

THE POWER OF JINGLES: ACTION-BASED, WHOLE-BODY, CORE MUSIC CHANTS

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WHAT IS A JINGLE?

It is a short chant using rhythm, story, rhyme, and action to embed an essential music concept in a student's hands, feet, limbs, mind, and heart. It is full dimensional--visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. And it is paper-free.

WHY USE JINGLES?

When learning to read words, we sing, "*abcdefg...*" When learning math, we sing, "*One little, two little, three little Indians...*" Recitations and jingles such as "*all cars eat gas...*" likewise connect us to the symbols and language of music.

HOW JINGLES CAME ABOUT

I knew little about musical terms, symbols, and vocabulary until I started teaching school. I created big music vocabulary charts and proudly posted them above the chalkboard for my Navajo students. But I didn't have the training, the curriculum, or a method to create the depth I desired. In graduate school I developed a beginning choir curriculum. But soon I found that too many of my junior high school students failed my tests. Some parents became alarmed and some students quit. To make things worse, I found that my loyal students had forgotten most of what I taught after the summer break.

I wanted a better way, so I began observing life as it is. I explored ballgame cheers: "*TWO, FOUR, SIX, EIGHT, WHO DO WE APPRECIATE?*" Everyone could cheer and learn simultaneously.

I learned that Japanese students memorize volumes of information and that American children do not. I also observed Michael Eaton, a gifted colleague, use short jingles that entertained and motivated crowds of drama students. After synthesizing these observations, I began inventing jingles myself, sometimes right on the spot in front of my students. As they developed, my confidence as a teacher grew. To my joy and relief, the jingles, in spite of their craziness and novelty, stuck in my students' heads! They loved them. Finally, at least in part, I was teaching the way that I, myself, wanted to learn.

I bombarded my beginning choirs with norms, signals, jingles, and repertoire. Students returned the following year with almost every jingle still memorized. They showed immediate readiness to move forward. It was all I could do to keep up with them! Furthermore, many taught themselves to play the piano from the jingles. Boys particularly engaged in the learning game. They craved the class structure and the rhythmic, kinesthetic, repetitive action of the jingles. Students with ADHD, discipline issues, and special needs learned them with excitement. Even the musically competent, patience-challenged students learned and had fun. Entire classes progressed together regardless of their various backgrounds and cultures. The gifted students also helped me coach struggling, absentee students easily because of the clarity of the jingles.

The students became more literate in reading essentials and became less dependent on their teacher. It was a joy to step back and hear students critique themselves and each other with intelligent music vocabulary. I also heard from parents that jingling happened at home at the dinner table. To my utter surprise and delight, younger siblings began entering my classes having already learned the jingles! This became a self-perpetuating miracle.

Concert audiences reacted with delight when the students, by the hundreds, performed jingles altogether. Many even joined in!

Such is the power of a jingle.

JINGLE SAMPLES

Dynamics

ff, fortissimo (very loud); *f*, forte (loud); *mf*, mezzo forte (medium loud); *mp*, mezzo piano (medium soft), *p*, piano (soft); *pp*, pianissimo (very soft).

Posture

Head straight, chin level, shoulders back and down, chest high, stomach free, toosh tucked, knees free, feet apart, hands at side, focus on conductor, and find a window---and smile!

Interpretation Markings

She crescendoed and decrescendoed, and breathed quickly (gasp) before the l-o-n-g fermata. One phrase began with short stac-ca-to notes, and ended with FORCE-FUL AC-CENT-ED NOTES!

Note-Names

FACE is in the spaces: F, A, C, E. LINES: Empty the Garbage Before Dad Flips!, E, G, B, D, F. The "Grand Staff" is: " Low C, D E F G A B C D E, F on the ring finger, G A B, middle C, D E F G A B, C prime, D E F G A B, high C.

Duration

Quarter note (1), half note (2 -), dotted half note (3 - -), whole note (4 - - -), dotted whole note (6 - - - -). Eighth note (one-half), sixteenth note (one-fourth), dotted quarter note (one and one-half), dotted eighth note (three-fourths). Quarter rest (1), eighth rest (one-half), sixteenth rest (one-fourth), half rest (2 -), whole rest (4 - - -).

Keyboard Pattern

The keyboard pattern is: 2 black 3 black, 2 black 3 black, *W-H-I-T-E*: C D E F G A B C B A G F E D C.

Chromatic Scale

The chromatic scale is: C C# D D# E F F# G G# A A# B C B Bb A Ab G Gb F E Eb D Db C.

Tempo

Lar-go is very slow. Adagio is slow-. Andante is walking tempo. Moderato is medium. Allegro is fast. Presto is very fast. Accelerando is getting faster. Ritardando is getting slower.

Intonation

When you descend down low, lift your voice!

Do the right thing, at the right time, in the right place, with the right people, for the right reasons. These are the five parts of being on-task.

TIPS FOR TEACHING

1. Start teaching jingles without explaining why. Just jump in!
2. Use a consistent signal to start each jingle.
3. Teach only a bit of the jingle at a time until mastery is achieved. Then connect it to the next bit.
4. Use rhythm, fingers, drama, action, and have fun.
5. Teach energetically.
6. Review the jingles often to keep them freshly in mind.
7. Apply jingles often in actual music.
8. Have students teach the jingles to siblings and parents.
9. Make up new ones.
10. Perform them in a concert.

JINGLE IDEAS

The elements of music
Historical periods
Composers
Form
Composition
Classroom expectations
Conducting patterns

TO ACHIEVE TEACHING DEPTH, ASK:

1. Do the students recognize a musical symbol or term?
2. Can they label it?
3. Can they draw it?
4. Can they define it in English and in Italian?
5. Can they pronounce it correctly?
6. Can they spell it?
7. Can they perform it in music?
8. Can they compose music using it?
9. Can they teach it?

EXTENTIONS

1. Tait, Malcolm, and Haack, Paul. *Principles and Processes of Music Education, New Perspectives*. N.Y.: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1984.
2. Facebook: "Lakeridge Jr. High's "Mr. Blackburn is retiring... Best wishes " page:
<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?v=wall&ref=mf&gid=68888505212>.

These are former students' comments about Mr. Blackburn's classroom work.