

FreshSTARTs Program

Didgeridoo Down Under

Appropriate for: grades K-12

Materials needed: DDU study guide (provided to schools upon booking)

This program meets the following Sunshine State Standards:

- MU.A.2.1.1** performs independently simple patterns and melodies on rhythmic and melodic classroom instruments and maintains a steady tempo
- MU.A.2.1.2** performs expressively with appropriate dynamics and tempos on classroom and ethnic instruments
- MU.C.1.1.1** knows music from several different genres and cultures
- MU.C.1.1.3** knows the general cultural and/or historical settings of various types of music
- MU.C.1.2.3** understands the roles that regions, events and historical contexts have in generating various types of music
- MU.D.1.1.1** knows how to respond to selected characteristics of music through appropriate movements
- MU.D.1.1.4** understands how music can communicate ideas suggesting events, feelings, moods or images
- MU.E.1.1.2** understands how music is related to other subjects
- MU.E.2.1.1** knows how music is used in daily life
- MU.E.2.2.3** understands that music preferences reflect one's own personal experiences and respects differing values and tastes in music

Objectives:

Students will learn specifically about ...

- The Didgeridoo: history, usage, crafting & playing techniques, related vocabulary words
select students (usually 30-40) at each show will be invited onto stage to play either a didgeridoo or clap sticks
- The Aboriginal People: music, art, history, culture, related vocabulary
- Australia: geography, culture, ecology, related vocabulary

DDU also strives to ...

- further appreciation of world music and indigenous art
- promote cultural harmony and environmental protection
- ignite excitement about reading, exploring and creating
- expand students' vocabulary & word comprehension
- encourage kindness and respect toward all living beings

Connections to Learning:

The didgeridoo, due to its foreign origin and environmental connection, naturally leads to educational lessons in geography, history and ecology. The DDU performer uses art displays, pictures, maps, books and a vocabulary list to deliver an assortment of educational lessons in multiple subjects. Once a rapport has been established, the presenter also delivers character-building messages about kindness and respect for all peoples and creatures.

Introduction/Background Information:

- The didgeridoos, a.k.a. didg, is essentially a hollowed-out tree branch. It is among the world's oldest instruments, and it produces a dynamic range of otherworldly sounds and tones. Besides being played solo, the didgeridoo is also used to accompany singing, dancing, chanting, drumming and almost all other forms of music, and for various types of therapy.
- The didgeridoo is best described as a simple instrument played with much complexity. It is a one-note instrument that can be played up or down by half a pitch according to mouth aperture. An experienced player will use everything from his or her lips, tongue, cheeks, throat, vocal chords and diaphragm to coordinate sounds, rhythm and breathing.
- The inception of the didgeridoo, which occurred thousands of years ago (between 2,000 and 40,000 or more years ago, depending on which source you ask), is mostly associated with the Aboriginal tribes of Arnhem Land in Northern Australia. Since then, the didg has spread among many Aboriginal tribes, and around the world.
- "Didgeridoo" is actually an English onomatopoeic word, used to represent the sound that early explorers thought the instrument made. Other spelling variations include didgeridu, didjeridoo and didjeridu, or didg(e) for short. Two of many Aboriginal terms for didgeridoo are yidaki and yirdaki.
- In Aboriginal culture, the didgeridoo is used in both ceremonies and informal settings, often as an accompaniment to chanting, singing and dancing. Traditional Aboriginal performances usually consist of powerful rhythms paced by one or more singers (one of whom is the lead songman), each with a pair of sticks or some percussion, and one didgeridoo. If a didgeridoo is unavailable, the piece can still be performed.
- In some Aboriginal tribes, the didg is only played by men, but in other tribes men, women and children all play it. Ceremonial didg playing, however, is almost always reserved for men.
- The Aboriginal people have more than 20 native sound instruments, most of which are percussive, such as clap sticks (clapping boomerangs can be used for the same effect), hollow log drums, skin drums, rasps, rattles and bull-roarers. In some tribes, stones are used instead of wood. Hand clapping and body slapping is used by singers of both sexes, sometimes as a substitute for clap sticks. The Aboriginal people have no traditional stringed instruments, although some stringed instruments are found in contemporary Aboriginal music. The only other native wind instrument besides the didgeridoo is the gum leaf (folded leaf whistle).
- Most traditional Aboriginal didgeridoos start as a branch or trunk of a eucalyptus tree that's been naturally hollowed out by termites, which nest by the trillions in Northern Australia. After cutting the branch or trunk to an appropriate length – most didges range between 4 and 5 1/2 feet, although some are much larger – the crafter cleans out any remaining termites and pulp, and styles the didg to his taste. He'll usually scrape off the bark and smooth the outside before either a) decorating the didg with designs, often including indigenous Australian animals; or b) leaving the didgeridoo with a natural wooden finish. Finally, bee's wax is sometimes placed on the blowing end to create a comfortable mouthpiece.

Pre-visit Activities:

Music & Art: Construct and decorate didgeridoos, clap sticks and bull-roarers. Listen to and study traditional Aboriginal music, and indigenous music from other cultures. Study and create the different styles of Aboriginal art, including bark paintings, X-ray art and dot art.

A didgeridoo can be made from almost any long, hollow material, including bamboo, plastic tubing, cardboard tubes, and even clay or molded leather.

Many stores that sell fabric, such as Hancock Fabric or JoAnn, will donate their leftover cardboard tubes. Look for tubes that have 1 7/8-inch interior diameter. If the interior is wider than

2 inches, it won't work as a didgeridoo. Cardboard tubing has two great qualities: it can be played instantaneously, and it can be recycled if someone no longer wants to keep it. And since we're all about environmental friendliness, we highly recommend using cardboard tubing!

PVC pipe, or plastic tubing, is not an environmentally friendly product, but it does sound better than cardboard. It's also cheap, easily accessible (found at all home-improvement stores), and can easily be cut to target certain notes. The following notes can be obtained by cutting to these approximate lengths (in inches): G = 69; G# = 65.5; A = 62; A# = 58.5; B = 55; C = 52; C# = 49; D = 46.5; D# = 44; E = 42; F = 39.5; F# = 37; G = 35; G# = 33; and A = 31.5. The best sizes, especially for beginners, are between 52 and 39.5 inches, because a long didgeridoo requires much air and might sound loose, while a very short didg will be high-pitched – a “mosquito didg” – and offer limited tone variation.

The most user-friendly PVC diameters are 1 inch and 1 ¼ inches. Make sure the PVC is “thin-walled,” which is lighter, cheaper, and has less of an environmental impact, than regular PVC. Thin-walled is often not available for 1 ¼ inches, so best to go with 1 inch.

Please note: PVC is environmentally harmful if thrown out. Do not buy PVC for your students or patrons unless you are sure that they will keep their instruments for life.

Once the tubing has been cut, you might want to make a mouthpiece. A common mouthpiece material is bee's wax, usually available through an arts & crafts store or online. A solid mouthpiece should be comfortable and snug, and not allow air to escape from the corners of your mouth. For a simple mouthpiece, wrap a strip or two of painter's tape or masking tape around one end and fold inward. Some people like to sand/chisel down the mouthpiece for comfort and the exterior for texture, but it is not necessary. If the PVC is dirty / dusty, rinse and wipe it off, or provide a wet wipe or paper towel for each participant.

Finally, let your decorative imagination run wild! First, lightly scrape down the PVC with sandpaper so that paint won't flake off. Then conjure up a decorative theme, such as Australian animals, marine life, astronomy or whatever inspires you. Think of the didgeridoo as a tubular painting canvas. You can even add texture by gluing on stones, leaves and crystals.

As for playing the didgeridoo, the basic vibrating sound, known as droning, is made by loosely buzzing the lips inside the mouthpiece. The key is relaxation. Slightly extend your lips as if to give someone a peck on the cheek, then buzz the lips as if imitating a horse. If you're used to playing a brass or woodwind instrument, concentrate on buzzing the lips looser than normal ... because tight lips and mouth will not work! You will know if you are droning by the tingling sensation in your lips and mouth.

To make clap sticks, carve or shave solid wood down into two, well ... sticks. They can be any size or thickness, but they must be strong enough to take a beating. To make a bull roarer, carve or shave wood into the shape of a mini-surfboard (6-12 inches long). Punch a hole at one end and tie on a strong string for twirling. Both of these accompanying instruments can be decorated with paint.

The bull-roarer produces vibration sounds as the flat object rotates in the air. Altering the bull-roarer's size and its rotational speed affects the pitch. The smaller the bull-roarer, the faster it can be twirled, resulting in a higher pitch; a larger instrument that spins at a slower speed results in a lower pitch. Changes in the speed and angle to the ground can produce the sounds of a whimper, scream, moan, roar and more!

Extensions

Geography: Study Australia on a globe and/or map. Pinpoint all states, territories, major cities and landmarks. Learn about its diverse ecological systems and what makes it such a unique continent.

Social Studies: Study Aboriginal culture and the social-civil hardships they've had to overcome, similar to the United States' Native American and black populations. Research famous Aboriginal people, such as politician Neville Bonner and land rights pioneer Eddie Mabo, and their social achievements.

Reading & Writing: Learn correct meaning, spelling and pronunciation of related vocabulary words in all sections. Study and write reports on any of Darren's recommended readings or other Australia/Aboriginal-related texts and books.

Science: Learn about Australia's indigenous and endemic animals. Contrast ecological problems created by feral animals Down Under and environmental trouble caused by feral animals in the U.S., especially in Florida

Math: Compare Australia vs. U.S. by numbers / ratios for population, miles (to/from/within Aus), land mass, coastline, beaches, highest & lowest point, hottest & coldest place, animals (mammals, birds, marsupials, etc), landmarks (ex. Great Barrier Reef vs. Keys reefs).

Additional Materials:

www.ddu.me includes videos, links and most of our study guide

Recommended Reading:

*minimum reading level in parentheses

Aboriginal Australians: Spirit of Arnhem Land by Penny Tweedie, New Holland Publishers, Australia, 1998. (middle school)

And Kangaroo Played his Didgeridoo by Nigel Gray, Scholastic Publishing, Sydney, NSW, Australia, 2005. (early childhood)

Australia: The People by Erinn Banting, Crabtree Publishing Company, New York, 2003. (elementary)

Blood on the Wattle by Bruce Elder, New Holland Publisher Pty Ltd., Frenchs Forest, New South Wales, Australia, 2003. (high school)

Celebrate Australia by Ken Duncan, Ken Duncan Panographs Pty Ltd., Wamberal, NSW, Australia, 1998. (elementary)

Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia edited by Peter Sutton, Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood, Victoria, Australia, 1989. (middle school)

Dreamkeepers by Harvey Arden, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 1994. (high school)

Encyclopedia of Australian Wildlife by Steve Parish, Steve Parish Publishing Pty Ltd., Archerfield, Queensland, Australia, 2000. (elementary)

Ernie Dances to the Didgeridoo by Alison Lester, Houghton Mifflin / Walter Lorraine, United States, 2001. (elementary)

From Alice to Ocean by Robyn Davidson and Rick Smolan, Penguin Books Australia Ltd., Ringwood, Victoria, Australia, 1992. (middle school)

Koala Lou by Mem Fox, Penguin Group, Camberwell, Victoria, Australia, 1988. (elementary)

Mutant Message Down Under by Marlo Morgan, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 1994. (middle school)

Pheasant and Kingfisher by Catherine Berndt, Mondo Publishing, New York, 1994. (elementary)

The Aboriginal Peoples of Australia by Anne Bartlett, Lerner Publications Company, Minneapolis, 2002. (elementary)

Voices of the First Day by Robert Lawson, Inner Traditions International, Rochester, Vermont, 1991. (high school)

Reflection/follow-up activities:

- How has DDU furthered your appreciation and knowledge of Aboriginal music and art?
- Has DDU motivated you to seek out world music or to start playing a new instrument?
- How has DDU encouraged you to create new music or art, or otherwise express yourself?
- How has DDU affected your views on multicultural and environmental issues?
- What are examples of new vocabulary words and their definitions learned during program?

Assessment:

Teachers are encouraged to create their own lessons, activities and tests based on the information and education plans provided in the DDU study guide. Students can demonstrate their didgeridoo playing ability when chosen to perform during DDU show. Follow-up workshops, focused on learning how to play the didgeridoo, can be scheduled with DDU presenter. Students also can work with art teachers on painting / decorating their own didgeridoos.