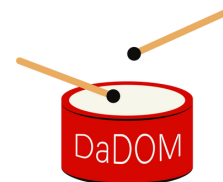


Lesson 1 - Tips & Activities



DaDOM online teacher training

Tips & Activities

It is important for everyone involved, students and teachers, to understand what music means to them personally. The first lesson is the perfect moment to address this, making sure all students understand why music is important as a foundation for the rest of the DaDOM Student Curriculum.

It does not matter if the student or teacher has no experience of making music, almost certainly they will have had pleasurable experiences of listening to music. Music is an emotional communication.

Here are a number of activities you can do with your students in the first lesson to engage their thinking about music. You can revisit these activities throughout the course as energisers or refreshers.

The soundtrack of my life | part 1

Ask yourself, 'what is your favourite music and why? Where does it come from? What is it connected to in your biography?'

Our musical tastes are mostly influenced primarily by two periods in our lives. The first is around the ages of 7-10. Here we experience the music of 'home'. It can be the musical taste of our parents or guardians. It may not be our taste, but it will always bring back the emotional memories of this time. These memories can, of course be both good and bad and so it is important to be aware of the emotional triggers that music can bring.

The second period is roughly from 14-25. This is the time that we rebel against our upbringing and experience the trials and tribulations of adolescence; first love, first kiss etc. Here we start to develop our own taste in music, which is connected to our peers and our new experiences. We can also develop new tastes in music later in life and invariably these are connected to new emotional experiences; new relationships, powerful events in life etc.

A good self-reflection is to look at your own favourite music and see to what or to whom it is connected. I recommend Jude Rogers book, 'The Sound of Being Human', in which she details her personal, emotional journey through the music that she has heard and loves.



Music is everywhere

The great American composer, John Cage said that all sound and silence can be organised into music. This is important, because it releases us from the constraints of a musical canon, that dictates whether we are qualified or not, to make music. A useful exercise is to close our eyes and listen. What do we hear? This exercise links to the lesson about ambient sound and which sounds are pleasurable and which are disturbing. We can encourage accessible music-making by making groups of three or four and, in silence, collecting sounds from the immediate environment, either by finding objects that can make physical sounds and bringing them back to the group or by recording them. You may need to show the students some examples of sounds and how they can be arranged to make a piece; for example, finding a rhythmical element to underpin the piece. Outrageous sounds should be encouraged! The groups then come back and make a one minute piece and choose a title for it. They perform it for the others, who have to guess a title. This simple compositional technique encourages creativity and awareness of sound and its potential. It is a technique that has worked very successfully with students, care staff and managers and musicians.

Self-conscious voices

Most people, whether they be teachers, students or musicians, are self-conscious about making music in front of other people. We have seen how music can be made from everyday sounds and the next step is to make music using our own voices. We can approach this in two ways.

- Names. Form a circle. Set up a steady 4/4 rhythm with finger-clicks. On the first beat say your name and then continue in time round the circle, so that everyone hears everyone's name. Gently suggest that the shy people need to be audible. This will encourage participation.
- Accidental sounds. Make a circle. Imagine a white-hot ball of energy in your hands. Using a clap, pass this to your neighbour. Do this as fast as possible, making eye-contact. The energy should pass round the circle really quickly. Encourage hip movement as well as eye-contact, as in passing a rugby ball (most people will not have played rugby, but this does not matter. It makes the game sillier and that encourages playfulness.). Change direction unexpectedly and this usually generates a voice reaction from people who are caught out. Add sending the energy across the circle, again catching people unawares. The sounds that the participants make are then the beginnings of music-making. Encourage the use of random sounds when sending the energy. These sounds can be descriptive of the way you are sending the energy; i.e. fast or slow, loud or soft. There are no 'good' or 'bad' sounds. All sounds are good! The sounds can also be words, like a greeting.
- Combine a) and b) by naming the recipient of the energy. This will invariably go wrong!



Words as music

The spoken word is a great source of music. Arrange the participants into groups of three (four is also possible if necessary). Let each participant say their name from left to right. Repeat this until a rhythm appears. Note that there is also a melody emerging. Change the order by going from right to left. What difference does that make? Change the rhythm. Repeat names. This is now a piece of music. Exaggerate the melody by changing the emphases. Think about how different languages accentuate melody, for example Italian. Try simple greetings: 'hello', 'good morning' etc. Can this be used to make a request or instruction more easily understood. If appropriate, ask how prose can turn into poetry, through rhythm, line and accent. Take examples of song lyrics and how they are matched to music.

Soundtrack of my life | part 2

Encourage the students to reflect on their own playlists and find out about the playlists of family, friends and neighbours. Do people have smartphone playlists? If not, where can you find their favourite music? How accessible is it? Find out about why their music is so important for them. Share and compare with your own experience.



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