

# Study Guide



## Transit Vocal Band

Transit Vocal Band is a high-energy a cappella group that has entertained audiences throughout the US and has produced award-winning albums! This highly interactive educational program will trace the historical development of the contemporary a cappella genre. Students will learn about ways science and technology enhance the a cappella sound, whereby inspiring the creative utilization and improvisation with the most natural instrument of all – the human voice!

**Did you know?** This performance is a public service of the Sampson County Exposition Center, Sampson CenterStage Performing Arts Series and the County of Sampson and is totally funded and underwritten through the financial contributions of many businesses, corporations, civic organizations, and individuals from across Sampson County and is provided **FREE** to students from Clinton City Schools and Sampson County Schools.

Many thanks to all **Class Acts-Sampson CenterStage for Students** Sponsors...On the day of the performance a complete list of Class Acts Sponsors will be distributed to each teacher...

**How you can help!** Please take a moment to have YOUR students write a note of appreciation to our sponsors...without them this performance would not be possible...

This study guide was prepared and provided as a courtesy of the ***Class Acts-Sampson CenterStage for Students*** series and is designed to aid in preparing students for an exciting performance...We encourage you to make use of this valuable resource designed to not only enhance each student's theatergoing experience; but to also complement their total educational experience.

# GOING TO THE THEATRE (101)



## Going to the Theatre

Watching a live performance is very different than watching television or going to the movies. When you see a live performance you play a part too! Your role is an audience member. As an audience member you should obey the following instructions:

When you arrive, follow an usher to your seat. Your group may be assigned to specific areas or seats in the theatre. Please stay in the seat that you are given until the show is over.

Most theaters do not allow cameras, cellular telephones or recording devices. Please leave these at home or in your classroom.

Food, drink, candy and chewing gum are not allowed in the theatre.

Book bags and/or oversized handbags are not allowed in the theatre.

When the theater lights dim, it means the show is about to begin...Please be quiet.

Listen and watch carefully. Talking and making noise disturbs the performers on stage and your fellow audience members. Please hold your comments until after the performance. Of course when something is funny you may laugh. You may even cry when something is sad.

Show your appreciation by clapping when the performance is over and when the performers take a bow.

Stay seated after the show and an usher or your teacher will lead you out of the theater.

### SPECIAL NOTE

This show will have a question and answer period following the performance. Please stay seated after the curtain call. If you have a question, raise your hand. Speak loudly and clearly when you are called upon.

# Theatre Collaborators



**When we see a show, we often think of only the performers on stage. However, many people come together to make a performance happen. Read the list of theatre collaborators and answer the discussion questions with a partner.**

**Musical Arranger** - A music arranger is someone who arranges a piece of music for a music director, music producer, conductor, a group of performers or a single performer. Most music arrangers know how to read and write music, have a good knowledge of music theory and know how to play several instruments.

**Sound Engineer** - An audio engineer helps to produce a recording or a live performance, balancing and adjusting sound sources using equalization and audio effects, mixing, reproduction, and reinforcement of sound.

**Director** - helps the performers understand their roles and tells them where to move on stage. The director also collaborates with designers to create the entire picture you see on stage.

**Costume Designer** - imagines and designs the clothing and other items worn by the performers on stage.

**Lighting Designer** - imagines and creates the lights of a performance to enhance the mood and the setting.

**Set Designer** - makes a map of each set and its changes

**Props** - items held or used by the actors on stage that help tell the story

## THINK ABOUT IT!



Why is changing the color of lights important for the mood in a scene?

If you were a character in a play, what color gel would you choose for your spotlight?  
Why?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS...



1. If you were to work in the theater business, which theater collaborator would you rather be?
2. Which job seems most challenging? Why?

## **Teacher's Guide - *A Cappella Reinvents the Genres* with Transit Vocal Band**

### **Greetings Teachers,**

Transit Vocal Band is very excited to be coming to your school to share our unique style of music with your students. As an a cappella group, we use no instruments or backing tracks on stage. Everything that you and your students will hear is created using nothing more than our voices - even the drums and the bass!

In this guide, we've provided you with some resources to prepare you and your students for our performance. Please feel free to use any of the information to give your students a bit of background on a cappella music.

We like to encourage an interactive show, so please let your students know that they are welcome to clap or sing along with us if they would like to. There will be times in the show where we will need them to be calm, quiet, and attentive so that we can deliver the teaching points for each musical style we cover, and we will adhere to the preferred method used at your school (e.g. raising a hand and waiting for silence).

The specific songs used to demonstrate the musical concepts vary depending on the age group. All songs are carefully researched for language and subject matter appropriate for the public, private and parochial school setting.

### **Objectives (NC Essential Standards in Parenthesis):**

By the end of this workshop/performance students will be able to:

1. Identify the sound and cultural context of the various genres of music as they have evolved over time. (K-8: CR.1.1, CR.1.2, 9-12: B.CR.1.1, B.CR.1.2)
2. Become familiar with the vocal techniques used to create instrumental sounds (K-8: MR 1.2, 9-12: B.MR.1.2)
3. Define common a cappella related musical terms (e.g. melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre) and recognize their usage (K-8: MR.1.2, 9-12: B.MR.1.1, B.MR.1.2)
4. Demonstrate at least three different vocal percussion sounds. (5.ML.3.1, 8.ML.3.2; B.ML.3.1)

## Performance - *A Cappella Reinvents the Genres*

- I. Opening Song (*How Far I'll Go* - Alessia Cara)
  - A. A high-energy a cappella arrangement of a contemporary pop song that introduces the audience to **Transit Vocal Band** and our sound.
  - B. Introduction of each band member and his/her role within the group during the bridge of the song
  - C. Brief description of a cappella
    1. Singing without instrumental accompaniment
- II. Discussion of Musical Genres
  - A. Definition of musical genre - category of music characterized by similarities in instrumentation, geographical/cultural/ethnic origins, and/or expressive style
  - B. Brief discussion of pop (short for popular) music as exemplified in the first song
  - C. Introduction to various popular musical genres
    1. Motown
      - a) On January 12, 1959 a young African-American songwriter named Berry Gordy founded "Motown Records Corporation" with a loan of \$800 from his family. His office location was also referred to as "Hitsville, USA".
      - b) Founded in Detroit, MI, then known as "Motor City" due to it being the historic automotive heart of the US. Berry Gordy grew up there, and it felt like more of a town to him. The contraction "Mo-Town" was born to describe the genre of music he produced.
      - c) One of first popular styles of music of the in which female groups (ex. The Supremes) were showcased as an act as opposed to only seeing female solo artists.
      - d) Musically characterized by charted horn sections, use of the tambourine along with the drums, "call and response" style singing that originated in gospel
      - e) Popular Motown groups/artists - Temptations, Supremes, Marvin Gaye, Jackson 5, Marvin Gaye
      - f) Popular Motown songs - "I Heard it Through the Grapevine" - Marvin Gaye, "My Girl" - Temptations, "Superstition" - Stevie Wonder, "I Want You Back" - Jackson 5
      - g) Song demonstration (*Superstition* - Stevie Wonder)
    2. Country
      - a) Originated in the southern US in the 1920's

- b) First recording in Bristol, TN on August 1, 1927 by Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family
  - c) Also formerly referred to as “old-time”, “hillbilly” or “cowboy” music - originated from Appalachian Folk Music which can be traced back to the 1700’s
  - d) One of the first genres of modern American popular music (it gave America a musical identity) - most previous musical genres originated in Europe
  - e) Artists often try to convey “real world experiences” in the lyrics of their music, and thus country songs are referred to as ballads - narratives or stories set to music
  - f) Musically characterized by instruments such as harmonicas as well as stringed instruments like the banjo, fiddle and acoustic guitar, yodelling, and “clip-clop” rhythms, characteristic to a cowboy trotting on his horse
  - g) Popular country artists throughout history include: Johnny Cash, Patsy Cline, Dolly Parton, Shania Twain, Kenny Rogers
  - h) Popular songs: “Jolene” - Dolly Parton, “Ring of Fire” - Johnny Cash, “Crazy” - Patsy Cline
  - i) Song demonstration (*Jolene* - Pentatonix, OPB Dolly Parton)
3. Rap/Hip-Hop
- a) Thousands of years ago in African “griots”, village storytellers would play basic handmade instruments while they told stories of their family and local current events. This style of talking while music is playing is rap music as we know it at its root form.
  - b) Rap is an old word meaning to strike or hit, but in the 1960’s, it appeared as a slang term in the African-American community referring to talking/having a conversation.
  - c) Started in the 1970’s in the South Bronx, NYC and became mainstream very quickly - within a 10-year time frame
  - d) Originated in African-American and Latino cultures
  - e) Characterized by “scratching”, DJing or sampling beats and bass lines from various recordings as well as rhyming, rhythmic speech, and “street vernacular” performed or chanted over a background beat or musical accompaniment.
  - f) Beatboxing gained popularity as a result of the evolution of this musical genre!
  - g) Popular artists include Eminem, Outkast, Busta Rhymes, Ludacris, Rob Base and DJ E-Z Rock

- h) Song demonstration (*Rapper's Delight* - Sugarhill Gang)
- 4. Jazz
  - a) Originated in African-American communities in New Orleans, LA in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with roots in blues and ragtime music.
  - b) Earliest written record of the word "jazz" being used is in a 1912 article in the LA Times in which a minor league pitcher referred to a particular pitch as a "jazz ball" because "it wobbled and you couldn't do anything with it".
  - c) Improvisation is the most defining feature - refers to creating or making up music as you go along! Also characterized by propulsive syncopated rhythms and often deliberate distortions of pitch and timbre.
  - d) Played with instruments such as the trombone, trumpet (often muted), saxophone, bass guitar or "string bass", piano, and drums (brushes often used rather than drum sticks)
  - e) Famous jazz musicians - Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis, Ella Fitzgerald, Winton Marsalis, Diana Krall
  - f) Popular songs - "What a Wonderful World" - Louis Armstrong, "My Funny Valentine" - Ella Fitzgerald
  - g) Song demonstration (*Take 5* - Dave Brubeck)
- 5. Additional genres that may be discussed include Beach Music, Electronic Dance Music, Rock & Roll
  - a) Brief historical overview of each
  - b) Brief discussion of unique instrumental/rhythmic qualities of each
  - c) Brief discussion of popular artists/songs of each genre
  - d) Short a cappella snippets to demonstrate each style
- III. Transformation via Improvisation (*Sweet Dreams* - Eurhythmics)
  - A. Students will observe as we take a basic, popular melody and transform it between genres!
- IV. Vocal Percussion
  - 1. Brief introduction to different common percussion instruments (e.g. bass/snare drums and cymbals) and instruction on how to vocally reproduce each sound.
  - 2. Specific instruction on imitation of drum sounds characteristic to musical genres previously discussed
  - 3. Guided rhythmic call and response in which students string all of the sounds together to make their very own vocal drum patterns.

4. Drum solo, emphasizing combinations of demonstrated sounds and more complex beatboxing techniques
  - a) Drum solo will specifically imitate patterns heard in different musical genres
- V. Question and Answer
  - A. Students are given the opportunity to ask questions about **Transit Vocal Band**, a cappella music, and the information presented during our performance.
- VI. Closer
  - A. A cappella performance of an upbeat contemporary pop song (*Can't Stop the Feeling* - Justin Timberlake)

## A Selection of Useful Definitions

**A Cappella** – all vocal music, performed without instruments or accompaniment

**Genre** - category of music characterized by similarities in instrumentation, geographical/cultural/ethnic origins, and/or expressive style

**Melody** – a single line of combined notes and rhythms; the tune of a song

**Unison** - one or more singers singing the same melody

**Consonance** - an aurally pleasant combination of notes in harmony

**Harmony** – a combination of two or more notes sung at the same time, usually to support and enhance the melody

**Arrangement** – an adaptation of a piece of popular music written so that it can be performed using only vocals

**Dynamics** – term used to describe loud and soft in a piece of music

**Tempo** – the speed of a piece of music

**Pitch** – refers to the frequency of a note (soundwaves) and is usually distinguished as a high or low note

**Vocal Percussion** – drums sounds made with the mouth

**Timbre** - the character or quality of a musical sound

**Rhythm** - a strong, regular, repeated pattern of sound

**Polyphony** - having simultaneous but independent melodic lines

**Homophony** - chords sung by multiple voices but in simultaneous rhythm

**Through-composed** - non-repetitive, non-sectional, often with different lyrics for each stanza



## **Possible Song Selections**

Teachers might consider finding the original versions of these songs as performed by the artists listed below. Students will then be able to make a connection to the way **Transit Vocal Band** performs the piece and analyze the ways it is similar to and different from the original composition. Please note that *song selections WILL change*. Upon request, a complete list of songs to be used will be provided upon request prior to our scheduled performance.

**How Far I'll Go** - Alessia Cara (from the soundtrack of *Moana*)

**Rapper's Delight** - Sugarhill Gang

**Take 5** - Dave Brubeck

**Superstition** - Stevie Wonder

**Jolene** - Pentatonix, OPB Dolly Parton

**Rather Be** - Clean Bandit featuring Jess Glynne

**Can't Stop the Feeling** - Justin Timberlake

**Firework** - Katy Perry

**Black Horse in a Cherry Tree** - K.T. Tunstall

**Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)** - Eurhythmics

**Summertime** - George Gershwin

**Happy** - Pharrell Williams

**In the Still of the Night** - The Five Satins

**We Are Young (modified lyrics)** - Fun

## **Other Famous Professional a Cappella Groups**

Teachers may have students search online for these popular groups in order to gain some exposure to a cappella before and/or after the assembly. Students may also be encouraged to do a free search to explore the a cappella community, find groups on their own, and then share them with one another.

**Take Six**

**Rockapella**

**Mo5aic**

**The House Jacks**

**Cadence**

**Duwende**

**Naturally 7**

**Pentatonix**

**The Swingle Singers**

**Club for Five**

**Home Free**

## **Popular Collegiate a Cappella Groups around the Triangle**

**Grains of Time (NC State University)**

**Rhythm & Blue (Duke University)**

**Pitchforks (Duke University)**

**Speak of the Devil (Duke University)**

**Out of the Blue (Duke University)**

**Loreleis (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)**

**Clef Hangers (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)**

## Resources

### **Transit Vocal Band** - [www.transitvocalband.com](http://www.transitvocalband.com)

Our very own website. Keep up with us, find out when we have more shows coming up, and listen to our music!

### **The Recorded A Cappella Review Board** - [www.rarb.org](http://www.rarb.org)

Site dedicated to a cappella album reviews and a forum where almost every member of the a cappella community regularly posts to share information about performances and other useful information.

### **The Contemporary A Cappella Society** - [www.casa.org](http://www.casa.org)

Non-profit, volunteer organization dedicated to the betterment and proliferation of the a cappella movement. Here you can find album and group reviews, read articles, learn about various award programs, and otherwise get involved in the a cappella community.

### **Varsity Vocals** - [www.varsityvocals.com](http://www.varsityvocals.com)

Hosts of annual a cappella competitions featuring the best collegiate and high school groups from around the world. There are several local, regional, and national events that are open to the public.

### **SoJam** - [www.sojam.net](http://www.sojam.net)

The nation's largest contemporary a cappella festival held annually, often in the Triangle area. SoJam features a collegiate competition, professional showcase, and numerous classes, workshops, and masterclasses.



# AT HOME

Dear Parents,

Recently, your student attended a performance by Transit Vocal Band. Transit Vocal Band is a high-energy a cappella group that has entertained audiences throughout the US. This highly interactive educational program traced the historical development of a cappella genre and students learned about the dynamics of a cappella.

Prior to attendance, teachers reviewed proper theatre etiquette with students and gave some background information about the concert.

As a parent, you are your child's best teacher. They can also teach you through their experiences. Ask your student about the performance they attended and read through this booklet. Share some experiences that you or other family members have had while attending a live concert or while participating in a choir or chorus. Do you have a favorite a cappella group?

Thank you for your participation in the arts.



## DO IT!

A reviewer writes an opinion of the actors, sets, and director for a newspaper or magazine. Write your review of the performance for your family.

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