

Nature's voices - A Found Sound Round

A found sound round is a group activity where individuals are asked to go and find something in nature that appeals to them, find a way of expressing that object through sound, and to use that sound to add to a group composition/piece of music made up in the moment. Everything in the universe is vibration, and we humans have imaginations that can turn what we see into sound.

This is a whole class activity

30 - 40 mins

Aims

- Encourage imagination and creative expression
- Make connections between people and place and enhance observation
- Play with musicality

Materials needed

- Natural found objects such as plants, sticks, stones, flowers, seed heads etc.

Instructions

This activity is usually done simply using voices, although you can also use percussion or tuned instruments too.

People take it in turns to

- show and tell the sound of the object
- play being the conductor or one of the instruments in an orchestra of found objects.

Having a conductor means that the elements of play, power, compliance and choice enter the activity. The conductor chooses who is going to add their sound to the musical piece and can have soloists and/or groups of instruments playing, or everyone at once!

The members of the orchestra are waiting for their signal to begin, to stop, to repeat, to get louder or softer depending on the conductors' commands.

Find something that you like the shape or pattern of... for example a flower, cluster of berries, a stick, or a grass stalk with its flower head, a feather.

Let's say you've chosen a cluster of berries and a feather as examples.

Explain "When I saw this lovely collection of berries twirling up the stem, I noticed there are 8 berries in the cluster and the idea came to me to express the sound with a rising "do-reh-mi-so-fa-lah-ti-dah" scale.

Then show the feather and say "I also found this feather and the idea to make a soft "shhhh" sound popped in my brain."

2. Ask your participants to go off and find a something they find interesting and to come back with it, and a sound that expresses it.
3. While they are doing this find a suitable conductors baton.
4. When people return gather them in a circle and invite everyone to share their object and imagined sound.
5. When that is done produce the conductor's baton with a flourish and say something like. "Now is where the fun starts... we can have turns at being the conductor of a found sound orchestra! When I point to you, please make your sound."
Start with a slow sweep around the circle so everyone plays their sound, and then start to point to people in an order or a pattern I like, to create a simple composition, soundscape or rhythm. Finish with a deep bow and encourage a round of applause.
6. Now ask the students to take it in turn to be the conductor.
7. Rose review- ask the students what they liked about the activity (the flower) what the challenges were (the thorns) and what we could do next (seeds)?

Extension

- Extra commands for the Conductor
After a couple of people have had a go, I mention that we can upgrade the conductor to have additional commands. Can the students come up with a gesture for the follow:
 - repeat
 - stop
 - volume increase and decrease
 - change pitch
- Group compositions
Challenge the young people to come up with their own pieces of music in small groups by combining their sounds.
- Notation
If their sound was going to appear on a piece of music, what would it look like? What symbols can you create to represent your sound?

Natural Musicians is whole body learning. To develop heartfelt relationships. To make music, art and movement, inspired by the world outside and the feelings and stories inside. The project grew from Chris's work as a didgeridoo and bushcraft teacher, forest school leader and environmental arts activist.

Find more about Chirs's work and request a workshop in your school.

If you like the activity you might like the online video-based course. Find out more [here](#)¹ and get a third off, that's £50 off!

Wholeland Nature Connection
@chriswholeland
www.naturalmusicians.co.uk