

Getting Rhythmic Movement “Dun” with Kid-Friendly Music Story Concerts

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The Problem with Concerts:

To most children (and adults) going to a concert usually means three things: I have to sit, I have to be quiet, and I have to listen to music I may or may not like or know for an hour or more. Exposing music to children in this manner will most likely damage their initial music experiences causing them to grow up into adults who think that concerts, classical music, and concert-going is stuffy, a waste of time and money, and boring.

Solution:

What if we treated music as it was supposed to be treated – as a story? Everyone loves a good story, but not everyone realizes that every piece of music has a living, breathing storyline of its own. What I propose is the creation of Music Story Concerts. These concerts will feature a plethora of diverse genres such as Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Pop, Jazz, and Blues where kids can dance, groove, connect with the music on a deeper level, see that music can have different characters and emotions and come away with excitement about music that will last a lifetime. Music Story Concerts have the potential to not only get our kids moving, but also expose them to general music education, and get kids (and adults) to not just listen to music but to love it.

How do we do run a Music Story Concert?

A Music Story Concert should be performed by musicians and be accompanied by the storyteller or movement director. This could look like a single instrumentalist, a small chamber group, or an orchestra with a storyteller. The storyteller or movement director's role will be to tell the story and to help guide the rhythmic movement during the pieces. At the beginning of each piece, the storyteller should excite the children's imagination with an engaging story that matches the piece's character; should have the instrumentalists play short selections that exhibit musical concepts such as contrasting dynamics, changing tempos, and repeated portions, (although these terms would be simplified using words such as loud and quiet and fast and slow) for the children to listen for; and should later guide the rhythmic movement.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Music Story Concerts have great potential in connecting our children to music by using all their senses, helping our children learn to listen by having them listen to a variety of music genres and learning to identify musical concepts such as dynamics and tempos, getting our children moving and giving them experiences that will help them love and make deeper connections with music for a lifetime.

Examples

The three examples I have selected are from Tan Dun's *Eight Memories in Watercolor*, which is a set of eight short programmatic piano pieces. Although programmatic pieces are not required for a successful Music Story Concert, I selected these particular pieces because of the short lengths and contrasting characters of the pieces.

<i>Piece:</i>	<i>Connect!</i>	<i>Listen!</i>	<i>Move!</i>
Missing Moon/Missing Family	Have you ever missed your mom or dad?	Can you hear the moonbeams falling from the sky?	Can you pretend to be the midnight breeze and wave your scarves: high or low for high and low sounds, big and small for loud and soft sounds, or toss it in the air to mimic the moonbeams (downward arpeggios) coming down?
Staccato Beans	Show me how you jump!	Can you hear the fast and slow?	Can you jump fast and slow? How about high and low for loud and soft?
Sunrain/Happiness	Do you like to play with water in the summer?	Can you hear the fast and slow?	Can you creep up on friends and splash them with water or bang on imaginary gongs with the piano?