



BAMBOOTAMBOO

play it and smile



Tips for Success

How to Make a Workshop Successful

Why should we have this kind of group musical activity in schools?

This is a good question. Most people are not professional musicians and most children that I work with do not play or even go on to play a musical instrument, so what use is this type of activity?

A simple answer is that it is fun and that is enough of a reason, but there are other equally important reasons to do this.

Whenever we engage in a group musical activity we need to use a high degree of non verbal communication, in particular team working and listening skills, often you also find certain pupils developing leadership skills.

From many years of experience working with people of all ages, the thing that makes the single biggest difference to a performance is team work.

This comes as a surprise to many people as it is a common belief that rhythmic ability and co-ordination are the more important factors, and whilst they are important they are innate in every living human and the trick is not to put much emphasis on these as we often over think and this gets in the way of playing fluently. You can't think about driving a car, it is something that becomes a part of you in the same way that we play Bamboo Tamboo when best when not consciously thinking about the co-ordination involved.

Often in a workshop if things don't seem to be going well it is because we are focussing on the wrong things and this can usually be remedied by working on team work and listening skills.

Both of which are vital skills that we use every day of our working lives, often more than numeracy and literacy, and this type of group musical activity gives us a brilliant way of introducing and honing these skills in a non competitive environment.

How do we improve team work and listening skills?

Often when a group learns to play a rhythm whilst there is only one rhythm being played it is quite easy to play in time, but when we split the group into two or three sub teams and have a second and third rhythm being played this is where the process breaks down.

If this happens (and it will) it is simply because people are not listening to each other, and this is what you do:

Get each person to keep their head up, when someone looks down at what they are doing they will zone out the people around them, by keeping their head up they stay in touch with the rest of the group.

To further enhance this team work have each group member turn and face the rest of their team, maintaining good eye contact and saying the words to the rhythms, quietly, whilst playing. Encourage them to keep looking at different members of their team and not just the person sat next to them. By getting this communication going the team gains confidence and the playing will come together without having to focus on co-ordination. By helping and supporting everyone else you make it easier for yourself.

Think about this, by helping and supporting everyone else you make it easier for yourself. What a brilliant and positive message. And by doing this activity people gain a direct experience of this principle in action.

Once a group can successfully play their own rhythm we can broaden this team work to the entire group by getting everyone to listen to how their rhythm fits into the larger groove. People can actually appreciate that their contribution is vital to the overall success of the group.

The success of the team is dependent upon the contribution of the individual, with each individual contribution being equally important as the next.

Another brilliant metaphor for life and one that is experienced directly through this activity.

Sometimes it is necessary to take a couple of steps back in order to progress. If a group is still struggling with this concept, have them put their instruments down and get each group to sing the words to their rhythm whilst practising the team work and listening.

The group will usually find this quite a simple task and as long as you make sure that they keep communicating with each other in this way when they begin to play again you will hear a marked improvement in their playing.

Often getting a group to play more quietly can help, if someone is trying to play as loud as possible, or is shouting the words to the rhythm then they will speed up and go out of time

with the rest of the group, simply by quieting down they will begin to work as part of the team quite naturally.

These ideas are simple but are the most important ones to promote during your workshops and they are the ones that our society needs most.

If a group improves these skills during a workshop then the workshop is a success.