



# “Eek! Squeak! Boo! It’s Almost Halloween!”

## Eurhythmics Activities for Your Music Classroom in October”

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*A first-grade “Halloween helper” was used to demonstrate these activities for you. The child has grown up in a musical household, but has had no previous eurhythmics training due to it not being part of his school curriculum. Due to constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, the activities were performed on carpet and in a limited space. I hope you were able to see value in the activities, and potential in the capability of every child!*

1. **The Spider in His Web** (*follow game*) The student will learn to hear ascending, descending, and circular melodic patterns played on an instrument and follow musical changes heard using bodily movement.
  - T. explains that st is a “spider in his web” and that spiders move slowly inside their web.
  - Using slow tempo, T. plays ascending and descending melodies using chromatic scale.
  - St. listens and shows direction using vertical space with body.
  - T. plays circular melodic patterns using whole-tone scale.
  - St. listens and turns in his web.
  - T. returns to ascending/descending and brings child down to floor.

Look to see whether the student is able to follow the musical changes accurately and quickly. Strive for full use of vertical space, freedom/looseness in the child’s body (no tension), and encourage the use of the head (“spider, use your eyes to look where you are going!”).

2. **Skip Around and Trick or Treat** (*follow game; can become aural reaction game*) The student will learn to hear and discern between different rhythms, tempi, and characters and respond through movement.
  - T. explains that st will listen to the words of the song; the words tell you what to do!
  - T. invites the st to “go for a skip”, allowing st to establish the tempo comfortable for them.
  - T. sings and plays through verses of song: a) skip around, b) walk around, c) run around, d) creep around. St. does the motions that are sung in each verse.
  - T. removes the words. “Now the music will tell you what to do!” T. scrambles the order of the verses slightly. St. must listen to the piano and determine which movement to do.

Consider creating additional verses that reflect more types of movement! Invite the children to make up a new verse themselves. To encourage wider use of space, you could also place “houses” on the walls of the classroom that children must travel to as they trick or treat.

Below is the original version of the song I collected in Klein Independent School District, Spring, Texas. I altered the words to: Skip around and trick or treat... but don't each much candy. Another possible variant: Skip around the pumpkin patch...make sure to bring one home.

**Skip Around the Witch's House**

SKip a-round the witch's house, the witch's house, the witch's house

SKip a-round the witch's house, but don't let her see you!

**3. How  
Big is  
the**

**Pumpkin?** (*follow game*) The student will learn to hear and respond to weight, and the changes it brings about in the music and the body.

- St. holds imaginary "wagon" behind them. T. explains they will walk through the pumpkin patch and pick up small or large (imaginary) pumpkins to place in their wagon.
- T. invites st to talk a walk, allowing the child to establish walking pace that is comfortable for them.
- T. joins in with walking music, and pauses to give musical cues for stopping to pick up a pumpkin.
- St. listens for musical weight; lighter = smaller pumpkin, heavier = large pumpkin. T. also slows tempo slightly for larger pumpkins.

If children are successful, T. can incorporate three different-sized pumpkins. The musical cue for stopping to pick up a pumpkin must be very clear and evident. Watch the children closely; if they are not showing accurate or timely response through their body, you may need to exaggerate or alter your music, provide a verbal reinforcement, or provide children with more preparation for this activity. A great follow up to this activity would be to have the children listen to a musical masterwork excerpt in which musical weight is very apparent.

**4. The Sneaky Jack O'Lantern** (*visual reaction game*) The student will learn to watch and respond to changes between two different rhythm values, using bodily movement through space.

- This activity takes place in the dark! Material: jack o-lantern (plastic pumpkin & manual flashlight)
- T. invites st to go for a walk. This allows the child to show their own walking pace. T. accompanies child's walking steps with a hand drum.
- When the "sneaky jack o'lantern" turns on his light, st. must "go for a jog". If light goes out, st. must return to a walk.

- T. takes away the drum and activity begins again, with child taking a walk. If needed, T. can assist st with drum but the goal is to have the child internalize the beat and subdivision of rhythms into eighth notes for the “jog”.

A drum may be used to assist students at the outset, but the goal of this activity is for them to respond strictly to a visual cue, internalizing the beat and rhythms without the help of an instrument. This fosters rhythmic independence through “internal hearing.” For fun, a child volunteer could operate the flashlight (which requires a strong sense for musical phrasing).

This activity can be adapted to use harder rhythms, or possibly even two contrasting melodic patterns.

5. **The Silent Ghost** (*interrupted canon game*). The student will learn to listen and then echo two different heard rhythms (quarter notes vs. half notes) by moving a manipulative through space. The student also learns to improvise their own rhythms and demonstrate them using the manipulative in space.

- Materials: 2 quality balloons decorated like ghosts with marker.
- T. explains that the ghost likes to come alive when it is quiet.
- T. shows two ways the ghost can move: a) tapping balloon “short”, or b) tapping balloon “long”
- T. reviews prep “1-2-3-small toss!” to prepare st. to have balloon in air when it is his turn. Have st. do, count, and think this prep...
- T. = “the leader”. T. plays musical phrases on piano, showing measures of short vs measures of long. St. follows directly after by tapping balloon as heard.
- Invite st. to become the leader. T. follows patterns the child creates with their balloon.

Make certain that the rhythms chosen are accessible for the child [it is challenging to tap eighth notes in time on a balloon, for example]. The activity can be adapted to harder rhythms for higher grade levels. Additionally, children in higher grade levels can also be invited to improvise melodies (in the T.’s role) on pitched percussion instruments while their classmates tap the balloons.

The balloon in this activity is a “beat animator”; it brings the beat to life and makes the motion through the beats visible to the child. It stimulates the child because balloons are fun to play with, and also trains the child’s ear-mind-body connection in preparation for manipulating a musical instrument with control in later years.

### **Closing**

The activities in this session can be adapted to teach harder concepts for children with more eurhythmics experience or who are in higher grade levels. They can also be adapted to suit other holidays or seasons. Capture the child’s imagination and they will learn through play!

The activities offer excellent opportunities to assess student understanding, because their understanding is made visible through movement. Not only can the T. see whether the child understands or not, but also where more work is needed. Therefore, the activities are also a way for the T. to evaluate the effectiveness of their own teaching.

Note that while these eurhythmics activities are highly experiential and discovery-based, they should ideally lead in time to literacy, where the child is guided to staff notation and music terminology. It is also beneficial to later relate them to a musical masterwork (of any genre) through music listening.