



Virtuoso Variations

VIEUXTEMPS Souvenir d'Amérique, Variations on "Yankee Doodle"

CLASS ACTIVITY: Scale Zip Zap Zop

OVERVIEW

One of the most frequently asked questions in a professional music performance is why a musician moves so much. This activity seeks to answer that question, and emphasizes the importance of body language, non-verbal communication, and eye contact both in music performance and in everyday life. Students will learn to communicate effectively without the use of words, while also building music fluency through ear training and scale practice. It is most appropriate for students with very basic command of an instrument and music literacy – 4th and 5th graders benefit the most from this activity.

SPACE CONSIDERATIONS: Students will need enough space to form a wide circle. The farther apart, the more difficult the game!

MATERIALS: Any Orff instrument, xylophone or other pitched percussion, keyboard, or recorder will do. Students who play a specific instrument outside of school can also participate with their own instrument if they are encouraged in advance to bring it. All students can participate on the same instrument, or a combination of different instruments works as long as all students can play the same scale.

HOW TO PLAY

Have the students stand in a circle with their instruments placed to the side. Start by introducing the old camp game Zip Zap Zop. One person starts by saying Zip while clap-pointing to another student at random. That person must immediately say Zap, while also clap-pointing to another student, who says Zop. Zip Zap Zop must be said in order, and must be said immediately. There can be no pauses or hesitation, or the game starts over.

Then, have students get their instruments. Together, play any basic one octave scale that the class already knows.

Repeat the Zip Zap Zop game with instruments. Instead of saying zip zap zop in order, students will build a scale in order. Keep a steady beat with a metronome; the students must pass the next note in time with the beat. They must find a way to "pass" to another student without talking. Discuss effective cueing strategies, including eye contact, sniffs, up nods, body direction, elbow gestures, etc. See if the students can build the entire scale, both ascending and descending, without pauses to stop and think about the next note, or hesitation about who the note was "passed" to.

To make this more challenging, make the circle wider, increase the tempo, and/or increase the number of octaves.