

ASME TASMANIA CONFERENCE 2007  
Inclusive Music Education  
Presenter: Mary Brake



**Session 1: *You can't get it wrong with improvisation!***

*Valuing each student and their respective offerings.*

Improvisation is an ideal vehicle for this

- vocally
- instrumentally
- physically.

*We can*



- demonstrate that we value and respect each student;
- build awareness of other group participants
  - develop listening skills
  - present form
  - develop turn-taking skills
  - encourage self-reliability
- provide a special space for all participants to feel important

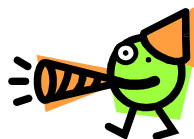
Activities will role model and demonstrate this.

- 1. Move it.** CD: *Move it* (#5) all hold onto Rainbow Ring. The visual impact is powerful. Just this simple act provides a picture of engagement and unity. This movement activity provides structure –a set pattern –for movement, and also a ‘gap’ for individuals to be leaders. Any individual who has difficulty coping with holding onto the ring close to another being might manage sitting, lying or dancing *inside* the circle. Again preparation for success is the essential. ‘Wow! Everyone is holding onto the ring! Have a look at our ‘circle team’! How can you move the ring?’ etc.
- 2. Who is next?** Build up awareness for those who need it of who is next to them, after them etc. Many assumptions are made about knowledge and understandings of our students. Many manage to hide their lack of understanding for many years, but often it manifests as withdrawal, refusal, lack of confidence or else misbehaviour. Work around the circle introducing self, taking responsibility for own turn, introducing ourselves in whatever manner is appropriate for us.

- 3. Jam like that** CD: *Boomerang Jam*(#11) This activity ‘honours’ each individual in the group. It provides individuals with an allotted few seconds’ worth of time for which they are encouraged to take responsibility through ‘jamming’ or improvising. The clearly defined structure of the music ensures that beginnings and endings of turns are well defined.

Provide unusual or novelty instruments to facilitate this. A

- storm spring drum,
- kokoriko,
- washboard,
- djembe drum
- pair of spoons



are all great options. Explain each instrument in turn and pass it round to ensure that the student feels confident with it. Preparation time is important. We need to prepare carefully and thoroughly if we are to ensure success and feelings of safety. The novelty aspects of the instruments provide interest and intrigue. The inherent mood and swing of the music encourages engagement and playfulness.

Why might a student normally be passive, a non contributor or relatively unheard?

- Physical disability
  - Shy
  - Non-verbal/selectively mute
  - Intellectual disability –might not understand what is expected =anxiety
  - Low self-esteem
  - Disengagement/ASD
  - Anxiety/trauma
  - Non English speaking
- a variety of reasons



Pause the CD if necessary to ensure that the student has their choice of instrument. In the event of an individual showing reluctance to take responsibility for their allotted turn, acknowledge and accept where they are at. ‘... Has chosen *silence* for their turn’, or ‘... has chosen stillness for their turn’. We need always to be aware of where the individual is and what they are offering. Try to recognise their offering, whatever it may be as a positive contribution. When an apparent ‘non event’ is turned into a *contribution* of silence the effect is very powerful. The most significant aspect of it is that the student has been respected and accepted. We have acknowledged their importance by sitting in silence, listening to their silence. We have shown the other students in the group that we value the contributions of each student and respect them, regardless of their ability or willingness to share.

The intrigues of the instruments arouse natural curiosity. The student is motivated to explore interesting instruments. Over a period of time incredible developments have been observed as students have struggled with poor

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muscle tone and dexterity and made amazing gains. Within a very short time the student has either been part of a small group watching and listening to others play, or else has played themselves. A sense of belonging begins to develop. The activity was fun and safe. Positive feelings ensue. Repeat this activity more times than you think is appropriate. Repetition provides safety and predictability. It also provides a solid spring board from which students may slowly begin exploring and experimenting.



**The chorus:** introduce clapping to the beat into the chorus. Later substitute claves for clapping. Claves require hand-eye co-ordination. Clapping can usually be achieved without too much effort, but considerable concentration may be required in the use of claves. This addition to the activity also requires a greater complexity of organizational skills! Students may be encouraged to anticipate when their improvisation turn is imminent to put down their claves in anticipation of grasping an improvisation instrument from the centre of the circle. When the activity is extremely familiar and successful for all, have two or more students ‘jamming’ or improvising in the solo section together!

#### **4. Action Leader** *Copy Cat CD: Funkey Monkey(#17), Action Leader Move it (#8)*

Another similar type of activity that provides opportunities to relax within the safety of a set pattern, and opportunities to be a leader in a safe manner. The activity is designed through the music which repeats an AB binary pattern. ‘Where on your body can you tap?’ Again, prepare!! Preparation is paramount. Prepare for success!! No preparation for success = possible failure!

Check ideas before starting – does anyone need a prompt card? (This may be for idea initiation or for memory/security) Check... ‘Who feels brave to be a leader this time?’ If someone is anxious about this, let them be a ‘follower’ until they are ready. Designate a ‘leader’s chair – this is a special place to look for cues –we need to take every opportunity to engender feelings of being special and important.

#### **5. Aussie Rock** *Bob in Bath CD (#3)*

A simple circle dance that is ‘doable’ with the rainbow ring. This dance facilitates a small amount of time for a student to improvise in the centre of circle –idea initiation!!! Ideas can be prompted by ‘Aussie’ themes or animals. Puppets can diffuse attention from the student.



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**Session 2: *I can sing too!***

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**EVERY CHILD HAS A SONG TO SING.  
SOME CHILDREN ARE RARELY HEARD.  
IT IS OUR ROLE AND PRIVILEGE TO BECOME  
ATTUNED LISTENERS AND TO FACILITATE  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERY CHILD'S SONG TO BE  
HEARD.**

**THIS SESSION IS ABOUT CELEBRATING THE  
CONTRIBUTIONS OF *ALL*.**



- **Sound Improvisation** - vocal utterances

*This activity explores a wide variety of sounds that may be uttered with the intention of singing. It provides an activity that is all inclusive. The utterance of the child struggling with Cerebral Palsy is as valid as the nonsense play word of the autistic child –and that is as valid as the truck sound of the child challenged by Down syndrome. The child who is 'normal' may then be challenged to move outside of their usual way of thinking about song to create within a new sphere of thinking and being.*

Establish a rhythmic pattern. This pattern will form the A section of a rondo form. Group members may play around with this pattern if desired. The pattern could include some melodic instruments to extend able students.

Taking turns around the circle make a sound that you have heard 'at your house'. Note the focus that is given. Narrowing the task enables the student to focus more easily and to initiate an idea from within the limits given.

***What is singing?***

Perhaps it is a sound that is made with the intention of singing. Does it have to be a *vocal* sound?

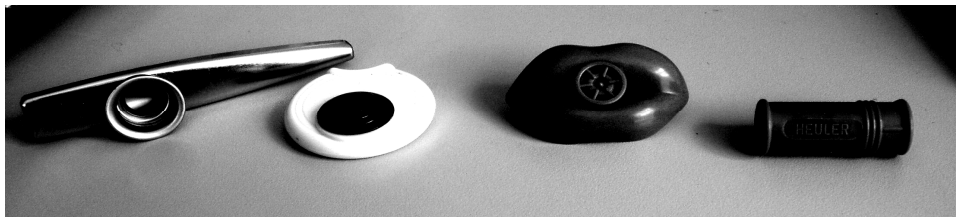
A song is a vocal utterance made with the intention of singing. It is an experience of mind, body and emotion. It is an expression of each individual's own unique existence. Twenty people all singing the same words and the same music would present twenty very different unique songs.

Singing comes from man's own instrument. It has been used throughout time to express every emotion possible, to celebrate every event, to teach, to lighten the day and to relax.

### *The silent song*

- **Kazoo Concerto Sing CD Vol 1, 2002.** #21 Produced by ABC Books

Some students may produce an *inaudible* vocal utterance. They may have a strong motivation to participate; they may work extremely hard at the physical production of a sound, but may not produce anything that is audible to the remainder of the group. Again, we need to think creatively: -can the student blow? Can the student suck? Can the student hit a Big Mac switch? Consider what the student can do, and then how you can utilise one of these capabilities to facilitate the production of a sound.



Humazooos may be an option if students are able to put their lips together. Speak to speech pathologist and you will be amazed at the inexpensive little gadgets that you will find.

**Bonuses!!** As students are motivated to participate and you are discovering more possibilities for them to do so, you will challenge your students in a greater variety of ways. You will be assisting their speech work and may work in tandem with a speech pathologist. As a student develops the skill to blow, to suck or to put their lips together, improvements in their eating and vocalising abilities will become apparent. A student may utter the sound 'mum' for the first time after sessions with a humazooos motivating lip closure.

- **Shaking your maracas** CD: *Teddy Bears Tango*

This activity shows how a child's song has been written into an activity pertinent to the entire class. It shows how the facilitator has accepted, validated and amplified the song of a little girl who is unable to access the wide gambit of verbalisation available to most of us. It reminds us that students in the minority have just as much to offer and are equally important as the masses.



- **Life's a Celebration** *Power of You CD* track 7

Songs with repeated sounds facilitate opportunities for participation for everyone. Some songs have been custom made for this purpose... they provide an opportunity for the less able to have a part while the more able 'wait' and listen respectfully for the contribution of the less celebrated.

This song is one example. During the chorus the less able sing the do,do, do,do section and then the more able are challenged with the complexity of words and tune during the verse (while the less able quietly wait and listen).

Through this activity we teach that *we* value all students and that all students *do* have a place in both our classroom and our society. If we push the less able child to the back of the room to 'do what they can' without actually facilitating an appropriate opportunity, then we are teaching our students that the less able are not important, have little to contribute in our world and that it is ok to ignore them. Despite our hectic sessions, let us give more heed to our approach and attitude to the less able.



- **Have you got your singing voice?** *Funkey Monkey CD* Track 1

Search out songs with manageable repeated words such as tra-la-lah, do-do-doo. We are actually discouraging singing by providing material that is full of complicated words.

- **Yesh Li Yadayim** (*– Tongue Dance!!*) (MI #15)

- provides a structure for tongue work,
- develops awareness of tongue and location
- develops muscle strength and control – very important for verbalising!

- **Can you blow a kiss?** (*YGGU #14*)

Lots of pre-speech exercises –blowing, poking tongue out, Indian calls, blowing raspberries etc etc.

- **Wear a smile on your face**

Participation though smiling in the appropriate repeated sections

- **Fireman's barbecue**

This activity provides some amusing sounds. It has a repetitive cumulative pattern which encourages anticipation and participation. Nonsense 'funny' sounds are often enjoyed by students with an ASD.

- **Singing my Life!**

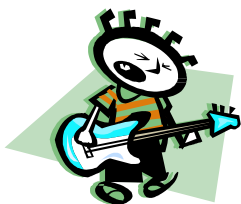
Philip is verbally limited. He suffers great frustration due to his frequent inability to make himself understood.

Time was spent with Philip communicating in a quiet, calm environment. We decided that we would write a song about the important things that Philip wants people to know about him. Philip could sing this song at assemblies; concerts etc and

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get his story out there! Philip loves strumming the guitar. He does not have the dexterity to manipulate chords but he was quite clear that he was going to play the guitar while he sang his song.

A guitar was tuned to D chord so that Philip could strum away with a tuneful sound.



Philip decided that his song should be called ‘Special things that I love’. It is very much Philip’s own language, it doesn’t rhyme and it will probably never make the charts BUT Philip loves it and sings it at every opportunity. He is so very proud of it and just the singing of it brings back to him the special things in his life. The repetition allows Philip time to recognise where we are up to in the song to maximize his participation. The special grandma in Philip’s song came to the big assembly at the end of the year and extolled Philip’s virtues, his cleverness and his musicality incessantly. Philip stuck by her side with a huge smile on his face! Philip writes a new song with me every week. Time is put aside for an adult to listen attentively to Philip, to validate his experiences and to help him to organise them so that they are accessible to others members of the school community. He has recently written about the relationship between his parents –and how it affects him, about the ambulance coming for his diabetic mother and about his dreams for the future of sharing a house with another student. He is challenged to understand that we do not know of these experiences without him telling us. His song writing is a useful opportunity of bringing staff ‘up to date’ so that Philip can be given appropriate support.

### *Notes:*



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#### **Session 4: *Music is an international language!***

- **‘Conversation’ with mouth castanets**

Considerations: ability to turn-take, sensitivity to length, intensity, volume, rhythms etc

- **Interaction/exchange with xylophones**

- **Video clip-conversation** –interaction of 2 students who have high-functioning autism/aspergers

- **Gathering Drum** –turn-taking, awareness of others and their contributions, being the leader, being the follower –interaction

- **Engaging students who have autism** -video

- **The Joy of being heard** -Video clip showing interaction on the keyboard with a nonverbal student who has Cerebral Palsy. The interaction has motivated this student to organise his movements to enable production of a variety of sounds. Initially all playing was with one arm only (R), however, as interactions became increasingly meaningful, expressive and lengthy, both arms were engaged in performance.

Some weeks later the student spontaneously burst into song. These tremendous moments of interaction and joy became frequent highlights of my week. Does this student interact in *any manner* for a sustained period of time with any other individual?

Again I am humbled by the power of music, and the privilege we have by having this tool in our kit.



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**Session 5: *Everyone is special!***

- **Ocean Song** (MI #18) or ***Dream Song*** (FM #20)

*Use a piece of chiffon fabric 3-4 metres long and waft slow gentle waves above children with it. As time progresses, utilise bubbles to add some variety.*



-Relaxation – day dreaming time.

-Children who find this difficult should hold the fabric and make the ‘waves’.

-The visual effect is very calming as is the regular lifting and falling of the arms.

Spanish Sunrise

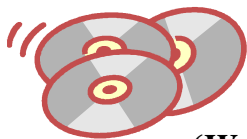
- **Kakadoo**
- **Hand Massage**
- **Aroma Therapy**
- **Bubbles Go Up** (YGGU #17) –*Streamers!!*
- **The conductor!**
- **The Jack in the box**



**Lo Yisa Goy** (FM #14)

-Centring, calming, relaxing  
-inclusion

## Resources



**'Welcome to Music'** series by Susie Davies-Splitter and Phil Splitter

***Move it*** (MI)

***Funky Monkey*** (FM)

***Boomerang Jam***

***The Power of You*** (POY)

**Susie and Phil's 'Welcome to Music'**

Susie Davies-Splitter and Phil Splitter

PO Box 268 East Bentleigh Victoria, 3165, Australia

Ph: 1300 769 803 Fax: 1300 769 805

[info@welcometomusic.net](mailto:info@welcometomusic.net)

[www.welcometomusic.net](http://www.welcometomusic.net)

**'You Gotta Get Up'** (YGGU) by Leonie Cecich.

–lots of activities designed for children with Downs Syndrome

[www.kidsnmusic.com.au](http://www.kidsnmusic.com.au)

Email: [tlcecich@bigpond.net.au](mailto:tlcecich@bigpond.net.au)

**'Teddy Bears Tango'** by Julie Wylie

[www.juliewyliemusic.com](http://www.juliewyliemusic.com)

Email: [jwylie@xtra.co.nz](mailto:jwylie@xtra.co.nz)

**'Swing Thing'** by Janet Channon & Wendy Jensen,

Kids music Company, P.O. Box 89-021 Torbay, Auckland, New Zealand.

[www.kidmusic.co.nz](http://www.kidmusic.co.nz)

Best range of **percussion instruments** in Australia: Optimum Percussion (NSW).

Ph:1300 850 242

website: [www.optimumpercussion.com.au](http://www.optimumpercussion.com.au)

Rainbow Ring from HeBi Designs (NZ). ph 03 3474849

Email: [birniebunch@xtra.co.nz](mailto:birniebunch@xtra.co.nz)

(Contact person is Heather –she does read her emails regularly and posts goods very quickly!)

