

Study Guide For Teachers

Ball in the House *in* *Totally Vocally*

presented by
Young Audiences.

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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

This program is jam-packed with music, entertainment and education. Ball in the House will perform song styles - from doo wop to current hits, as well as their own original pop/r&b songs – all without instruments! Ensemble members not only will describe how they create their music, but they will also incorporate explanations of vocal arrangements, songwriting, and the friendships within the band that make Ball in the House what it is. Ball in the House will develop a fun rapport with students, allowing them to feel comfortable to discover the possibilities of vocal music.

LEARNING GOALS

- To introduce students to vocal music and its ties to religious, cultural and social history.
- To incorporate the popular music that students listen to outside of school into the music studied while at school.
- To explore the limitless creative possibilities of music without instruments.
- To encourage teamwork and collaboration in creative endeavors.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

A cappella is an often misunderstood genre of music, with many different interpretations. The phrase “a cappella” was first used in Italian Catholic churches, where it meant “in the style of the chapel.” The most accepted and classic definition of a cappella music, is singing without non-vocal instruments, or singing without accompaniment. Popular 20th and 21st century a cappella is characterized by the use of close harmony. The voice is used to create rhythms as well as melodies.

When most people think of a cappella music, they think of barbershop quartets or doo wop groups, but in recent years, the art of a cappella singing has been broadened and refined. Many contemporary singers and groups have made a cappella music popular, such as Boys II Men and Take 6.

Groups such as Ball in the House perform like a band. They have microphones, a sound system, and a dynamic stage show, giving audiences an energizing audiovisual experience. By using vocal percussion and creative arrangements, these bands sound like a full band, though the only instrument used is the human voice. In any musical genre there are a cappella bands. Although a cappella music was first used in religious ceremony, today there are groups who sing a cappella world music, rock, blues, R & B, show tunes and jazz. In 1985, approximately 100 professional and amateur a cappella groups were in existence. Today they number in the thousands.

BEFORE THE PROGRAM

1) Coordinate the arrival of Ball in the House with a study unit that explores vocal music from Gregorian and African chants, to Doo Wop and jazz.

- Investigate connections between these styles of music that include social culture, current affairs, religion, geography.
- Work with school music teacher to set aside a cappella music in the music room or library to create a section on vocal music.

Related Questions:

- What is a cappella music? Is it a way to make music? Or is it a style of music?
- What is "doo-wop"? What is a "barbershop quartet"? How do groups in the 1950s and 1960s that performed these styles of music relate to popular vocal bands on the radio today?

2) Make your own vocal instruments! Write a song!

- Have students discover what instrument sounds they are able to create with their voices and body parts. Arrange the students in order of their sounds according to pitch, to create a vocal orchestra.
- Have students write a song using anything that inspires them. Focus on using the voice and the body to make all the music for the song. Encourage collaboration between students on each "song."

Related Questions:

- What makes music "popular"? Why do you like a particular song? What makes a song "good"?
- Have you ever written a song? Have you ever painted a picture? How does inventing something creative out of your brain make you feel? If you like to paint, write songs, write poetry, or be creative in some other way, where does YOUR inspiration come from?

RESOURCES

www.ballinthehouse.com The band's main web site with sound clips, bios, and other info about the group

www.casa.org The Contemporary A Cappella Society of America, news, info, lists, arrangements, etc. for everything about contemporary a cappella

www.humanbeatbox.com Info, tutorials, and community about beatboxing

www.a-cappella.com Mainly A Cappella, Selections of a cappella music of all styles, background information on a cappella, recent articles, music for kids.

www.singers.com Primarily A Cappella, CDs, videos, songbooks, links to performers

AFTER THE PROGRAM

1) Research one a cappella group from the past and how they expressed ideas or concerns of their time. What were some common themes in their songs?

2) Listen to an a cappella group from the past and then listen to a present day a cappella group. What is the same about them? What is different? How are their voices used differently?

3) Experiment with vocal sound making. What musical instruments can you imitate? What animals can you imitate? What other sounds can you duplicate: cars, airplanes, doors opening or closing, etc.

ARTIST INFORMATION

Ball in the House is: Jon J Ryan, beatbox/vocal drums; Ben Detty, vocal bass; Monty Hill, baritone; Dave Guisti, tenor; and Wallace Thomas, high tenor. Each member of this a cappella vocal band brings his own unique style and vocal range to the group, along with diverse performance and theatrical experience. This five member band from Boston has toured nationally in primary and secondary schools, colleges, theatres, festivals, and has shared the stage with such acts as Jessica Simpson, the Beach Boys, Howie Day, Jewel, and the Temptations. Ball in the House bridges the gap between vocal music taught in school and the popular music students hear on the radio, integrating the harmony of a cappella music into a contemporary popular format.

VOCABULARY WORDS

a cappella-singing without non-vocal instruments, singing without accompaniment.

rhythm-a repeated pattern in music or dance

melody-the tune in a song

harmony-the combination of simultaneous musical notes to create a chord. In a cappella music, different voices are used to create richer sounds.

percussion-musical instruments whose sound comes from striking, scraping or shaking. In a cappella music, the voice is used to create these sounds.