

Performance

Performance Anxiety

Even if students have heard "5 Little Pumpkins" before, it's an excellent way to give everyone an opportunity to star in a mini-drama. Consider inviting the principal or office staff to come in and see the results of your work today or later in the week. Preparing for a small audience is both an incentive and an opportunity for students to experience performing in a relatively non-threatening venue. Learning to handle performance anxiety is a part of every performing art. Discussing "butterflies" (that feeling of fluttering in one's stomach) acknowledges that excitement and hesitation are a normal part of performing.

Great actors/actresses have often been heard to say that without "butterflies," performances can be flat.

Give your students some hints to help cope with performance anxiety, e.g. stretching, rolling shoulders, breathing in through nose and out through mouth to a count, imagining the audience in their underwear, looking for a friendly face in the audience...

Performance Standards

Periodically, music class needs to include time to polish a piece for performance. In Grade One, students should be able to begin and end singing together, keep their eyes mostly on the conductor, and enunciate carefully. Posture for performance singing is standing, feet slightly apart, knees loose, chins and shoulders down/relaxed with a straight back.

Performance Skills

Every song has the potential for further learning --both for performance and in exploring how music works. Preselect one song from the repertoire. Choose one that can be envisioned as part of a school concert.

Performance Skills: Pre-Chosen Song

- 1 (If possible show a piece of jewellery with a gemstone. Explain about how the stones are polished.) **"In music, the songs are our gems, and sometimes they need some polish so they sparkle. How could we polish a song?** (clean them up --yes but how?) **Why would we want to polish a song?"** (so it will sound better, enjoy singing more if songs are sung well, maybe sing for an audience)
- 2 **"When we sang** (name of song sung for audience either at Halloween or in a school concert) **what were some of the things we worked on?"** (Write the ideas on white board/chart paper as they are named.)
- 3 **"We're going to polish two songs today, one that I pick,** (Name the song you have preselected.) **and one that you pick."** (Either put two or three suggested song names into a hat OR hold a class vote.)

posture
volume
watching the conductor
beginning together

Performance Practice

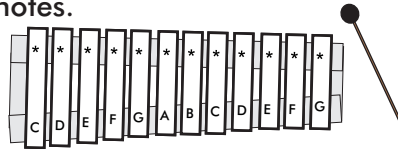
1 Standing/Posture

Ask students to stand. Remind them that all singing is enhanced by music posture to enable good breath and sound control.

standing
straight, but not "at attention"
feet flat on the floor,
--a little space between them
head high BUT chin down
shoulders relaxed
knees soft/flexible

2 Warm Up

Look for the Key of the song (printed near the title).
Play/sing the notes for the Key as shown beside.
Students echo the notes.



so mi so la so mi

Key C	G	E	G	A	G	E
Key D	A	F#	A	B	A	F#
Key G	D	B	D	E	D	A
Key F	C	A	C	D	C	A

3 Sing at least one verse of the song.

As students sing, pay special attention to the following points.

diction

Could someone who doesn't know the song, understand the words?

Do ending "s" sounds hiss or come together crisply?

Are "t"s being pronounced together?

Are words that are held over 2 or 3 beats, being held on the vowel sound?

dynamics

Is the song loud or soft where it needs to be?

Is the volume static, or does it fluctuate to add interest?

Does the class keep to the tempo as guided by the conductor?

Are areas of the song that are staccato being "punched," and legato phrases flowing smoothly?

breathing

Are students able to sing entire musical phrases (usually a line) before taking a new breath?

pitch

Are students able to begin the song on pitch?

Is there a particular place in the song where the pitch is off?

*demonstrate what you are hearing, give a way to improve and try the song or a line in the song again

*discuss the dynamics with the class *draw attention to conducting signals for each dynamic.

*look at the music for the song and together with the class pick out "breathing" places
*do some breathing exercises to increase student ability to sustain their breath over time

*if notes are flat --give students a visual image of flat tires needing some air to pump them up, often a posture correction will raise pitch

*if notes are sharp --do a bit of physical relaxing with students (rolling shoulders, raising arms, bending knees)

4 Suggest changes.

Gently encourage students to **work on one area** by explaining both what you heard and at least one way to improve it. **Be as specific as possible.**

5 Sing the song again.

Sing at least one verse again. Don't be afraid to stop part way through a verse to refocus student attention on the part to be changed. Repeat until performance is improved. (Focussing on one part of the song/performance, often improves several.)

6 AND THEN Repeat the polishing process, singing the student song choice.

Practice and Review Polishing Songs

Before class, choose two songs that students enjoy singing. Note the key they are in below to prepare for singing warm-up.

1. _____
(name of song Key first note sung)

2. _____
(name of song Key first note sung)

- 1 Challenge students to quickly name 3 polishing foci for songs.
- 2 Warm-up for the first song using handsigns.
- 3 Name a polishing focus e.g. posture, and a few tips to keep in mind as students sing.
- 4 Students sing song without teacher's voice helping. Teacher commends singing and/or suggests need for polishing. Sing at least part of the song again.
- 5 Repeat steps 2 to 4 for the second song.

Song Polishing Areas

Posture, Diction, Dynamics, Breathing, Pitch
and, maybe most important,
Paying Attention to the conductor.



	Key G	Key D	Key C	Key F
la	E	B	A	D
so	D	A	G	C
mi	B	F#	E	A

so	mi	la	so	mi
so	mi	mi	so	la
so	la	la	so	mi
so	so	la	so	mi
so	mi	so	so	la