

SECOND GRADE MUSIC NEWSLETTER

We are having an exciting first half of the year in music! We began the year learning an African/American street song and dance called, "Zudio". The children loved the dance and the actions that went with it! Dance routines are a great opportunity to practice "steady beat" and movement patterns. This also brings a group together, nurtures kinship with others and demands cooperation.

We have been using our music books to learn the lyrics to "Zudio" and to learn the song, "Sweet Potatoes". The children are quite familiar with the title, the author, the staff, staves, verses, and repeat signs and they are beginning to recognize notes and rests on the staff.

Keeping a steady beat" is an ongoing focus in every class. We use fun songs such as "Blueberry Pie" and "Rockin' Robin" to find the beat in our bodies and perform various body percussion movements to show we feel the beat! We spend time reading simple notation using "ta", "ti- ti" and rest symbols in various rhythmic patterns. The children enjoy using rhythm sticks and other percussion instruments to play and read simple rhythm patterns. This prepares us for ensemble work!

Playing bar-instruments and playing in an ensemble setting has been the highlight in music thus far! Bar-instruments are xylophones, metallaphones, glockenspiels and bass bars. We have enough of these instruments to allow two players per instrument and have everyone playing a part. There are also parts for percussion instruments such as drums, tambourines, woodblocks etc.... The three major songs with accompaniment have been: "Welcome To Music", "The Noble Duke Of York" and "Instrument Rondolet". In this kind of ensemble playing, the children play ostinatos, (specific rhythm patterns played through out a piece) on their instrument. The children combine rhythm with melody and since the bar instruments have a high quality sound, the children quickly realize they are making quality music. The sound of twenty musicians on twenty instruments is amazing! I have been very impressed with the children's work and working together!

As the leaves were changing we learned a partner song called, "There is No Time Like The Autumn". In a partner song two different songs are sung at the same time, which create a built in harmony. The children needed to really hold their parts which they did...bravo! We have also been singing, "Kookaburro" in a round form, which introduces built-in harmony as well. In every class we warm-up our voices with a wolf puppet named, "Awhooby". We are becoming familiar with our voice as an instrument and how it is very different from our speaking voice. We concentrate on developing our "head voice". In warming-up, the children "echo-sing" phrases to songs with an emphasis on matching pitch. "Welcome To Music" and "Waddaly Atcha" were two favorite songs!

In terms of vocabulary, the children have been learning the names of the bar-instruments and various instruments from the orchestra. We are studying the four families of instruments: strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion and listening to examples of instruments from a sound bank on a CD. Listening to Shostakovich's piece, "The Polka", has given the children a fun way of listening to many instruments in the orchestra. We discuss "tone color" and how each instrument has a unique sound or color, as well as a dynamic sound. The children are learning how the choice of instruments together with dynamics can make a piece more interesting and exciting.

Most recently, we have begun working towards our Second Grade show: "Songs from Around the World". The children are taking part in creating the actions of which there are many! So far, we have covered three songs from Australia and three songs from Africa. Asia begins next week. The children are being challenged to use their singing voices with a varied repertoire. The show will be held in April. The date will be announced shortly. I am always looking for other musicians to help with accompaniment during the show. Please let me know.

Thank you, Diana Hansen

