

FIDDLE RESIDENCY – Lesson Plan

Artist/Instructor: KELLY THIBODEAUX

TITLE: Fiddle Residency, includes basic fiddling skills along with music appreciation and Louisiana culture and folklore. The violin is presented as a folk music instrument in the Americana tradition.

TEACHING ARTIST: Kelly Thibodeaux is a working musician from Louisiana (www.etouffee.com) with 35 years of professional fiddling experience and 15 years teaching experience with workshops, after school programs, and artist in residence programs.

AGE LEVELS: K-adult

TYPE OF CLASS: Elementary school classrooms, workshop format (one day), group lesson

TIME NEEDED: A minimum of 4 – 45 minute consecutive sessions per class. Kindergarten can be 30 minute sessions (recommended). Workshop formats, 1 to 2 hours.

SUPPLIES: Artist supplies $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, or full size violin for each student.

OBJECTIVES: The main objective of this residency is to teach each student enough basic skills to be able to play a simple 3-chord fiddle tune with guitar accompaniment (provided by instructor). Students will also learn a variety of techniques used to produce sound effects that will musically illustrate a short Louisiana folk story.

PROCESS AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION: This residency serves as an excellent introduction and hands on experience to one of the world's oldest and most powerful musical instruments – the violin. This is accomplished by learning how to “saw” (a repetitive bowing technique common in American style fiddle playing) and learning enough simple fingering positions to be able to play a 3 chord 2-step dance tune. For every additional session past the minimum 4 students can utilize their new fiddling skills to play more complex 2-steps (a Cajun 2-step) and/or a basic waltz.

LESSON STEPS: On the first day I begin with a brief introduction of myself and a demonstration of the violin, showing the students how it can “talk”, “laugh”, etc. and a rousing fiddle tune that illustrates an unusual Louisiana experience (the “Uncle Beano” story). Throughout the next 3 sessions I will continue performing these musical stories of the Louisiana kind to further illustrate the many applications of this very powerful instrument.

SESSION 1: Fiddles are distributed and students are instructed how to hold the instrument and the bow and then how to perform a simple single bow stroke. Next, students are instructed on how to “saw”, a back and forth motion of the bow consisting of a “short short long” bow stroke pattern. If time permits on this first day students are then instructed on how to bow the various sounds used to illustrate a Louisiana folk story (“The Kingdom of the Frogs”). This includes the sound of croaking frogs, hopping frogs, wind, and falling rain.

SESSION 2: The instruction from session 1 is repeated and students are individually checked for proper compliance. Next, the fiddle tune “Texas State Line”(a two-step composed specifically for beginners) is demonstrated and students are carefully instructed on finger placement and timing. Fingering of the notes is facilitated with visual aids in place on each fiddle (white markings on the finger board) and timing is as simple as counting 1-2-3-4 (each count representing one short short long bow stroke). The last portion of this session is spent fine tuning the sound effect techniques for illustrating “The Kingdom of the Frogs” story.

SESSION 3: The instruction from session 2 is repeated and each student is checked for compliance and performance. “The Kingdom of the Frogs” is performed (narrated by myself and illustrated by the entire class on their fiddles) and as time permits each student performs solo the tune “Texas State Line” with guitar accompaniment. These activities all serve as a rehearsal for session 4.

SESSION 4: This session is dedicated as a recital for the students to perform solo the fiddle tune they have learned with guitar accompaniment and as a group to perform their musical illustration of “The Kingdom of the Frogs”. Parents and family members can be invited to witness this remarkable musical experience and to meet their very own brand new fiddle players.

It has been my experience that children in the first grade on up do quite well with this program, with comprehension and performance increasing with each age level. Kindergarten age children learn at a much slower rate due to their still developing motor skills but can still achieve a remarkable performance level, considering their age and abilities. Their enthusiasm and participation however is right up to par with the older age groups. To view a short documentary on the program please go to www.etouffee.com and click on “fiddle workshops”.