

Foothills Brass Quintet's Building Blocks Show Introduction and Study Guide

Our 40 to 50 minute "Building Blocks Show", created to inspire elementary students K-8, shows kids how music is put together! Step-by-step, we create songs using the building blocks of Tone, Rhythm, Melody and Harmony. We also show them how brass instruments work and teach them to make a simple brass instrument from hardware store materials. The show is, of course, full of great music from the past and present. We include movie and TV hits, classical favourites, and even a little country music.

The Foothills Brass

Celebrating more than 30 years of entertaining audiences, the Foothills Brass delivers SERIOUS FUN! Founded in 1981, the FBQ has the distinct privilege of being one of only a handful of chamber groups to maintain a full-time performance schedule since its inception. Foothills Brass presents up to 200 events each year in concert halls, universities, classrooms and cathedrals. Foothills Brass is composed of five versatile Canadian musicians from across North America.

Why We Perform

The Foothills Brass especially loves to perform for young audiences. Children approach music with a more open heart than many adults. Music education is vitally important to society. We want to inspire students to learn to listen to, and play music. Creativity, and the development of a sense of intrinsic value, are the primary outcomes of all Arts education. Learning a band or orchestral instrument also improves fine motor skills, self-discipline, presentation skills, patience, and tenacity. Learning music enhances the ability to work in groups, the ability to recognize complex patterns, and the ability to concentrate and listen. Music education improves general academic performance and prepares students for a variety of workplace environments. Interestingly, the most likely student to be admitted to medical school is a music school graduate.

Helping Students Get the Most from Our Presentation

We can engage students with no preconcert preparation at all, however, a little preparation may help students get more out of the event.

Audience Etiquette:

For some students, this may be the first live concert they have experienced. We invite students to make noise, move and participate in portions of our show, but generally we want students to follow our lead and *listen*. Students have often been taught about audience etiquette when it comes to movie theatres or plays, but some have no idea that audience manners apply to concerts as well. A little instruction about different kinds of music presentations would be beneficial. At dances, at events with background music, and at loud rock concerts, it is accepted that the audience makes noise. Concerts such as ours are different. People can't listen to the music if others are talking.

The Instrument Families:

We will demonstrate how the instruments of the brass family work. Students will certainly be hearing all the brass instruments at our concert, but teachers could put this experience into a broader perspective by introducing students to the other instrument families. Many students will have heard nothing other than guitars, bass, drums, electronic keyboards and singers. Ask students to name instruments they already know. Put them into families. Then build the other families of instruments. How many woodwind, brass, string or percussion instruments can they come up with? How many can they identify by sound or by sight? Slowly fill out five to ten of the instruments in each of the percussion, woodwind, string and brass families.

The Science of Sound:

Explain to students that sound is vibration and that slow vibration is a low pitch. Explain that big instruments tend to make low sounds and small ones make high sounds. A wooden yardstick will demonstrate the

principle very well. Hold the yardstick on a desk allowing various lengths to vibrate over the edge. Students could compare this to the long vibrating strings in a bass versus a violin. What is it that vibrates in reed, brass, and percussion instruments?

The Building Blocks of Music:

Introduce students to the building blocks – tone, melody, rhythm, and harmony. Have them sing a single tone. Then let them sing a melody together with no accompaniment. Get them to clap a simple rhythm, or clap to music. Divide the class into two groups and have them sing two different pitches to demonstrate harmony.

The Function of Music:

Music is used for many functions – community cohesion, dance, inspiring the military or the faithful, background noise, creating emotion in movies and advertising, and simple distraction. Sometimes music can be “art music” – music to be listened to. Have students thought about music of the past? Did people always have recorded music in the background? Can anyone name some musicians or composers of the past?

Ask students to name all the places they hear music. Here is a partial list: background in restaurants, grocery stores, malls, etc. Music is an integral part of every TV show, movie, and advertisement. The internet is filled with music. Music is heard at dances, community events, fundraising events, in churches, synagogues, temples, concerts in the park, on radios and other electronic devices in the home or in the car, and at rock/pop concerts. All of the above music serves a function beyond itself.

Community choir and band concerts, and theatre concerts, are generally the only places where people sit quietly and really listen. Wouldn't it be great to have more of that? All of this music requires thousands of professional musicians, artists, producers, managers, agents, salesmen, composers, advertising people, graphic artists arrangers, and recording technicians. Many people work in the music business in one way or another.