

Young Audiences of Massachusetts

Educational Materials

Please forward to teachers

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE:

Jeff Davis: *States of the Union*

Grade Levels: 3-5

Every section of the United States has distinctive folk music that is a result of geography, immigration, and history. This program is a musical tour, illustrating the unifying similarities and interesting differences between the various regions and states of our country. Students may hear, for example, Scandinavian music from the Plains or Great Lakes States, Anglo-American ballads from the Appalachians, French-Canadian tunes from the Great Plains or New England, African-American songs and tunes from the Mississippi River.

LEARNING GOALS:

1. To introduce students to a variety of American folk music.
2. To sing and hear folk songs to “enhance understanding of history and geography.” (See Mass. Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education, Current Curriculum Frameworks, preK-12 Standard 10; p. 104.)

PRE-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: *Folk Songs in the Landscape*

What do students think about folk songs? Providing a definition for them. Immigration patterns and folk music: How does immigration affect local music?

POST-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: *People and Their Music*

What did the students think of the music they heard? Did some of the music sound as if they might be able to play the music themselves? Had they ever heard anything like it themselves?

CURRICULUM LINKS:

History and Social Studies, English Language Arts, Music.

PRE-ACTIVITY: FOLK SONGS IN THE LANDSCAPE

LEARNING GOALS:

To study American folk music in the American landscape; to define the term “folk music;” to discover students’ personal experience of folk songs in their lives; to make folk songs another tool for the study of regional America.

MATERIALS/PREPARATION:

CD / Cassette player, books

TIME:

45 minute class

Step 1:

Discuss the definition of folk. “What does the term folk music or folk song mean to the students? Do any of them know a folk song? What is the difference between a pop song and a folk song? Can the students think of rimes, recipes, riddles—or anything else—that they learned from their families and are, therefore, family folklore?”

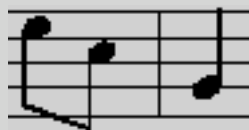
Step 2:

Explain that folk songs are a) often have no known author and are usually learned by word of mouth, so b) the songs were often changed through a process called oral transmission (meaning the songs and tunes changed through time. c) The music was often (but not always) sung by working people with relatively little wealth, and usually by people without access to mass media (or anything like it), and d) the oldest songs were often preserved by the people who lived most remotely.

Step 3:

Discuss the immigration patterns of the regions of the United States. Who are the people who settled each area? What languages would they have brought with them? Ask the students, (who may have been researching a single State), what has been learned about the people who settled a region. How many groups can be accounted for? Did some of the immigrants settle straightaway in a State or did they live for a time in another region of the U.S? Why might immigrants change the music of a region?

(continued...)



PRE-ACTIVITY: FOLK SONGS IN THE LANDSCAPE

Step 4:

Have students consider the geographic features that might have influenced the folk music if an area. Was there a coastline where fishing songs or sea shanties might have been sung? Were there big rivers where songs might have been sung while rowing or while whiling away the time? (If there were rivers, where do they come from and where do they go? Did those rivers have, say, big textile mills hiring people? Did the country have farms? Big cities where immigrant settlers might have landed first? Were there canals?)

EXTENSIONS:

1) Listen to almost any piece of music from The Alan Lomax Collection or The Anthology of American Folk Music to hear the best authentic American folk music. For the best of old "world music" recordings, listen to any volume of The Secret Museum of Mankind. (See: RESOURCES)



POST-ACTIVITY: PEOPLE AND THEIR MUSIC

LEARNING GOAL:

To emphasize the almost-lost idea of people making their own music and to investigate how that music sounded from region to region.

Step 1:

Discuss whether or not any instruments in the program were familiar to the students. What were their favorites? Are they able to remember any particular pieces?

Step 2:

Does the music sound complicated or does it sound straightforward? Does it sound like music that anybody, with practice, could do? Does it sound like music that could "fit" in a living room or would it be something you'd have to hear on a stage? Can students imagine themselves playing any of the instruments?

Step 3:

Ask if all of your music you heard sounded as if it could have been sung anywhere in the country. What are the reasons for their answers? Is there evidence for an opinion either way?

Step 4:

Consider with the students if music (and all other aspects of culture) in all the regions of the country are getting more different with time or more alike? Do they think that television, radio, and the Internet have made a difference in the way people listen to music?

EXTENSIONS:

Have students think of where their families come from? Are they themselves immigrants? Are there any immigrants in previous generations? Wherefrom? Where do they live now? Are their families all in one State or one region? If not, where do they live?



RESOURCES:

Books:

Lomax, Alan. **Folk Songs of North America**. Doubleday, 1960.

Parkman, Francis. **The Oregon Trail**. [Many editions are available.]

Seeger, Ruth Crawford. **American Folk Songs for Children**. Doubleday, 1948

Warner, Anne and Frank, **Traditional American Folk Songs**. Syracuse, 1984. [Now out of print but available at libraries.]

Recordings:

The Anthology of American Folk Music, Smithsonian-Folkways Recordings, 1997. [Each cut was originally a commercial recording from the 1920's.]

The Alan Lomax Collection, Rounder Records, Cambridge, Massachusetts. [This series is dozens of CDs, some of which were not recorded in the United States—recordings of musicians in Italy, Spain, The Caribbean, and more. For purposes of this program it would be the ones recorded in the U.S. which would be the most valuable.]

The Secret Museum of Mankind. Several volumes. Shanachie Records, Newton, New Jersey.

Jeff Davis: *States of the Union*

Grade Levels: 3-5

ABOUT THE PERFORMER:

Jeff Davis is one of the nation's foremost performers, interpreters and collectors of traditional American folk songs, tunes, and stories. He plays banjo, guitar, bones, spoons, fiddle, Appalachian dulcimer, Jew's Harp, Native American flute, and several instruments in the mandolin family. Jeff appears at Sturbridge Village and Mystic Seaport regularly, and performs at folk festivals in the United States and abroad. He has recorded for *Flying Fish* and *Minstrel Records*. Jeff received the 1992 UMass-Dartmouth "Eisteddfod" Award for service to the traditional arts. He graduated from Duke University with a degree in Russian history, but spent much time in North Carolina learning songs from mountain musicians. After a brief tenure as a middle school history teacher, Jeff began playing music full time at schools, clubs, and festivals. Jeff has been a lecturer for the Smithsonian National Associates Program and has performed for school and community groups through the New York State Council for the Arts and the Ohio Arts Council-Arts in Education program. With his friend Jeff Warner, Jeff Davis has recorded two volumes of traditional music for children, *Old Time Songs for Kids* and *Two Little Boys*.

ABOUT YOUNG AUDIENCES:

Young Audiences of Massachusetts (YA) is the oldest, largest and most utilized arts-in-education organization in the state and one of the largest in a national network of 33 chapters. For over 45 years, YA has distinguished itself as the vital link between Massachusetts schoolchildren (K-12) and more than 95 of the region's most accomplished actors, dancers, singers, musicians, and storytellers. Its 36 ensembles offer 57 interactive arts programs that represent a range of cultures, historical periods and artistic disciplines. YA is unique in its flexibility to offer interactive performances, tailor-made residencies, workshops, teacher-training, curriculum planning and multi-year projects. All programs include educational materials and satisfy local, state and/or federal arts education standards.