

WIRES STRINGS

& OTHER THINGS

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY PACK

WIRES, STRINGS & OTHER THINGS

Introduction

Wires, Strings & Other Things is a new music show for Ages 6+ composed by Brian Irvine and directed by Wouter Van Looy. This show is a music performance that encourages you to always be curious. To listen, respond to and communicate through the sounds, music and stories that are all around you – wherever you are and whoever you are with.

This specially prepared accompanying classroom pack shares a number of accessible activities encouraging active listening, the use of voice, movement, sound and creation of compositions. These activities link in with the listening and responding, performing and composing strands of the Music curriculum.

Invention is a core theme of *Wires, Strings & Other Things* and this pack creates an opportunity to discover the inventors and composers in your class. These activities and games are intended to create openness and freedom within composition. Each child is an explorer in the world of sound and we are excited to see what they find!

How to use this pack:

We aim for this pack to be used to further explore the performance of *Wires, Strings & Other Things* with your pupils in the classroom before, or after attending the show. The use of these activities will enhance and deepen the children's understanding of the performance as well as supporting their overall musical development.

All of the processes in this pack are linked closely to the core theme of invention in *Wires, Strings & Other Things*. However, the processes used in these activities are open and can be adapted to different themes and subjects throughout the academic year. In this way cross-curricular integration and linkage with a range of curricular subjects is both supported and encouraged.

ACTIVITY 1: LISTEN!

This activity encourages active listening, focusing on familiar sounds in the pupil's environment.

What does silence sounds like, does it actually exist?

Put on a timer for 60 seconds and ask the entire class to do their best to stay quiet. During this time, ask them to think about the following:

- What do you hear inside your body?
- What do you hear inside the classroom?
- What do you hear from the world outside?

When the 60 seconds is finished, ask the students to name all the things they heard and write them on the blackboard. Discuss the different sounds and see if anyone can come up with something that no one else heard?

What were the most surprising sounds you heard?

Use these questions to prompt further class conversation:

- Is there anywhere in the whole world where there are no sounds?
- What is the most unusual sound you ever heard? And where did you hear it?

ACTIVITY 2: EXPLORE!

This playful activity focuses on the use of voice and movement.

Can you make up a new sound using only your voice or body?

Using these prompts, ask the children to take a few moments to make sounds:

- Whisper REALLY quietly or shout REALLY high!
- What sounds can you make with your mouth closed?
- How many different sounds can you make?
- Explore breathing really fast or very slow. What difference does it make to the sounds?

Now let's try with our body.

- Pick two parts of your body and try to clap them together. For example, your foot and hand, or your lips and shoulders. Does it make a sound? Can you find your very own sound?

Next, start a game, asking one pupil to make ANY sound they like with their voice or body. Then instruct the second pupil to copy the sound and to add their own sound. The third pupil then copies the first and second sound and adds their own new sound. The fourth pupil copies the first three sounds and adds their own sound and this carries on around the classroom. This gets more difficult as it goes beyond three sounds.

See how many sounds your class can remember in order!

ACTIVITY 3: INVENT YOUR OWN INSTRUMENT!

This activity encourages improvisation and the creation of original sounds or tunes using homemade instruments and found sound sources.

How many different sounds can you invent?

After completing activity two, we will now focus on sounds outside of our body. Ask your pupils to look around, what do you see that makes a noise? Discuss the different sound sources.

Then ask your pupils to use their pencil to tap different objects and surfaces. This activity can also be done as homework, as a great place to look for sound sources is in the kitchen! There are cupboards of pots and pans, and drawers of different types of sticks like cutlery or wooden spoons.

Ask your pupils to tap the same objects or surfaces using something other than their pencil: a pen, a stick etc.

- Are the sounds the same? Listen carefully.
- Are some high or low?
- Are some loud or soft?
- What if you scrape instead of tapping?
- See what happens if you use your finger tips or blow on your object?

**Tip! Another great place to find strange noises is in the recycling bin, make sure your objects are clean before trying them out!!*

Challenge!

Ask your pupils to try lots of sounds in their home or in the classroom. Note that anything that makes a sound is an instrument! Ask them what's their favourite instrument that they made? How many different sounds do the class come up with? Are some of them the same or similar?

ACTIVITY 4: BRING YOUR FAVOURITE SOUND TO SCHOOL!

This activity encourages communication through thoughtful selection of sound and mood.

What sounds did everyone discover?

After completing activity three, ask your pupils to bring their favourite 'instrument' from home into school. Ask the pupils one by one, to discuss their 'instrument', are they getting any more ideas for what they might like to try later?

Next ask the pupils whether they can copy the sound of the 'instruments' with their mouth or body. Ask each child to show and play the sound of their instrument for the class. Then see if the class can make that sound, it's fun to see what everyone's interpretation of that sound is! They can use any part of their body, mouth or voice. Name and notate!

Once the pupils have worked out how to make the sound with their body or voice, ask them to give it a name. It can be as simple as “wooden spoon on silver pan” or as imaginative as “Jimmy’s extraordinary yogurt machine”. It’s completely up to them.

Ask your pupils to create a written symbol that represents this sound. This symbol can be ANYTHING they like! It can look like the instrument it came from or look like the sound it makes, an explosion of raindrops or a picture of the sea. It’s completely up to them!

ACTIVITY 5: DESCRIBE

This activity focuses on developing the child’s creativity and uniqueness.

How many different ways can music sound?

Ask your class to think about one sound and try to make it sound lots of different ways:

- Try making to sound really slowly
- Try make it as high as you can
- Try make it as quietly as possible

The class can do this together or try one at a time using sounds found in activity 4.

With your class, talk about the different descriptions they would use to describe their sounds? Here’s some examples to get the class started, can they think of more?

- High
- Low
- Fast
- Slow
- Crazy
- Calm
- Spikey
- Smooth
- Long
- Short
- Excited
- Sleepy

ACTIVITY 6: GESTURES, BODY MOVEMENTS AND FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

This activity provides an avenue for self-expression, developing improvisation and creation skills.

Can you communicate without sound?

After completing activity 5, this activity aims to see if we can communicate without sound!

Prepare pieces of paper with all of the descriptions from activity five; high, low, calm, spikey etc.

- Ask each child to pick one piece of paper/ description from a container – like a raffle!
- Then ask the pupil to act out the description without sound, similar to Charades but acting out the description. They can use their body to go in slow motion, act really sleepy, or make faces to express the related emotion, happy and sad etc.
- Ask the class to guess what each pupil is acting out?

ACTIVITY 7: COMPOSE!

This activity focuses on creating graphic scores and arrangements.

What are your favourite sounds?

Now it's time to make a piece of music using your class's favourite sounds and descriptions.

The class will pick 6 of their favourite sounds from activity 4.

- Use a die to decide the order of sounds.
- Roll the die 10 times and write the symbols in order on the board.
- Divide the class into 6 groups, each group will be in charge of making one sound.
- Each group will decide which descriptions to add from activity 6 to each sound.

Each group can decide how long they're going to make each sound for in seconds. Each group will have something like this for their sound.....

Group 1: Name of sound / Symbol for sound
Description / Number of seconds
"wooden spoon on silver pan" / @\$% (Spikey) /
5 seconds

Then using the die it might be an order like this....Group 4, Group 2, Group 3, Group 4, Group 6, Group 1, Group 5, etc.

Once every group has shared their sound and the order/arrangement of the sounds has been decided using a die, see how it sounds! Ask the group to perform it! A conductor may be needed to point out which sounds are next, pupils can take turns being the conductor and see if it changes the music!

ACTIVITY 8: STORY TELLING

This activity focuses on active listening and interpretation.

Can we tell a story with sounds?

Ask your class to think about the sounds the class have made:

- What do they sound like?
- Do they remind you of anything? Maybe it sounds like lots of birds, or a river, or a big battle?
- Could you write a story to go with the sounds?

Challenge!

Ask your class to create a story using whatever they imagined the class sounds to be and what they heard during activity 7.

They can then decide where to put in sound effects!

They can put the sounds in any order, use ANY directions they like and use the sounds as many times as they like.

Here is an example story.....

Amy and Joe were taking a walk on the beach
Sound 3, Calm, 4 seconds

Then they came across a dog
Sound 2, Loud, 2 seconds

The dog was looking for its ball which had gone into the sea
Sound 6, Spikey, 6 seconds

When the story and sound effects are ready, ask each pupil to read their story out loud while pointing to each group when it's their time to make their sound. They should use gestures and facial expressions from activity 6 to tell each group if they want them to be fast or slow, loud or quiet...

*Tip: They can practice their story by themselves to make sure that they like the sounds they have picked for their story. Also, they can perform it for their family when they're at home!

ACTIVITY 9: RANDOM MUSIC

This activity draws an awareness to the structure of music, the patterns, tempos and rhythm.

What if no one writes the music? Can we find ways to see music around us?

Give each pupil a piece of string. Ask them to drop it on the floor and see what shape it makes. What kind of sound do they think this shape makes? If it goes up what would that sound like? If it is all squiggly would that sound different? Ask them to move their string into any shape and see if their friends can sing what that shape sounds like?

Now, ask your pupils to look around the classroom and see if they can see patterns, shapes and colours that could be music. Ask them to look at the pattern of how the tables are arranged in the classroom, can they sing the shape and pattern? If there are children running in the playground, it creates a pattern, ask them to sing the pattern they imagine!

ACTIVITY 10: MAKE YOUR VERY OWN GRAPHIC SCORE

This activity focuses on improvisation and creation through the creation of a graphic score and arrangement.

Can you write your own music score?

Lots of composers use graphic scores, this is music that is made from lines, shapes and pictures. It's up to the musician to try to work out what the picture means. It's like a code! Some great ways to first start writing graphic scores is to use lines and dots. Squiggly lines, jagged lines, big dots and wavy dots all mean different things. Let's see if your pupils can create their own score, it is up to them to decide what they want it to sound like.

Working in pairs, ask pupils to write a graphic score using lines, shapes or pictures for their partner. When both partners are finished, they can swap music.

Ask each partner to try to sing the music they see in front of them on the sheet. See if the singer is singing the music the way the creator/composer imagined the musical score to be!

Interesting fact!

Your class are now composers and have all given world premieres of compositions by Ireland's youngest and most exciting music writers. Here at The Ark and Music Network we would love to hear your compositions! You can send images or sound recordings of your scores to programme@ark.ie.

ABOUT BRIAN IRVINE



Brian was born in Belfast. His body of work reflects an obsessive love of music creation in all its forms and includes operas, orchestral works, large-scale oratorios, installations, film, theatre and dance scores as well as ensemble, solo, chambre works. His music is a highly personal concoction of punk, improvisation and contemporary classical – difficult to describe...

He has been commissioned by many international orchestras, opera companies, theatres and has toured extensively with his own ensembles. He has won a number of awards for his music including a British

Composers Award for Opera and the BBC Radio 3 Jazz Award. His Junk opera 'Postcards from Dumbworld' was shortlisted for the Irish Times Opera Award (2011) and his BBC Radio 3 commission 'Secret Cinema' was nominated for a BBC3 Radio 3 Listeners Award (2011). Rain Falling Up was also shortlisted for a British Composers Award (2012).

He has toured extensively internationally and has appeared at some of the world's leading international music festivals/venues.

www.brianirvine.co.uk

ABOUT THE ARK

The Ark is a unique, purpose-built cultural centre in the heart of Dublin's Temple bar, where children aged 2 – 12 can explore theatre, music, literature, art, film, dance and more.

The programme of world class performances, exhibitions and creative workshops every few weeks, so audiences both young and not so young can expect a different experience every visit. The Ark gratefully acknowledges the support of its principal funder the Arts Council and also its other annual supporters: the Department of Education and Skills, Temple Bar Cultural Trust and Dublin City Council.

www.ark.ie

ABOUT MUSIC NETWORK

Music Network's mission is to make high quality live music available and accessible to people throughout Ireland. In partnership with The Ark we provide high quality programming to children and families. Through our subsidiary company, Music Generation, we connect tours with music education programmes, giving children and young people rich, holistic musical experiences.

Music Network tours are funded by the Arts Council and are presented in association with RTÉ lyric FM.

www.musicnetwork.ie

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Commissioned and Produced by The Ark and Music Network

Composer & Musical Director: **Brian Irvine**

Director: **Wouter Van Looy**

Performers: **Andreea Banciu** (viola), **James Allsopp** (bass clarinet),
Ed Devane (electronic instruments)

Stage & Costume Design: **Alyson Cummins**

Video Design: **Erato Tzavara**

Lighting Design: **Sarah Jane Shiels**

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Classroom Activity Pack created by Lisa Dowdall