

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 CenterStage Performing Arts Series and the County of Sampson and is 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 across Sampson County.

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! Our sponsors love receiving notes from students.*

Many thanks to each Class Acts-Sampson CenterStage for Students Sponsor!

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.

Performer - a person who entertains an audience; includes actors, singers, musicians.

Producer - someone who finds financing for and supervises the making and presentation of a show.

Musical Arranger - a musician who adapts a composition for particular voices or instruments or for another style of performance

Director - someone who supervises the actors and directs the action in the production of a show; the “visionary” for the show. The director also collaborates with designers to create the entire picture you see on stage.

Costume Designer - the person who creates costumes for actors to help define and express the character; works with the director and creates renderings of what costumes should look like.

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

Sound Designer - imagines and creates the music and other sound effects which help tell the story of a play

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

Gels - pieces of plastic that are used in stage lights to change their color

THINK ABOUT IT!



Why is changing the color of lights or the use of props 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 share our unique style of music with your students. As an a cappella group, we use no instruments or backing tracks. 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! Students 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 students to be calm, quiet, and attentive so that we can deliver the teaching points for each musical style we cover.

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

- A. A high-energy a cappella arrangement of a contemporary pop song that introduces the audience to **Transit Vocal Band** and our sound.
- B. 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 music as exemplified in the first song

- 1. Pop is short for popular, is appealing to lots of people, regardless of their specific musical tastes, and is music that people are exposed to via mass media (radio, TV, etc.).
- 2. Musically characterized by rhythms and tempos that can easily be danced to - the music makes you want to move!
- 3. Made up of short, catchy verses/choruses that musically and lyrically are easy to remember and sing along to.

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, and was named as such due to Detroit, MI being a “motor town.”.
- c) One of the first popular styles of music 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, Stevie Wonder

- 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

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, yodeling, 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

3. 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, deliberate distortions of pitch and timbre, “walking bass lines” and the use of brushes on drums to create various “feels” to the music

- d) Played with instruments such as the trombone, trumpet (often muted), saxophone, bass guitar or “string bass”, piano, and drums (again, 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
- III. Transformation via Improvisation
 - A. Students will observe as we take a basic, popular melody and transform it between genres!
- IV. 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.
- V. Closing Song

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 often change*. Upon request, a complete list of songs to be used will be provided upon request prior to our scheduled performance.

Message in a Bottle - The Police

Separate Ways - Journey

Take 5 - Dave Brubeck

Superstition - Stevie Wonder

Jolene - Pentatonix, OPB Dolly Parton

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

At Last - Etta James

Old Town Road - Lil Nas X and Billy Ray Cyrus

Shining Star - Earth, Wind & Fire

Flowers - Miley Cyrus

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

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

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

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

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

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.



Thank you for your participation in the arts.

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