

Michele Ellis

Snakes Alive

Snakes Alive is series of activities for remote and distant education for children aged between 4-9 years. These tasks were not taught live via Zoom and other such platforms but the activities were delivered via film clips with accompanying written explanations. Parents and carers were the guides, teachers and technical support for their children. Naturally there was no way to guarantee the participation level at home when the instruction was pre-recorded however my intention was to make activities that would engage the student imagination and body as if they were in the classroom. It is evident by observing the responses of the children who have recently returned to the classroom, that various levels of understanding and immersion occurred without the spontaneous and reflective responses given by a music teacher. Needless to say, it was a joy to revisit the material with the children and to extend and explore the activities beyond my initial planning.

Introduction: Many children are studying animals while learning at home including jungle, farm and zoo animals. There is an abundance of virtual material relating to this topic including, stories, poems, arts works, songs, dances to awaken the imagination of children. This offering is a combination of song, instrumental performance, as well as listening and movement activities and opportunities for children to share their imagination through sound and motion.

Activity 1: Singing

The Snake Charmer Song - traditional

Snakes are enchanting and mysterious as are those who perform the ancient skill of snake charming. While children are listening and learning the song they can animate the melody line using snakes gestures with their arms. This will be later extended to whole body movement in subsequent activities.

Setting the context: Snake Charming is an age old practice. This clip shows a family living with their snakes and the changes of this profession. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMmDcFNfTpY> This clip is included to give a context to the material and as the visuals include a family, students can draw parallels and discuss differences between themselves and the children in the film.



In a place I know, a mag - i - cian has a show, In his bas - ket deep lies a
co - bra fast a sleep. When the mas - ter plays a haunt - ing sound, It
ris - es up and looks a-round, It bends and sways as the mast-er's mag - ic plays.

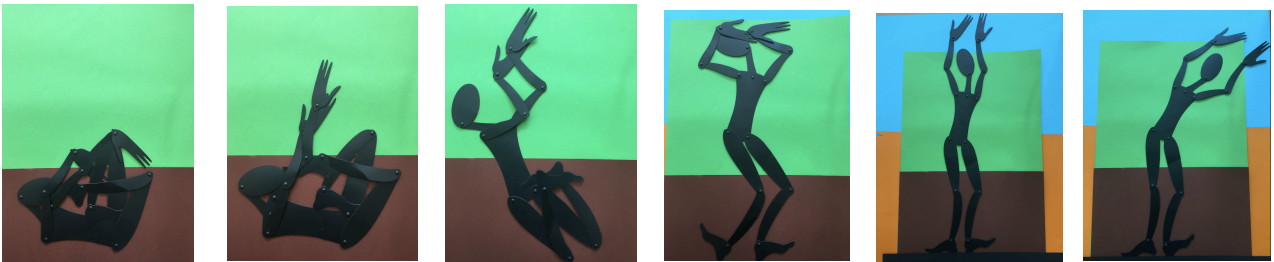
Melody and lyrics - traditional

*In a place I know, a magician has a show,
In his basket deep, lies a cobra fast asleep.
When the master plays (or pipes) a haunting sound,
It rises up a looks around,
It bends and sways while the master's magic plays.*

Teaching the song: This clip is how one could approach the song with a brief introduction, simple actions and the opportunity for children to respond with snake actions.
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/2n6sfypz875bqhf/Snake%20Charmer%20Song%281%29.mp4?dl=0>

Activity 2: Moving

Snake movements: This activity engages the imagination and body. Children follow a narration and imagine being snakes in their basket. When they hear sound they rise and bend and sway before curling up once again in their basket. This movement activity was made with stop animation however one could use the images below to inspire action and story telling with music and narration of your choice. The music excerpt used in the animation is the track *Veli* by the artist Hedningarna from the album *Karelia Visa* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5QVUYt5Wo>)



Movement stop animation activity:

Children follow and move to the narration following the images of the clip.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/bwctcgpenq4vk03/Snake%20moves%282%29.mp4?dl=0>

Feedback can be given if children perform live with you or submit a video.

Related activities that could give further movement vocabulary and impulses involve students finding images of snakes on the internet and recreating the shapes they see in the images with their bodies or with materials such as string, pipe cleaners, wire and modelling clay. Image source: <http://clipart-library.com/viper-clipart.html>



Activity 3: Responding and Creating

Responding to sound using phrases of The Snake Charmer Melody

Option 1: Children move in a 'snake like' pathway to the melodic phrases of the song, then stop and shake (as in the tail of a rattle snake) as indicated by the breaks in the music. A teacher could perform this live or use the attached video and sound recording. This video has visuals. This clip was devised to encourage students to make a 'shaking' instrument with materials found in their home. For example rice in a plastic container.
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/a7px6x21eozodfl/Snake%20charmer%20music%20for%20slithering%20sounds%281%29.mp4?dl=0>

Option 2: The second clip is a simple soundtrack using phrases from the Snake Charmer Song and the rasp of a cabasa. This was created on GarageBand. It has worked well in the classroom as described above but also in reverse, by having the children remain on one spot but curling and curving their bodies in response to the melodic fragments and then moving swiftly with one step or jump to a new position in the room with the fast percussive sound.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/a7px6x21eozodfl/Snake%20charmer%20music%20for%20slithering%20sounds%281%29.mp4?dl=0>

Option 3: Children repeat the movements they have created using their own vocal sounds instead of the recording.

Option 4: Students select and create two or three 'snake' shapes with their bodies. When they are comfortable making their shapes, ask them to find various ways to transition between them (lead with a body part, change tempo, change the character of the movement smooth/rough etc). This can be accompanied by the students creating their own vocal sounds or the teacher can provide different recordings or live music options. Contrasting music selections will influence the quality of their movements which can be used in subsequent movement lessons.

Michele Ellis is a music teacher at the British School in the Netherlands. She is a recent graduate of the Advanced Studies in Music and Dance Education, Orff Institute, Salzburg, 2019, and completed the International Internship at the San Francisco School 2016. Before immigrating to Europe this year, Michele held the position of Head of Department (Primary Music) at the International Grammar School in Sydney, Australia. Orff Schulwerk has been an endless learning journey for Michele and as her experience continues, she shares her joy and passion for teaching through teacher training courses, articles and workshops.



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