

Appendix D

Folk Music Exploratory Unit

NL Folk Song

(Includes adaptations and reproductions from pp. 191 -4, 197-8, 227-8 of Intermediate Music Curriculum and Teaching Guide, 1993, Department of Education, Division of Program Development, Gov't of Newfoundland and Labrador)

Newfoundland Folk Song and their Role In Society

“Musical literacy is the ability to understand a wide variety of music as it occurs within a broad range of contexts. It refers to one’s ability to make meaning out of musical experiences and to use music as a means of personal expression. It means understanding the organization of music across time and place, the conventions and cultural characteristics of music, and its role in the lives of people. It means knowing enough about music to function with a certain amount of musical independence and knowing enough about music to value it in one’s life.” (Wiggins, p.3)

This unit is designed to look at folk songs not only in terms of structure, style and performance, but also in terms of the role they play and/or have played in society. This role might be one of pure and simple entertainment or it might have a deeper meaning in terms of education or even social control. The songs included in this unit ably demonstrate the variety of folk songs styles, the ‘variant’ aspect of the folk song tradition, and the various roles or functions that folk songs may have. However, these selections are not intended to be all inclusive. There are many fine songs in the field and in folk song collections which teachers should feel free to use. The songs here are offered as examples and as guidelines to the course of study. As this unit contains a great deal of material, it should not be regarded as ‘the program’, the content of which must be covered.

One of the major aims of this unit is to have students find out what folk songs exist in their community and what role they play. Again, the songs contained herein are given as examples of how folk songs function and as examples of what might be in the community.

Outcomes

This unit will provide students with an understanding of the roles that folk songs play in their society and have played in that of their predecessors, through research projects, interviews, and the study of song material. Students will become familiar with the styles and construction of Newfoundland folk songs and will be given an opportunity to compose their own songs in the traditional styles. Through in-field (in-community) interviews and observations they will become familiar with the traditional performance situation and ritual, the revival folk song movement, and the modern day trends in folk song writing and recording. This unit will also help develop student’s thinking, research, communication, analytical, synthesis and reporting skills.

Researching Music In Our Community

The unit calls for an inquiry approach to learning whereby students explore and apply methods of qualitative (or descriptive) research. The dual objectives of this approach are to develop student awareness of music's meaning to others while, at the same time, strengthening their communication skills of questioning, listening, analyzing, and reporting.

During this unit, students will find out how people feel about music whether they are performers or composers. In order to answer this question, they must learn how to ask questions, listen to answers, gather meaning from these answers and, finally, report their findings back to the class. In this process, they will be conducting research.

There are several assumptions underlying this type of research in the community:

1. The purpose of the research is to gain an understanding of how, when, where, and why people include music in their lives.
2. The research takes place in a natural setting and is, therefore, often called "naturalistic" research). Students will visit subjects in their homes, at work, in stores, or in other places where day-to-day living takes place.
3. The information (data) describes people's experiences in their own words. It describes, as well, the place in which the interview occurs and any other details that might help to understand the subject's words.

Suggestions For Field Research

1. Before conducting interviews with people in the community, students should practice interviewing their classmates
2. Students should prepare some questions in advance, with others flowing naturally from the interview.
3. Students should always ask for permission to record the interview.
4. Students should record the following data for each interview:
 - date and place
 - the situation in which the interview or observation took place -kitchen, playground, etc.
 - name of interviewee (age, approximate)
 - own name
 - names of song/words and tune
 - where or from whom singer learnt song
 - the circumstances surrounding the writing of the song, if known
 - any background information—historical/political, etc.—relating to the song
 - on what occasions and/or in what situations the song would be sung
 - reason for singing song, if applicable
 - other songs on the same topic or with the same function known by the singer
5. Students should transcribe their recordings as soon after the interview as possible. They will find this much easier to do while it is fresh in their minds.

Preparing For The Interview

Decide what areas or topics you want to research related to local music and musicians. You should have a definite subject in mind, for example:

- song-games played as a child
- songs composed and performed by local musicians
- songs learned in the lumber camps
- musical traditions in the community

In preparation for interviewing people in your community, develop such questions as:

- How long have you lived in this community?
- Why do you think it is that you live here?
- What are some special things about living in this community?
- Who are the people in this community that are especially musical?
- What is it about music that you particularly enjoy?

Prepare a list of people who might serve as potential interviewees. Contact these people to:

- let them know what you are doing and why
- request their permission to be interviewed
- let them know what will happen to the tape
- ask if they mind being tape-recorded
- arrange a meeting time and place

After you decide on the people you will interview, prepare questions you will ask, and arrange a time for the interview, you are now ready to conduct interviews in the community. But first ensure that: the recording device is working and the interviewee has given his/her permission to be recorded. Offer to play back the interview so that the interviewee may check his or her statements.

The Interview

1. Choose a quiet place to do the interview.
2. Test the recording device before starting the actual interview.
3. Start the interview by stating your name, the date, the name of the person being interviewed, and the place where the interview is being held.
4. Offer to play back the interview so that the interviewee may check his or her statements.
5. Be sure to thank the interviewee after the recording session. A written thank-you the next day is also a nice gesture.
6. Offer to copy the tape for the interviewee. This is often appreciated, especially if the interviewee has sung for you.

After The Interview

1. Make an outline of the tape, listing the subject matter according to the footage.
2. Transcribe the tape (see the next page for a sample outline)

Example:

- 1-8 Details of interviewee's childhood
 - large family, 17 children
 - small fishing community
 - no TV
 - 9-42 Song-Game "London Bridge"
 - the song
 - description of the game
 - other
3. Prepare a report to deliver orally to the class.

Sample Interview Questions Template

(Topic: Songs from the Lumbercamps)

Personal History

1. Where and when born
2. When came to this community and why
3. Occupation
4. Location of occupation; lumber camp

Subject

1. Songs sung while working
 - why sung
 - who leads or starts them
 - who made them up
 - where learned
 - what songs are about(Have interviewee sing examples, if possible.)

2. Songs sung during leisure time (at the lumber camp)
 - why
 - when
 - where
 - by whom
 - what songs are about: life in the camp, life back at home, love songs, etc.
 - where were they learned/from whom
 - who made them up(Have interviewee sing examples, if possible.)

3. Song sung at home
 - are there some 'camp' songs that would be sung at home
 - are there some 'camp' songs that would not be sung at home
 - why/why not
 - what type of songs are sung at home that are not normally sung at camp
 - why are they not sung at camp

Evaluation

When evaluating student progress and achievement in this unit, it is essential to keep in mind that it is based on both musical and non-musical learning objectives. It will, therefore, be important to consider the following:

A. Research

- setting up of objectives
- how well student's questions are designed to acquire the desired information
- ability to use tape-recorders
- ability to accurately transcribe responses either from a tape recorded interview or live in the field
- ability to accurately transcribe song words
- ability to accurately describe the situation in which a folk song performance took place
- ability to sift collected data for relevant material
- ability to report back accurately and concisely, both orally and in writing

B. Function of Folk Songs

- students should be able to identify the various functions of folk songs
- students should be able to define more than one function for some folk songs
- students should be able to distinguish between folk songs associated with a certain season, ceremony or activity and those of the lyric or narrative ballad style
- students should be aware of the importance of rhythm in work songs, children's game songs, and chin music
- students should be aware of the value of folk songs as mood changes be it through their melodies, rhythms or words
- students should be aware of the folk song's association with all aspects of life from love to politics and religion to war
- students should be aware of the role of folk songs to express and communicate thoughts and feelings
- students should be aware of the changing role to folk songs since the advent of recorded and broadcast music

C. Transmission of Folk Songs

- students should be aware of the method of composition, revision and transmission of folk songs
- students should be aware of variant forms of folk songs and the manner in which they develop
- students should be aware of the method of diffusion of folk songs from region to region and country to country

D. Characteristics and Qualities of Folk Songs

- students should be aware of the scales/modes commonly used in Newfoundland folk songs
- students should be aware of the use of certain modes/scales to communicate certain feelings
- students should be familiar with the tonal ranges commonly used in Newfoundland folk songs
- students should be able to analyze the form of folk songs used in the unit

- students should be aware of the rhythmic patterns frequently used in folk songs
- students should be aware of the use of rhythmic patterns to express mood and feelings
- students should be familiar with the harmonic sequences frequently used in folk songs

E. Singing Style

- students should be able to compare the vocal styles of different folk singers
- students should be able to distinguish between accompanied and unaccompanied folk songs
- students should be developing an awareness of why some songs are more suited to accompaniment than others
- students should be familiar with and have some facility on the instruments generally used for folk song accompaniment
- students should be able to differentiate between melodic, harmonic and rhythmic accompaniments

F. The Performance Situation

- students should be familiar with the social setting of a folk song performance
- they should be aware of how the setting relates to and changes with the type of song being sung
- they should be aware of how the type of song sung relates to and changes with the audience, e.g., some 'men only' songs
- they should be familiar with the persuasion ritual associated with impromptu performances
- they should be aware of the tactile and other support systems between performer and listener

G. Musical Abilities

- students should be able to perform (and accompany where appropriate) folk songs of a variety of styles
- students should have developed some ability in the composition of folk songs in a variety of styles
- students should have developed some ability to transcribe the music of folk songs they have recorded in the community
- students should be able to analyze folk songs in terms of their form, melodic, rhythmic and harmonic structure and their expressive qualities
- students should be able to create and perform their own melodic, rhythmic and harmonic accompaniments to folk songs

H. General Learning

- students should be familiar with some of the socio/economic history of Newfoundland and Labrador
- students should have some insight into the pain, suffering, frustration, joy, love and happiness of their ancestors
- students should have gained some insight into the value of folk songs to the writer, performer and society in general
- students should be aware of the folk song repertoire in their area and should be able to state what its contents say about the values and belief systems of the community as a whole.

Folk Song Analysis

When using folksongs in the classroom, sing them by rote first to provide the students with an aesthetic experience. Then, look at the notation, sing with syllables, and analyze.

The following analysis is appropriate for student analysis of folk songs.

Scale

- What scale is used for this folk song? Is it do centred or la centred?
- What note is do?
- What is the key signature
- What notes are found in this song? Sing in solfa and note the different notes that are used.
- Arrange these notes from the lowest to the highest pitch.

Form

- How many phrases can be identified in this song?
- Are all phrases the same length?
- How long is each phrase?
- Are any of the phrases alike?
- How about the third and fourth phrase? Are there any ways in which these two phrases are alike?
- Using letters to designate phrases, show the form of this folk song.

Rhythm

- What is the metre for this folk song?

- Tap the rhythm.
- What do you notice about the rhythm of the four phrases?

Paraphrase Text

- What is this folk song telling us about?
- How does this boy feel?
- What words or phrases tell you this?

Performance Style

- What do you need to think of in performing this song?

Suggested Resources

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