

Teacher lesson idea

Woodland symphony

Lightning strikes can have the effect of hollowing out trees - tall trees act as a convenient conductor to the ground, especially when wet. A 700 year old oak tree on the Marks Hall Estate in Essex is a good example of this. Having been hollowed out, this has created a ready-made wooden drum. It has been used as part of a musical symphony by combining with other natural sounds and some instruments added. You don't need to have a hollow tree to make a similar symphony. Try some of the ideas below.



Ancient oak at Marks Hall Estate. Alison Ratcliffe

Lesson idea

Ideas for sounds:

rustling leaves in a shoe box
 beech nut cases in a crisp tube
 various sized sticks to knock together
 a ridged stick to scrape
 different sizes of hollow logs (some will produce bass notes, others higher sounds)
 instruments such as rain shaker & bull roarer (flat wood & string)

The aim is to produce a rhythmic composition by beating out the syllables of woodland words using various 'instruments'.

Choose words with different numbers of syllables to represent different beats.

Some good examples are:

4 beats	cat-er-pill-ar
	bu-nny ra-bbit
3 beats	bu-tter-fly
	spa-rrow hawk
2 beats	spi-der
1 beat	bee

- Split the class into groups and allocate a word and accompanying instruments.
- Get them to think of the character of the creature eg hoppy, flitting, buzzy. Each group is given time to explore the rhythm of their word.
- Bring the class back together.
- Get each group to perform their rhythms one after another to the rest of the class.
- The teacher then acts as the conductor and introduces each sound one after the other until all the groups have been incorporated into the woodland symphony to produce a layered effect.(e.g. after each count of 4, the next group could begin).

Encourage the groups to perform their rhythms both quietly and loudly to see what effect it has on the symphony.


































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The composition could be further developed by writing a graphic score (see below) on a long paper roll eg wallpaper with woodland pictures or symbols instead of notes. Each picture could be written on a different line of the staff and at different intervals so that the children have to concentrate on when to play and when to remain silent.

A graphic score is a non-traditional way of representing music. Instead of notes, pictures are used. It gives performers more responsibility for what they play. It should be written down in a way that represents the sound as closely as possible and makes sense to the performer.

Caterpillar								
Bunny rabbit								
Butterfly								
Sparrow hawk								
Spider								
Bee								

Teacher's notes

For further information on graphic scores and how to use them see the Music Teacher's Resource Site: www.mtrs.co.uk

