

Creativity: Making Music Through the Imagination of Children

By Oren Logan

Inspiring creativity in the music classroom can be a tricky endeavor, especially regarding movement. Students may be unsure how to approach making music on their own, be overwhelmed by the lack of limits as they move freely around the room or be caught in a cycle of their own perfectionism. As teachers, our job is to present creativity effectively in a safe and fun environment.

Harnessing students' imagination is a fantastic way to make creativity accessible and fun for students. Students make up games, characters, and elaborate worlds as they draw, write, act, and play with friends. All these ideas can be used in the music room to increase student musicianship.

As students enter my classroom, we usually start with an activity called an "act it" list, an activity I learned from my mentor Fritz Anders. For this activity, students act out various things from nature, work, movies, and more as I improvise on the piano. Students might be bees running quickly around the room stinging on an accent, a wolf tiptoeing up to a partner with a light-staccato motif, or a ice-skater floating around the room to a waltz. As we play this game, students always come up to me with requests on what we will be next. Some suggestions can be as easy as playing a march for a soldier walking, or as complex as a potato rolling around on the ground (yes, I get many strange requests such as this). This activity allows students to control the music through their imagination without thinking too hard about what they are doing.

Imagination makes learning so much more personal for students, thus they learn more too. I cannot count how many times we have used a Fortnite dance to teach meter (the floss is in a meter of three by the way) or pretended to be Among Us characters sneaking around a laboratory to "In the Hall of the Mountain King." Neither of these interactions were my ideas either. Students overwrote my own ideas as we listened and moved to the music, and they have so much more fun because of it.

Making creativity accessible for students and their imagination is also important. Students will have a challenging time coming up with a story that they can relate to if the music they are interacting with is too complex or foreign to them. Music from "The Nutcracker" or *Carnival of the Animals* are a great place for students to start. The base story or animals from these pieces can be used as a template for students' imagination and can be further changed or elaborated on as you interact with the music.

Students are also highly successful when they have something to channel their imagination through. A simple scarf, ribbon, or puppet can help students focus their imagination outward, instead of seeing the imperfections of their own bodily movements.

The imagination of a child is vast and limitless, unlike the imagination of most adults. I love stealing the ideas students produce to reinspire my teaching and turn ownership of the lesson over to students. I change the flow of my lessons to accommodate student ideas whenever

possible too. Music and Eurhythmics are not subjects that can be dictated to students, but something that we experience collaboratively as a class.