

**I'm a New
Music Leader
in Primary...
Now What?**



**Advice and Anecdotes about Teaching
Music in Primary**

By Betsy Lee Bailey

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Advice and Anecdotes about Teaching Primary Music

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Downbeats and Beat Patterns - Dec. 10, 2012

Probably the most intimidating thing about suddenly being thrust into the opportunity of leading music is conducting **Beat Patterns**. There are many drawings and maps of how to wave your arm around in all sorts of patterns such as 4/4, 3/4, and 6/8 time signatures, but there is a simpler way.

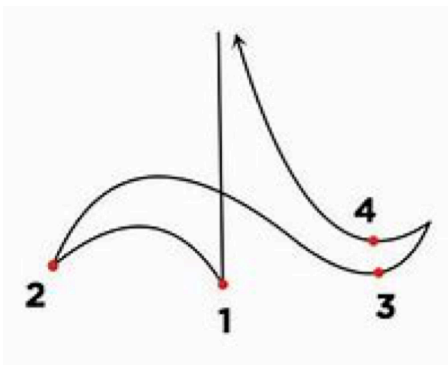
First, try practicing snapping your fingers to the beat of the music. Think in your mind the song "*Ode to Joy*," the famous 5 note melody from Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. This melody has one note or syllable



for nearly each beat. Now, practice tapping your fingers down on a table for each syllable or note or beat of the tune. When you tap this way in an even rhythm, you are essentially conducting downbeats. Now pretend to tap with that downward motion in the air. Notice that your downward motion should tap at approximately the same place in space on precisely each beat. This is called the *ictus* of the beat pattern or **DOWNBEAT**. The upward motion before and after the downward motion into the ictus is called the *preparation* or *rebound*. In conducting music, everything that you need to convey can be done through **DOWNBEATS** made up of the preparation/rebound and the ictus.

Using just DOWNBEATS you can be successful in keeping the rhythm of the music. But DOWNBEATS can do so much more. The meter or rhythm of the song is usually divided into strong and weak beats. In "*Ode to Joy*," the first of every four beats is the strong or heaviest beat. The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th beats are much weaker. Any song with a walking beat will feel the same. Sometimes the 3rd beat will be a strong beat, but not as strong as the 1st beat. We call this **DUPLE METER**. In this case we can divide our DOWNBEATS actually into strong downbeats on counts 1 and 3, and weaker downbeats on counts 2 and 4. Conducting is actually a function of how long and strong the rebound phase of the downbeat is. In preparing for a strong downbeat,

the ictus will be small, but the rebound will be big. In preparing for a weak beat, the rebound from the previous beat will be small into the next down beat. In TRIPLE METER, such as in the song "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," the 1st beat will be strong with beats 2 and 3 much weaker. With just the preparatory upward motion you can cue the singers how **loud to sing**, how **fast the tempo** will be, and the **feeling** to use while singing. By using a strong, long motion and taking a big breath the singers will know to sing loud. By using a small light motion and taking a gentle breath the singers will know to sing softly. Obviously, the speed and length of the preparatory cue beat will determine the tempo. The body language, facial expressions and breathing of the conductor will convey a lot of information to the singers and the accompanist.



After you start feeling comfortable with using DOWNBEATS, you can progress to learning beat patterns. The shapes of the beat patterns are just an extension of strong and weak downbeats. Many times accomplished conductors throw out the whole notion of using beat patterns in favor of conducting DOWNBEATS.

Setting the rhythm, conveying the feeling, and keeping everyone together are much more important than getting hung-up on beat patterns.

Of course there are songs out there that have beat patterns that look deceiving. For example, "***Have I Done Any Good in the World Today?***" This piece is marked in a 6/8 time signature. Here is an example of **compound rhythm**. Looking at the time signature, you would think that you need to wave your arm around in a pattern of six beats per measure. The problem is that the beats are too fast and you would look ridiculous after a while waving your arm around so fast. Besides, you would probably lose all track of your counting. Because 6 can be divided into two groups of 3 counts, conductors will simply use two DOWNBEATS per measure, or two groups of fast triple meter. In my arrangement of this song, the measures often change between 6/8 and 3/8. Just using one DOWNBEAT per 3/8 measure solves that nuisance counting problem.

Using Visual Aids – December 4, 2012

Teaching children to sing the delightful songs of Christmas has been a joy to me throughout my life. Whether preparing for a holiday concert at school, or a sacred program for Church or just recreational singing, this is the best time of year to teach children's music.

Handing out sheet music or hymnbooks to little children really is useless. Depending on the age group, many will not be able to read, let alone read music notes. So, music leaders generally resort to using visual aids to help in their teaching. ***Remember, when using visual aids, they are only means to an end. The goal is to be able to drop the visual aid as soon as possible.***

Teaching aids such as pictures, word charts, games and hand motions should be used with specific goals in mind.

- 1. Does this teaching aid help bring to order the group and help them focus on the task at hand?**
- 2. Does this teaching aid help guide their listening towards mastery?**
- 3. Does this teaching aid help in memorization?**

Notice that I did not mention **entertainment** as one of these goals. Occasionally, I have watched a song leader try to use so many elaborate pictures and gimmicks to make sure every child has a turn to hold something, that she uses up all of the time handing things out and does very little singing. There are many beautifully produced commercial products out there for use as visual aids, ***but unless you***



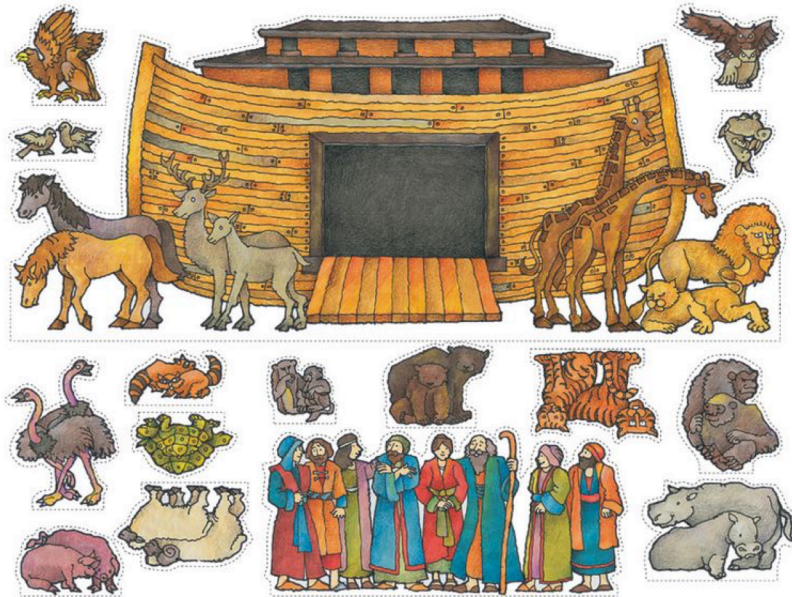
know how to use them, they are mere gimmicks to attempt to dazzle, mesmerize and entertain the children rather than help them actually learn something.

The song leader herself should be her own best visual aid. Her energy, pacing, and singing; her knowledge of the music, words and message of the

songs; her rapport with each child should be enough without the use of complicated teaching aids. She must herself model good posture and singing, mastery of the music and lyrics, and concert deportment. She must connect with her students so that they do just as she models for them. On the other hand, using visual aids can be great fun and bring energy and variety to the teaching period.

Singing is the main activity in a singing class. So often, I have watched music leaders try to tell stories about the music or ask questions of the group or explain the words of the songs for so long that they lose the

attention of the students and run out of time to sing. If the song takes 1:00 minute or less to sing per verse, why should it take 5 minutes to set up or explain a game or visual aid? In theater-speak, we say



do a ***“walk and talk.”*** In other words, a song leader should be able to say a few words of transition or explanation or review ***while*** choosing helpers or setting up the game or visual aid. She should also know her students so well that she is able to keep mental track of who has been a helper and who needs a turn to do something. If she is wise, she will create opportunities of some kind for *each* student *each* session, even if it is just answering a question or doing an action in a small group.

So, you Song Leaders out there, I encourage you to ***sing more and talk less, learn your students by name*** and something about them individually, have ***specific goals when using teaching helps***, and most of all, ***be your own best visual aid!***

Using Costumes and Props – Aug. 20, 2013

Using costumes and dress-ups and props as a teaching strategy can be loads of fun. Some songs are suited very well for this, especially in Primary. Some of **my** favorite songs for using dress-ups and props are: *"When We're Helping"* p. 198 The Children's Songbook, *"To Be a Pioneer"* p. 218 CSB, and *"My Dad"* p. 211 CSB. **Although the dressing up and holding props provide the "fun" factor, real musical concepts can also be taught.**



"When We're Helping" is one of those short catchy songs built around the upper minor third of the major triad. The entire song is sung on only six pitches, well within the hearing and reproducing range of a small child. The words are simple and the rhythms are, too. When combined with simple repetitive actions, this song can easily be mastered even by the youngest singers. I like to dress-up the girl child-helper in a frilly apron, a necklace of beads with clip on earrings, and hand her a feather duster. She leads the group as we sing, although we are not limited to just dusting as we act out how we help **Mother** do the chores. For the **Father** verse, I dress up a boy in a hat, a pre-tied adult tie, and hand him a tool (*usually a plastic replica*). We improvise the actions of fixing things using tools - hammering, screwing, sawing, etc. - or working in the garden - raking, mowing, shoveling, etc. *We sing as we "work" and we exercise our ears and voices, too.*



"To Be a Pioneer" is sung in two parts like a **Partner Song**. The girls learn the verse and the boys learn the contrasting lower "ostinato" part. Because this song is challenging, I use the donning of costumes as an incentive. When the parts are learned to a point that a few of the children can hold their own, I choose a few to come up to the front and be the leaders of their section -

girls in front of the girls and boys in front of the boys. (Sometimes we rearrange the seating for this.) These few children get to wear the Pioneer costumes or pieces of costumes (sunbonnets, straw hats, aprons, vests, etc.) We can repeat in order to review towards mastery and give other children the opportunity to wear the costumes. ***The repetition reinforces the children's awareness of and ability to sing in HARMONY.***



"My Dad" is a fun song to actually use a child as the visual aid. I like to add pieces to his attire as we sing the song. It usually embarrasses him, but it is all in good fun. I have him wear a baseball cap or work gloves or a tie for the first line or I give him something that dad's like to do to hold such as a fishing pole or golf club. I pin an honesty badge on him and hang a picture of a Dad that looks similar to him around his neck. Then I have him do some



actions as I prod him along. This song has some big skips in its angular melody - 4ths, 5ths, 6ths and octaves. ***The children will not know that they are practicing ear training, but you will, and that is a very good thing for singing.***



I always have an ulterior motive when using visual aids. That is to teach real musical skills and gospel concepts for each song. The art or costumes or props or actions or activities are just tools to use to do real teaching that can last a lifetime. The object is to help the children learn the song so well that they can sing it without any aid at all. Only then will you know you have done your job!

Using Object Lessons – Feb. 2, 2014

A newspaper, a few clothespins, a set of keys, a stack of blocks, an egg carton, a pitcher of water, a rock -- what do these things have in common?



They are all simple household items that can be used as marvelous teaching tools. Object lessons can be drawn from the most common items -- easily obtainable and of essentially no cost. The best teachers do not need fancy visual aids or elaborate handouts. They tend to draw attention to whatever is handy and make it an **OBJECT LESSON**. The Master Teacher, Jesus Christ, used the things in the everyday world to teach. *"Consider the lilies of the field"* was certainly an object lesson drawn from what the people could see as they sat on the side of the Mount.

I wonder at the time and expense some Primary workers go to in order to prepare their lessons. **Yes, a good picture and a well-delivered story are important, but the endless hours of coloring commercially prepared artwork or assembling elaborate handouts are probably not so important in the grand scheme of things.** In my experience, most handouts for school-aged children get turned into paper airplanes or end up in the trash long before they are shown to parents or hung on the refrigerator door. **If you are going to invest time and money in lesson preparations, one of the best investments would be in a**



book helping you learn how to use simple household Objects as Teaching Tools. Acquiring the knack of drawing from the common experience of the audience using everyday objects can be very powerful and stick in the minds of the learners.



Teaching songs in Primary might occasionally require lyric charts of some kind or a fun game, but no amount of fancy, elaborate and expensive visual aids will make up for the lack of good teaching strategies. And good teaching strategies do not have to cost a lot in

either time or money after the initial investment is made in learning the skill. If I were a new song leader in Primary, I would spend my time



memorizing the songs and learning musical skills and pulling out ideas from the songs that would teach the gospel and help ingrain the simple doctrines into the minds and hearts of the children. I would look for opportunities to model good singing and allow the words and music to be indelibly etched into the very fabric of the children's beings. Helpful in that quest is

the use of simple everyday objects as teaching tools whenever possible. **A commonly seen physical object can powerfully ignite a memory and bring the words and melody of a Primary song or hymn instantly to mind.**

Simply holding up an object that seems to have no relevance to the topic can start the curiosity juices flowing. It can grab attention and extend it as the teacher asks questions to guide the thinking or listening of the group. There are many types of



conclusions that could be drawn from and lessons that can be taught through the use of everyday objects. Having a collection of ideas is a great investment.

Some useful hardcopy sources are:

A Children's Songbook Companion by Pat Graham and Trudy Stewart and others

Our Children's Songs by Virginia B. Cannon (*may be available on Amazon or other online stores*)

Object Lessons Made Easy by Beth Lefgren and Jennifer Jackson



Reaching the Magic 7 Mark –Jan. 2, 2013

If there is a universal truth about teaching songs to children, it must be this – **Children must listen to or have an experience with the song SEVEN times before they will even begin to start participating in the singing.**



A lot of the frustration with teaching music to children is **how to hold their attention long enough to get through a song seven times.** Having many and varied teaching strategies to call upon will help. This idea also goes along with the philosophy of using teaching styles to match the various learning styles of the

children. Singing and listening to the song plays to those who learn best aurally (**Auditory/ Musical**). Many song leaders will additionally just use Visual Aids, such as word strips and pictures, to teach a song (**Visual/Spatial**). That is fine for learners who primarily need visual clues in order to process information. But what about children who need to move or manipulate things (**Kinesthetic**), or talk through the ideas with others (**Linguistic Intrapersonal**), or like to work alone (**Interpersonal**)? And what about the kid who needs to figure things out through reason or logic (**Mathematical**)?



Ideas for Teaching to the Seven Learning Styles

Auditory/Musical – Listening, singing, playing musical instruments, rhythm games





Visual/Spatial – Pictures, word strips, keywords, object lessons, pitch conducting

Kinesthetic – Hand motions, tapping rhythm, large muscle movements (*marching, hopping, twirling, waving arms, bending, etc.*), manipulating objects such as scarves, shakers, drums,

rearranging word strips, conducting the music, bouncing balls, rolling dice, throwing bean bags, etc.



Linguistic – Telling stories, explaining the meaning of the lyrics, looking up scripture references, asking and responding to questions



Intrapersonal – Working in groups, playing in teams, judging the group's performance, boys sing/girls sing, taking surveys

Interpersonal – Individual study, individual opinion,

individual report on topic, playing a solo or showing one's individual talent in some personal way

Mathematical – Games of strategy, keeping score, puzzles, riddles, ordering things



It is a good idea to plan to use activities in at least four of these styles every time you teach a song. Even better if you try to use all **SEVEN!** This is how we **guide their listening** by providing varied ways to experience the music. It also provides a certain momentum for learning and nobody complains about repeating the song many times if they always have something fun to do or something interesting to think about!

Bag of Tricks – Dec. 20, 2012

TEACHING a song, **REVIEWING** the song towards mastery, and **USING** a song in Primary are all different aspects of leading the music in Primary.

Obviously, in order to use a song in Primary, it first must be **taught**. But in order to **use** the song successfully in Primary, it needs to be **kept in the children's memory**. The Children's Songbook itself contains 255 different songs, not to mention all of the additional songs and hymns available from the Church Music Website and other sources. That is a lot of songs to keep current in the minds of the children. Also, remember that each year new children enter Sunbeams without knowing any of the previous year's songs. Tragically, many song leaders will teach and use only the few songs outlined in the yearly Primary Sacrament Meeting Presentation plus the 5-10 perennial favorites. ***That is using less than 20% of the songs from the Children's Songbook, and additional songs and hymns!***

This is why I recommend a **Bag of Tricks** for the new song leader. Having a variety of incentives, games, and fun with music activities ready at a moment's notice is an absolute must. These little gimmicks and activities should be available for use at any time without fuss or muss. The ones I recommend can be stored flat in envelopes and kept in a tote bag.



1. **Stop and Go Signs** – useful for helping children watch the conductor or helper, learn to “hear” the music in their minds, give many children turns to be helpers.
2. **Boys Sing/Girls Sing Signs** – useful for challenging mastery of the singing, following the conductor or special helper, and paying attention.

3. **Hide the Note** – useful as a game for reviewing a song towards mastery or just having fun. (*Use upbeat songs for best results*)
4. **Colored Scarves** – useful for experimenting with conducting skills, beat patterns, leading loud and soft, high and low, smooth (*legato*) or just having fun. I recommend having at least six to give turns to helpers. Songs: *“Lift Up Your Voice and Sing,” “I Think the World Is Glorious,” “Autumn Day,” “It’s Autumn Time,” “Falling Snow,” “I Often Go Walking,” “Sing Your Way Home,” “My Heavenly Father Loves Me”*

5. **Egg Shakers** – Rhythm is an important part of music. Having some kind of shakers (*maracas, or small medicine containers filled partway with rice, or folded and sealed paper plates filled partway with rice*) will help the children feel the beat of the music, create rhythmic accompaniment, and just have fun with music. I recommend having at least 10 to allow for five helpers. A calypso rhythm is especially fun.



Songs: *“We Are Different,” “Children Holding Hands Around the World,” “I Think the World Is Glorious,” “Follow the Prophet,” “Book of Mormon Stories,” “Nephi’s Courage,” “Shine On,” “I Believe in Being Honest,” “Hum Your Favorite Hymn,” “I Want to Be a Missionary Now,” “I Hope They Call Me on a Mission,” “Sing Your Way Home,” and “Choose the Right.”*

6. **Race to the Finish Game** – easy to keep ready and to set up, useful to challenge mastery of songs and concert deportment.
7. **Family Blessings Cards Activity** – instant feedback on how you as a song leader are doing to keep songs in the children’s memory banks. *If they cannot recall a song from the theme card, then you still have some work to do!*
8. **Animal Match-Up Game** - good for any **Choose and Review** time.

9. **Go Fish** – good for any choose and review time.

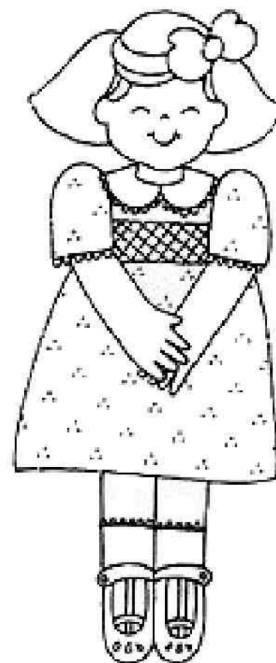
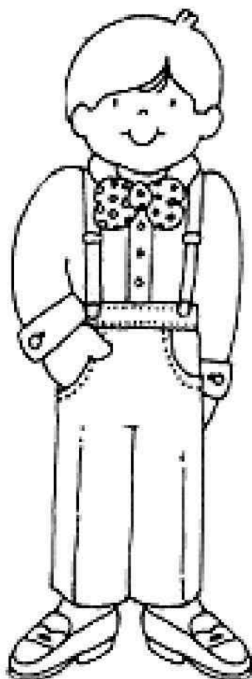
10. **Roll the Dice** – Though not as easy to store, the Cube (*could be a foldable box*) with six ways to sing a song is useful to keep handy in a pinch.



Most of your time as a music leader in Primary will be reviewing songs and keeping songs fresh in the memory banks of your little charges. It is a good idea to keep a careful record of the songs you use each week, month, and down through the years. You will want to make sure you regularly program in songs from previous Sacrament Meeting Presentations, seasonal and holiday music, hymns, and special songs supporting the themes used in Primary.

Aim to use six different songs in each Music period. Even if you are teaching a new song, **DO NOT** try to accomplish the task of mastery in a single lesson. Better to introduce the new song a little bit at a time and not kill the interest of the children by talking it to death for one entire period.

In the **Visual Aids and Other Ideas** tab on the website I give ideas and instructions on how to make these items for your **Bag of Tricks**.



Primary Presentation Helps – Sept. 12, 2013

Fall is the season for Primary Sacrament Meeting presentations. The leaders, teachers and children get the chance to show the parents and ward members what they have learned in the previous months during Primary. In my many years of producing and watching different presentations, I feel I have seen and learned some tips to make them successful.

In previous years, the program was created by a team of writers in Salt Lake and simply handed to the ward leaders throughout the church. They in turn were to adopt and adapt the script as needed to fit their group. **The scripts were written using a variety of staging techniques designed to showcase the children, the topics, and the songs, yet keep the pace moving along so that the audience would stay engaged.** Little by little, the directions from Church headquarters have been simplified to just a few guidelines. The full responsibility for the presentation now lies squarely with the ward leaders.

From my travels and visitations, I have seen many touching and beautiful presentations, filled with stories of inspiration and testimony, exuberant renditions of the songs, and plenty of "cute factor" from the children. I have also seen presentations where it was obvious that the leaders had no real experience in understanding staging techniques. Even though the Primary Presentation is for a church meeting, it is nevertheless a **SHOW**. The congregation is an audience and wants to be able to understand and endure the proceedings without too much discomfort. By their coming, they expect to be fed spiritually and to learn something.



*When I was a new Primary president, I was approached by a senior citizen. She asked me what day the Primary Presentation was. She wanted to know **SO THAT SHE COULD MISS IT!** Many older people in the congregation find that the children cannot deliver their lines in a way that the older people can understand, and the busy-ness of all the children on the stand causes too much commotion. They just don't get anything out of the program, so why come?*

That exchange inspired me to make the best program possible in the best-prepared way using all of my theatrical training. There are certain procedures that are tried and true. When used, these strategies can make a real difference in how smoothly the presentation goes, and how well the program is received.

1. TIMING - The presentation needs to fit within 30-35 minutes. If this means that there will not be solo parts for every child, so be it. Perhaps an entire class could be featured as a group to stand and do a choral reading or sing one of the songs or verses by themselves.

2. STAGE LIMITATIONS - Most chapels have very limited space to place the bodies of the children. The choir seats sometimes are hidden behind the organ and piano so that small children sitting there cannot possibly be seen even when standing. Assess how many extra chairs can be placed on the podium to judge whether or not it is even possible to seat the entire Primary on the stand. Depending on the numbers of children, some classes may have to sit in the audience and come up only for certain parts of the program. I usually had the 4 and 5 year olds come up just for their featured section of the program and then again for the closing song with the entire Primary. Sometimes the side aisles or the front rows of the congregation need to be used to seat classes of taller children. When they sing, they can stand in front of the podium. Some buildings have risers for this purpose. You just do the best you can with your unique limitations.

3. FLOW - Minimize the movement of the participants so that the shuffle between parts does not use up much of the time and cause the audience to lose interest. Too often, the leaders just bring up every class, no matter the size, by group for each child to say a one-liner. The children usually drape themselves lazily over the modesty wall looking very bored or they excitedly wave to or make faces at their parents. This behavior is as disturbing as it is distracting to the audience. Better to have them come up in smaller waves, and **NEVER** stand against the modesty wall. **If there is an opportunity to set up microphones in other locations on the stand, that can help manage the FLOW of participants, too.**

4. VARIETY - Make use of the many techniques available to tell a story or convey an idea. Individual talks or testimonies, storytelling,

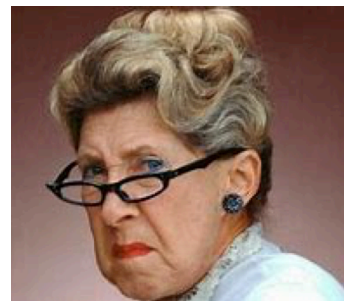
2-person conversation or question and answer, group presentation, choral reading or scripture recitation, and the list goes on. The key to good delivery is **MEMORIZATION**. Helping the children get their parts memorized so that they can look up, enunciate clearly and look pleasing is essential for making a great presentation. ***An engaging way to incorporate narration is to have one child asking questions in a sincere way and have the "narrator" introduce each new section with a leading answer to that child's question. This way the subject unfolds in a natural way that engages the audience in caring that the child gets his questions answered.***

5. SINGING - Prepare! Prepare! Prepare! The songs used in the program should be memorized so that **NO** big posters or visual aids need to be employed. It is distracting enough for the audience to have the song leader(s) out in their midst, let alone to have big posters obstructing their view!

6. SPECIAL MUSIC - Keep solos and features within the fabric of the presentation. I have attended programs where 10 different children took turns playing the prelude music, each in their own unpolished way, and others sang solo verses of songs or played accompaniment instruments poorly. *This is not a recital or talent show, it is Sacrament Meeting where **REVERENCE** and **WORSHIP** are still the key elements of the meeting.* Any solo or special accompaniment **is only special if it is done well**. Also, it is better to keep the playing of the prelude and interlude music to one experienced player who can set the proper tone. Simple extended introductions or postludes can also be skillfully employed as **TRANSITIONS** to cover movement.

7. ADULT HELPERS - Minimize the distraction that teachers and adult helpers are just by their size. The audience gets confused when there is a lot of adult movement. There certainly should be enough helpers strategically placed to maintain order, but their movements should be few.

These are tried and true strategies towards good programs. Hopefully your presentation will go well and keep your audience engaged. I would hate to have anyone come up to you and ask when the Primary Presentation was just so **THEY COULD BE SURE TO MISS IT!**



Singing Nice and Loud – Sept. 10, 2019



I was a substitute accompanist last Sunday for a Church group of young singers ages 4-7. They were learning the second verse of a song that I had not known before. But when I started playing it, I had to catch myself. It was written in the form of a pop power ballad --- the

chord progression, rhythms, and how the melody was constructed. I really had to pull back so that I did not go into Rock Band mode. The children hardly sang on the verse, but, boy, did they let loose on the chorus! They knew how to belt out a pop power ballad. It is what they know. That type of music is all over the TV, radio, recordings, and even those highly targeted commercials.

The song leader had probably asked them to sing **NICE** and **LOUD** when they were first learning, but they only perfected the **LOUD** part. The pitches that were between Middle C up to F were pretty close to being matched, but those down around G and A below Middle C



were croaked and the notes above were monotone yelled. It wasn't **NICE** at all. The sad part was that they were singing a sacred song about the miracle of Jesus' Atonement. I doubt that the children actually understood that they were singing words that should be sung with absolute regard and reverence for the majesty of what the Savior did for us. The song leader tried to tell them that they needed to sing **NICE**. But it might be too late to get them to relearn something that they are having so much fun doing.

In general, children emulate what they hear. If a child grows up in a culture that uses chants and throat clucks for their singing, that is what they think is normal and good. If children grow up listening to only their culture's pop music, that is what they are accustomed to and is how they want to sing. Singing sacred music, reverently, requires a different approach. And singing any music in tune, requires expert

teaching strategies. There is a danger in encouraging children to sing along with grown-up voices on professional recordings. The ranges adults sing in are not a fit for most children. The kids end up trying to sing too low or too high which is out of their physical range.

Most children have naturally higher and lighter ranges than adults and those usually fall within one octave and a few notes either direction from Middle C up to Treble C. The problem seems to be that the vast



majority of American children are growing up only matching pitches in their speaking ranges and sadly they are not finding their head voices at all which would allow them to sing above F4 (*only a fourth up from Middle C!*). That's a singing range of about four notes, folks. They are not matching pitches lower than middle C – just grunting. And they are not matching pitches above F --

just screeching out a monotone. They don't realize what it takes to match pitches because they have not learned to hear by singing in their "head voice" register.

Children can learn to match pitches when encouraged to find their light, high **HEAD VOICE**. Once they get acquainted with vocalizing above F in a sort of "siren" type sound, they can open the pathways to matching pitches. That song leader needs to get them matching pitches in their head voice range before turning them loose on a song so familiar in style that they lapse into pop power ballad mode. I hope she can reign them back in and help them sing **NICE**.

Matching Pitches – Nov. 16, 2019

My daughter invited me to come hear her children perform in their ward's Primary Presentation. I am always happy to attend performances of my grandchildren. She especially wanted my opinion



on a new song the children had learned. For the most part, the 50+ children sang very well. But I learned what my daughter had observed from an earlier rehearsal. When they sang this new song, it was obvious that most of the pitches were much too low for the majority of the

children's light, high voices. Where on the other songs, the pitches of the melody had a consensus of matching, in this new song, suddenly all we heard was a monotone croaking.

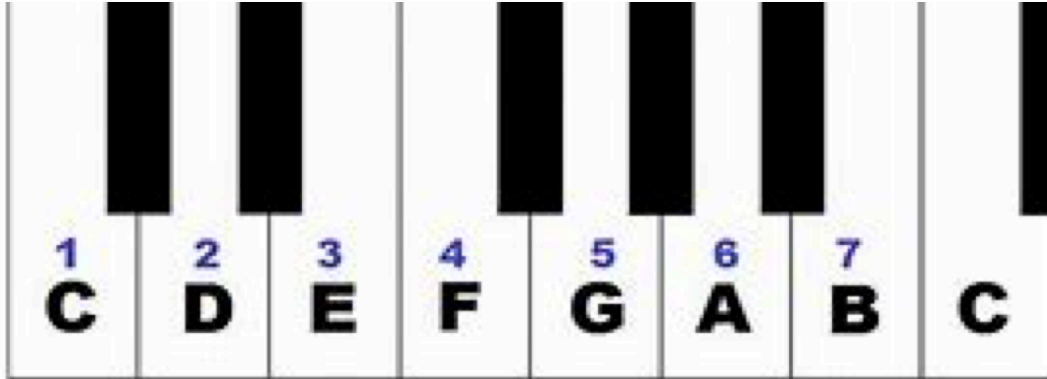
Sure, there will be adults and some older children who are more comfortable singing in a low alto range. But it is really unfair to insist that young children try to sing out of their natural singing range. Besides that --- *and how many times must I rant from my soapbox?* --- **unless children exercise singing in their light, high voices, THEY WON'T LEARN TO MATCH PITCHES very well!**

Do you (*as a song leader who is responsible for teaching young children*) want to have that reality hang over your head? Just because you get some flack from teachers and other adults complaining that the music in Primary is just too high, should you cave? No! A thousand times NO!!!!

Little children (4-9) need to utilize their "head voice" apparatus. When the vocalization happens in their heads and not in their throats or chests, the vibrations activate recognition between their ears and their brains. They learn to **MATCH PITCHES**. Most music



educators agree that a child's first singing range is about 1 octave between Middle C and Treble C with a possible whole step beyond in either direction.



Unfortunately, too many children miss out on this learning opportunity. They don't get it at home. And rarely do they have singing instruction at school anymore. So, if they enjoy singing, where do they get their examples? All they do is listen and sing along with adult performers on the television or radio. That can be very confusing. Some men have extremely high voices, or very low voices that are completely out of the child's pitch matching capabilities. And many professional women have low voices or sing in a very expansive range. It is not unusual for a professional female vocalist to sing from low F (5th below Middle C) to high G (5th above Treble C) or higher. That is a span of more than 3 octaves!

Buck the trend!
Be the teacher that helps kids learn to MATCH PITCHES!!!

