

Study Guide for Teachers

Ball in the House
Totally Vocally
presented by
Young Audiences New Jersey & Eastern PA
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www.yanjep.org



ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Totally Vocally is packed with music, entertainment, and education! Through contemporary and classic cover songs as well as original works, Ball in the House helps students discover the history of a cappella singing from chant to doo wop. The elements of teamwork and collaboration are equally highlighted as students explore how various vocal parts create harmony and beats, working in unison to produce a multi-dimensional piece of music.

- LEARNING GOALS**
- To introduce students to vocal music and its ties to religious, cultural, and social history.
 - To incorporate the popular music that students listen to outside of school into the music studied while in school.
 - To explore the limitless creative possibilities of music without instruments.
 - To encourage teamwork and collaboration in creative endeavors.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

A cappella is an often-misunderstood genre of music, with many different interpretations. The phrase “a cappella” was first used in Italian Catholic churches, where it meant “in the style of the chapel.” The most accepted and classic definition of a cappella music is singing without non-vocal instruments, or singing without accompaniment. Popular 20th- and 21st-century a cappella is characterized by the use of close harmony. The voice is used to create rhythms as well as melodies.

When most people think of a cappella music they think of barbershop quartets or doo wop groups, but in recent years the art of a cappella singing has been broadened and refined. Many contemporary singers and groups have made a cappella music popular, such as Boys II Men and Take 6.

Groups such as Ball in the House perform like a band. They have microphones, a sound system, and a dynamic stage show, giving audiences an energizing audiovisual experience. By using vocal percussion and creative arrangements, these groups sound like full bands, though the only instrument used is the human voice.

Although a cappella music was first used in religious ceremonies, today there are groups who sing a cappella world music, rock, blues, R&B, show tunes, and jazz. In 1985, approximately 100 professional and amateur a cappella groups were in existence. Today they number in the thousands.

BEFORE THE PROGRAM

1. Coordinate the arrival of Ball in the House with a study unit that explores vocal music from Gregorian and African chants to doo-wop and jazz.
 - Investigate connections between these styles of music that include social culture, current affairs, religion, and geography.
 - Work with the school music teacher to set aside a cappella music in the music room or library to create a section on vocal music.

Related Questions:

- What is a cappella music? Is it a way to make music or is it a style of music?
 - What is doo-wop? What is a barbershop quartet? How do groups in the 1950s and 1960s that performed these styles of music relate to popular vocal bands on the radio today?
2. Make your own vocal instruments and write a song.
 - Have students discover what instrument sounds they are able to create with their voices and body parts. Arrange the students in order of their sounds according to pitch, to create a vocal orchestra.
 - Have students write songs using anything that inspires them. Focus on using the voice and the body to make all the music for the songs. Encourage collaboration between students on each song.

Related Questions:

- What makes music "popular"? Why do you like a particular song? What makes a song "good"?
- Have you ever written a song? Have you ever painted a picture? How does inventing something creative out of your brain make you feel? If you like to paint, write songs, write poetry, or be creative in some other way, where does your inspiration come from?

AFTER THE PROGRAM

1. Research one a cappella group from the past and how they expressed ideas or concerns of their time. What were some common themes in their songs?
2. Listen to an a cappella group from the past and then listen to a present-day a cappella group. What is the same about them? What is different? How are their voices used differently?
3. Experiment with vocal sound making. What musical instruments can you imitate? What animals can you imitate? What other sounds can you duplicate: cars, airplanes, doors opening or closing, etc.

ARTIST INFORMATION

Ball in the House is an R&B/Soul/Pop a cappella group based out of Boston, MA, whose high-energy shows have audiences singing, dancing, even beatboxing along. With their extensive tour schedule (averaging 200 shows a year), Ball in the House has performed everywhere—from theaters to performing arts centers, to fairs and festivals, to opening for some of the biggest acts in the world, including the Beach Boys, the Jonas Brothers, the Temptations, and numerous others. They headlined the China International Chorus Festival in Beijing, won the 2016 Boston Harmony Sweepstakes, and were voted 2014 APCA Band of the Year and 2009 Best of Boston for Outstanding Musical Performers. For six years they were the voices behind all the Cool Whip commercials and recently wrote and performed the jingle for Amazon's Prime Day. Ball in the House has appeared on America's Got Talent, the TODAY Show, and the Daily Buzz, the Philadelphia 4th of July Parade, and SBS Culture Club and MBC News in Seoul, South Korea.

RESOURCES

www.ballinthehouse.com The band's website, with sound clips, bios, and other info about the group.

www.casa.org The Contemporary A Cappella Society of America: news, info, lists, arrangements, etc. about contemporary a cappella.

www.humanbeatbox.com Info, tutorials, and community about beatboxing.

www.singers.com CDs, videos, songbooks, and links to performers.

VOCABULARY WORDS

A cappella: Singing without non-vocal instruments; singing without accompaniment.

Rhythm: A repeated pattern in music or dance.

Melody: The tune in a song.

Harmony: The combination of simultaneous musical notes to create a chord. In a cappella music, different voices are used to create richer sounds.

Percussion: Musical instruments whose sound comes from striking, scraping, or shaking. In a cappella music, the voice is used to create these sounds.