

Class Notes

Steam Machine

Supporting Materials Packet



Steam Machine (AJ Srubas, David Robinson, Rina Rossi)

Photo Credit: Jenny Cvek

About the Performers:

Steam Machine are a music and dance ensemble that perform old-time and bluegrass music, featuring fiddler AJ Srubas, guitar player Rina Rossi, and banjo player David Robinson. Their focus is instrumental old-time music from the midwestern United States. In their Class Notes Concert, Steam Machine will describe cultural uses of music from different time periods and places. They will also teach fundamental music concepts like steady beat, pattern identification, and noticing/defining expressive elements in a musical performance.

Learning Goals:

1. Students will identify the violin/fiddle, banjo, and guitar by sight and sound, and understand how each instrument produces sound.
2. Students will learn and identify several key characteristics of American old-time stringband music.
3. Students will perform call-and-response patterns and participate in activities that promote learning by ear.

Preparing for your Class Notes Concert

Thank you for signing up for a Class Notes Concert, brought to you by YourClassical MPR!

The Class Notes team has created two resources to help prepare for and extend the Class Notes Concerts experience:

1. **Meet the Artist PowerPoint.** Build excitement for the concert by introducing the ensemble in advance. Students will learn key information like instrumentation and style of music.
2. **Supporting Materials Packet.** The lessons in this packet come from the [Class Notes Lesson Library](#). The first lesson is designed to be a starting point for discussing audience behavior prior to the concert. All other lessons align with learning objectives for this artist. Use these before the concert to introduce an important musical concept or after the experience to reinforce learning. Every classroom is different. Teachers should customize all content to fit student needs.

After your Class Notes Concert, please fill out our teacher survey and have your students complete our student survey. Class Notes staff will send a link with instructions after your concert.

PACKET CONTENTS

- 1) What is an AUDIENCE?
- 2) What is STEADY BEAT?
- 3) Instrument Exploration: Violin
- 4) Instrument Exploration: Guitar



MUSIC FUNDAMENTALS: What is an AUDIENCE?

Age Range: Elementary, Grades K-3

Learning Objective: Students will demonstrate active listening and positive audience behavior in a concert setting.

Total Video Time: 5:29

INTRODUCE the concept of audience

1. Ask, "Have you ever been to a concert or performance?" Allow students time to respond.
2. Explain, "There are two main jobs at a concert: the job of the *performer*, and the job of the *audience*."
3. Ask students to share with a classmate about a time they watched a performance. What did the performer do? What did the audience do?

After some time for students to discuss with each other, encourage students to share out their experiences with the class, supporting and validating the variety of experiences.

4. Remind students, "There are many kinds of audiences. The type of concert influences how an audience responds."
5. As a classroom, create a chart listing positive and respectful audience behavior. Use the [sample chart](#) as a starting point.

LEARN about being an audience

1. Explain, "Sometimes an audience will dance and sing along with a performer. Sometimes it's the job of an audience to listen and notice as many sounds as possible. When we need to notice sounds, our own voices and body wiggles can keep us from hearing the performer. So it can be helpful to let out some wiggles and sounds before listening."
2. Learn to sing a song about being in the audience: "We Are The Audience." (Download the score [here](#).)
3. Watch our Class Notes Video: [What to do at a Concert](#).

EXTEND learning about being an audience

Choose one or more activities to extend learning.

1. Practice audience skills by utilizing one of our [Class Notes Virtual Concerts](#). In these lessons, teachers play the role of Concert Host, and students play the role of the audience.
2. Hold your own classroom concert! Assign performers, audience members, and observers. The job of the observers is to notice good audience behavior. (i.e. "I noticed STUDENT was watching the performer and not talking!")



Visuals: What is an AUDIENCE?

We Are the Audience when....

- We **listen** to and **notice** sounds.
- We research in advance: Who is visiting your school? Where are they from? What type of music can you expect?
- We follow directions on where and how to sit so you can see and hear.
- We are curious! What questions would you ask the performer?
- We notice the *timbre*, or unique and special sounds, made by each instrument or voice.
- We make predictions. What do you think will happen next?
- We share your experience with someone at home.
- We show appreciation at the end by clapping.



Visuals: What is an AUDIENCE?

We Are the Audience

K. Condon

Voice

We are the aud - i - ence, it's our job to li - i - sten, Let all your

6

Vo.

wi - ggles out be - fore the mu - sic be - e - gins. (WIGGLE!!!) We are the

11

Vo.

aud - i - ence, it's our job to li - i - sten. Feel your bo - dy qui - et down,

16

Vo.

so sounds can co - ome in.

Suggestion for song usage:

The first time the song is introduced, ask students to watch and listen, and encourage them to keep a steady beat (maybe by rhythmically bouncing one fist on top of another.) Perform just the first half of the song. When you get to the "wiggle" part, ask them to join you. Repeat the first part of the song again- this time they can join you in the singing. After the second wiggle, explain, "This time the song starts the same, but ends differently." Slow down and get considerably quieter on "Feel your body quiet down..." so that you are at a slow whisper by the end of the song.



MUSIC FUNDAMENTALS: What is STEADY BEAT?

Age Range: Elementary, Grades K-2

Learning Objective: Students will identify and respond to steady beat through active movement.

Total Video Time: 9:34

INTRODUCE steady beat through movement

1. Choose a song or chant from your classroom repertoire.
2. While singing or chanting, have students demonstrate the steady beat by tapping their heads, knees, stomping, clapping, or jumping.

TEACH steady beat

1. Explain, "Music has a steady beat – a heartbeat that pulses underneath. When we listen to music, we often tap our foot, bob our head, or dance to the steady beat."
2. Listen to [Jump in the Line](#) by Harry Belafonte. Depending on your space, have students shake, jump, clap, or stomp along with the beat.
3. Explain, "Beats can be split up into smaller sounds, or they can be held longer to make longer sounds."
4. "Let's try this clapping experiment. First, let's clap four steady beats."

CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP

"Let's cut that beat in half and double the claps."

clap-clap clap-clap clap-clap clap-clap

"Now let's make the beats bigger by making them longer."

CLAP ----- (hold) CLAP ----- (hold)

5. "In music, these sounds can be stacked on top of each other. Rhythms fit inside each other, sort of like Russian nesting dolls." ([Show this image.](#))
6. Listen to [Jump in the Line](#) again and try each kind of rhythm. For older groups, split the group and try two at once.

EXTEND steady beat

1. Dance, step, or move to these songs: [Twistin' Matilda](#) and/or [Hang on Sloopy](#).
2. Use a theme to show beat and rhythm. Choose a short rhythm ostinato for students to move to. If possible, use a classroom instrument to play the rhythm while students move. Eventually, switch the ostinato. Ask students to pick the next rhythm pattern.

Theme Examples:

- **WINTER:** Stomp in snow (quarter notes), throw snowballs (eighth notes), glide on skates (half or whole note)
- **BASKETBALL:** Pass (quarter), Dribble (eighth notes), Shoooooot (half or whole)
- **DANCE:** Kick (quarter), Tip Toe (eighth), Spin (half or whole)



Age Range: Elementary, Grades K-6
Learning Objective: Students will learn to identify the violin by sight and sound.
Total Video Time: 14:22

INTRODUCE the violin

Have you ever heard of a violin? What do you know about the violin? What do you wonder about the violin?

EXPLORE the sound of the violin

1. The violin is the smallest member of the string family. Instruments in the string family make their sound when a string is plucked or pulled by a bow.
2. [Watch](#) violinist Huldah explain her instrument.
3. This [piece of music](#) is for violin and stomping foot! It is performed by a young violinist named Anaïs Feller.
4. Tell a neighbor (or write down) three things you noticed about the piece, the performer, or the violin.

EXTEND learning about the violin

Choose one or more of the following activities to extend learning.

1. Make your own box violin! Learn about instrument construction and the violin by creating your own. [Here's a tutorial](#) to help you.
2. [Listen](#) to violinist Erika explain how she changes pitch on her instrument.
3. [Learn](#) the difference between the Baroque violin and the modern violin.
4. [Listen](#) to *Estonian Lullaby*, performed by Anaïs Feller.



Age Range: Elementary, Grades K-6

Learning Objective: Students will learn to identify the guitar by sight and sound.

Total Video Time: 12:07

INTRODUCE the guitar

Look at a [picture of a guitar](#) and ask: "Does anyone have a guess what instrument this is? That's right, it is a guitar. Have you seen or heard a guitar before? There are many different kinds of guitars. The guitar in this picture is called a classical acoustic guitar. What are some things you notice when you look at it?"

LEARN how the guitar makes sound

1. Ask students if they've ever stretched out a rubber band and plucked it. Explain that a guitar makes sound in the same way. There are six strings stretched over a hollow *body*, usually made of wood.
2. If you'd like to incorporate hands-on learning, stretch six rubber bands over an open shoebox to demonstrate the concept. Allow students to experiment and explore. Notice that thicker rubber bands make different sounds than thinner ones.
3. On a guitar, each string is a different thickness, so they each make a different sound. Demonstrate on a guitar if possible. Notice that the strings are held in place by *pegs*. If you turn a peg to tighten a string, it makes the sound a bit higher. If you turn the peg to make the string looser, the sound gets lower.
4. If you press your finger on a string and pluck that string, just one part of the string vibrates and that changes the pitch, or the note. Guitarists learn exactly where to put their fingers to play certain pitches/notes.

WATCH and LISTEN to the guitar

1. Guitarist Joel Spoelstra demonstrates his instrument in [this short video](#) (approx. 2 minutes).
2. In [this video](#) (approx. 3 minutes) the musician Prince plays an electric guitar. An electric guitar is hooked up to an amplifier, which connects the guitar to an electrical current, which changes the sound.
3. In [this video](#) (approx. 8 minutes) notice how guitarist Milena Petkovic plays the guitar in different ways to make different sounds. Sometimes she plucks on string, sometimes she strums all strings at once.

REVIEW what you learned about the guitar

1. Can you name some different parts of the guitar?
2. How does a guitarist make a sound on a guitar?
3. What can a guitarist do to play different pitches/notes?
4. Can you think of some instruments that are related to a guitar?