



Notes from Playground Proms Twilight session

Thank you for coming to the session. We are happy to share these ideas with you. The exercises can all be adapted for different ages and stages and for classrooms or larger clear spaces.

Please refer to the list of tracks provided in a separate document. You are encouraged to use your own choice of tracks too but it's often hard to find exactly what you're looking for. Start from the skill you want to teach, not a track you happen to like!

Using space safely and effectively

Without direction, most classes find it hard to share a space while moving. Some children just follow another child, others career around not looking, and almost every class will end up going round in a circle in the middle of the space. Training the pupils to look into the space and plan where they step is very good for making pupils aware of others and building a class team. Try playing a steady track relatively quietly so they have to listen.

You may find these prompts/suggestions useful:

- Find a space by taking as few steps as possible. Try not to be the last person moving
- Spread out over the floor like honey on toast – evenly and not clumped in the middle
- Choose your own path, walking into the spaces (guard against following the crowd) and aim to keep evenly spaced out across the room
- In order to keep eyes in the room rather than on the floor, place a beanbag on their heads. This regulates movement and they see much more
- Everyone sits neatly in their space and one child moves around, making an interesting path
- Girls sit down in their space, boys move, then swap

Ways to practice keeping a steady beat

Keeping a steady beat or *pulse* is an essential skill for music making. This enables us to play/sing in time together in unison, and to fit different lines of music together. When performing without a track groups usually tend to get faster. Walking in

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space is a good way of embedding steadiness, but we have to work a bit harder if the class is non-ambulatory. Stepping on the spot isn't quite the same!

Experiment with these ideas:

- Count aloud for 4 then clap for 4 (repeat)
- Count aloud for 4 alternating with tapping quietly for 4
- Count aloud for 4 the count 4 in thinking voice (TV)
- Step/clap
- Step/count in TV
- Step constantly and clap on 1
- Find a way to show four beats in unison with a partner

The aim here is to establish an embodied pulse that we count silently throughout the activity.

Twice as fast/slow

Being able to go twice as fast or slow as a beat is a fundamental music skill. It relates strongly to number work and also literacy.

Once pulse work has been practiced, children will respond instinctively by walking in time to music with a strong beat. They will jog when they hear that in the music. We can relate this to ta (crotchet) and tete (quavers). These are covered in KS2 but KS1 can experience the movement even if they don't learn the names/symbols.

- Try walking in the space to a steady drum beat for several counts of 4, then change to twice as fast (quavers) for several counts of four. Keep swapping between these two note values. Sometimes it's good to establish a pattern e.g. 8 beats of ta alternating with 8 beats of tete.
- Circular clapping. A clap makes the same sound for every length of note. Making a circular gesture with hands for a slower pulse introduces the concept of duration. The longer the "note" the bigger the circle.
- Sit in circle and have a beanbag each. Experiment with how to show different durations with the beanbags
- Turn to face partner and experiment with showing two durations in sync
- Try swapping at a signal
- There are lots of games to enjoy using ta and tete cards which you can easily make yourself. For example, give every child a card but tell them only to move when they hear their card. Make sure to establish the ta pulse before you start.
- Upper primary pupils might enjoy the exercise you did of finding different pulse levels within a track they're listening to.

Musical signals/quick reaction

This work has many applications. This is an example of what you could do but feel free to make up your own signals and actions:

- Stand or sit in a circle and establish a steady pulse with beanbags moving from hand to hand

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- When you hear the drum play once, keep the beat in your thinking voice only
- When I say BACK you move the beanbags again. Are you all keeping the beat together?
- When you hear this (two drumbeats) tap alternate knees starting on the count of one (or introduce the term *bar* or *downbeat*)
- Three drumbeats mean pass beanbag around your body
- Mix them up
- This also works with pitch (could try with vocal signals but teachers may prefer to use chime bars or similar. Encourage them to be creative)
- Chime bar “jingles” can be successfully used as classroom management e.g. put your pencils down now/sit by the whiteboard

Beanbags

Most schools will have enough beanbags for a class to have one each. They are useful because they make a small sound and don't roll away.

Creative movement

In the twilight session we tried showing the first few bars of Beethoven's 5th symphony with beanbags and worked in pairs or small groups to show how this music moves. We noticed that there were long and short notes to show, and long pauses. We also tried to show when the music was quiet and when it was loud. This kind of listening and action can be applied to lots of music. Working in pairs or groups adds an extra challenge.

We model this kind of work in the schools' workshops. Follow-on suggestions include:

- Asking for adjectives to describe the feeling of the music
- Drawing the music
- Writing a story or poem based on the music

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