on lesson requirements and extra achievements.
2. Information about Key Club activities and goals will be found in his studio workbook.
3. I know you will help him attain these goals, especially those which need parental supervision, such as:
 - a. Practice daily including sight reading and written work.
 - b. Bring to every lesson
 - 1) All assigned music
 - 2) Workbook
 - 3) Assignment book or sheet
 - 4) Completed written work
 - c. Earn extra credit (activities especially suitable for the home).
 - 1) Make reports on
 - A) Music
 - B) Composers
 - C) Concerts you attend
 - D) Concerts you heard on radio or T.V.
 - 2) Play for family, friends, school, church and others
 - 3) Play musical games
 - 4) Compose a song
 - 5) Try anything else not mentioned above within the field of music.

4. Students achieve Key Club promotions (green, red and blue keys) for completing minimum requirements and may receive special awards for maximum participation.

5. With both of us, parent and teacher, working together

_____ can become a successful, well-rounded musician and have fun doing it.

Sincerely,

P.S. Please discuss the enclosed Key Club Information sheet with your child and see that it is placed in his studio workbook.

Key Club Information

I. Name

Key Club---so named because we learn to play and write music in all keys.

II. Purpose

- A. Make music more interesting.
- B. Encourage participation in all phases of music.
- C. Reward effort with recognition.
- D. Measure achievement level.

III. Goals

Progressive learning bases^d on requirements of State and National Music Teachers Association, National Guild of Piano Teachers, and leading conservatory entrance requirements.

IV. Membership

All students are eligible to attend Key Club meetings and to work toward membership goals and awards.

V. Meetings

- A. Play for group.
- B. Learn to listen constructively.
- C. Become acquainted with new repertoire.
- D. Meet others with common interests.
- E. Receive public recognition for performance and Key Club accomplishments.
- F. Develop enthusiasm by discovering what others are doing.

VI. Levels

Key Club Membership

Green Key

Red Key

Blue Key

Junior

Green Key

Red Key

Blue Key

Senior

Student Teaching

Content of Lesson Material--First Level

Keyboard geography; landmarks

know keys names

Rhythms: Clapping and stamping

chanting of syllables

sing note values

Techniques: Developing hand positions

use of fingers

use of arms and body

Playing: By listening, singing, and rote

sing song before play it

sing rhythm

play by ear what heard

Improvising: Create own song

have music describe a story

questions and answers

transpose

Requirements for Key Club

Membership

1. Basic reading (simple sight reading)
2. Know what a key and a scale is
3. Know the keyboard (up,down, and skips)
4. Play simple songs (five finger patterns)
5. Theory--understand how music is made up
6. Finish music ladders
7. Performance

First Level

1. Ability to read music
2. Play at least one piece in any flat or sharp key
3. Color and paste into workbook all fifteen ladders
4. Attend club meetings
5. Play in public one piece
6. Start musical dictionary
7. Keep track of a month's daily practice.

The Child's Bill of Rights in Music

I.

Every child has the right to full and free opportunity to explore and develop his capacities in the field of music in such ways as may bring him happiness and a sense of well-being; stimulate his imagination and stir his creative activities; and make him so responsive that he will cherish and seek to renew the fine feelings induced by music.

II.

As his right, every child shall have the opportunity to experience music with other people so that his own enjoyment shall be heightened, and he shall be led into greater appreciation of the feelings and aspirations of others.

III.

As his right, every child shall have the opportunity to make music through being guided and instructed in singing, in playing at least one instrument both alone and with others, and, so far as his powers and interests permit, in composing music.

IV.

As his right, every child shall have opportunity to grow in musical appreciation, knowledge, and skill, through instruction equal to that given in any other subject in all the free public educational programs that may be offered to children and youths.

V.

As his right, every child shall be given the opportunity to have his interest and power in music explored and developed to the end that unusual talent may be utilized for the enrichment of the individual and society.

"The Child's Bill of Rights in Music."
Copyright: Music Educators Journal, April-May,
1950.

In Conclusion, as stated in "The Child's Bill of Rights in Music", every child has a right to learn as much as he can. As a teacher, it should be exciting to see children's minds grow because of your guiding hand. In doing this project I could see many, many possibilities of teaching musical concepts and the prospective knowledge a child could have. I feel it is the teacher's fault if a child is bored and can no longer be motivated. Learning should be a challenge both to the student and to the teacher. The following statement sums it up:

The possibilities of using new and different technology in teaching music creatively are limited only by the teachers' imagination and willingness to keep up to date.

From Music in American Society, an interpretive report of the Tanglewood Symposium. Music Educators National Conference, 1968, p. 53.