

**African American Singing Games
for the Elementary Music Classroom
Florida Music Educators Association Conference
Presented by Nyssa Brown
nyssa_brown@yahoo.com**



Session Description:

Learn songs, play games, and listen to authentic field recordings from *Step It Down* by Bessie Jones and Bess Lomax Hawes. Historical information about Bessie Jones, as well as cultural and gender considerations in teaching African American children's music, will be included.

Date: Saturday, 1/11/2014 * Time: 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM * Room: TCC 15

Nyssa Brown is a choral and general music educator at South View Middle School in Edina, Minnesota. From 2007-2012, she served as Music Education Coordinator for Minnesota's Perpich Center for Arts Education, coaching teachers in over 100 school districts across the state of Minnesota in developing standards-aligned curriculum and assessments. A collaborator in the revision of the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, she currently serves on the Grades 3-5 subcommittee, offering input to the Core Writing Team. Ms. Brown taught elementary school vocal and general music at Park Spanish Immersion School in St. Louis Park, Minnesota from 1998-2007. Passionate about teaching in a global context, Nyssa taught at the American Embassy School in New Delhi, India and in both Namibia and South Africa, through a fellowship offered by the Eastman School of Music's Umcu: The Kimberley Project. Ms. Brown was one of ten finalists for 2004 Minnesota Teacher of the Year and received a prestigious Milken Educator Award in 2004 from the Milken Family Foundation. In 2006, Nyssa was chosen by Education Minnesota, a state affiliate of NEA and AFT, to represent Minnesota at the national level in NEA's Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence. Nyssa is a faculty member of the Kodály Levels Course at Indiana University and the University of St. Thomas. She also serves as an adjunct professor at the University of St. Thomas and Augsburg College. Nyssa also studied in Hungary at the Kodály Institute's summer seminar. She released her first CD in October, 2000, "Packwood or Paradise" and is currently recording a CD of lullabies. Ms. Brown graduated from the Hartt School of Music and Hartford College for Women in 1998 with a BMus in Education and a BA in Women's Studies. She completed her Master of Arts in Music Education at the University of St. Thomas, 2008. Her Kodály certification was earned at Brigham Young University in 2001, and she has completed Levels 1 and 2 of her Orff training at University of St. Thomas.



Session Goals:

- Learn songs and plays from the African American Tradition
- Describe context for each of the songs learned
- Discover resources to support integration of this material into the classroom

Recommended Resources:

- **Book - Step It Down: Games, Plays, Songs and Stories from the Afro-American Heritage by Bessie Jones and Bess Lomax Hawes**
- **CD and booklet - "Put Your Hand on Your Hip and Let Your Backbone Slip" by Bessie Jones**
- **Brown Girl in the Ring (book and cd) by Lomax**

Opening Questions:

Why did I choose this session? * What do I hope to gain from the session? *
What would success look like for me by the end of this session?

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Plays, not Games	The Nature of the Play
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of fun • The Sea Islanders “played” • Repeatedly constructing small life drama • Improvising on the central issues of their deepest concerns • Taking on new personalities for identification or caricature • Acting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative (not competitive) • Sense of timing and movement through space • Move to the music, don’t try to get there first • Circle is community space • Each person takes a turn in the center • The circle insulates from the outside world • Democratic structure • Multiple ways to express oneself: music, movement, and drama.

Categories of Plays	Example Song from Category	Source	Other songs in category (all found in Step It Down)
Baby Games and Plays	Go To Sleepy Little Baby	<u>Step It Down</u> and American Folk Songs for Children, rec by Lomax*	Patty Cake
Clapping Plays	Hambone	<u>Step It Down</u> and Put Your Hand on Your Hip	Head and Shoulders, Baby
Jumps and Skips	Shoo Turkey	<u>Step It Down</u> and Put Your Hand on Your Hip	Just from the Kitchen
Singing Plays	Oh Green Fields, Roxie	<u>Step It Down</u> and Put Your Hand on Your Hip	Draw Me a Bucket Green, Green the Crabapple tree
Ring Plays	Little Sally Walker	Oral Tradition and <u>Step It Down</u> and Put Your Hand on Your Hip	Little Johnny Brown Way Down Yonder in the Brickyard
Dances	Zudie-O	Oral Tradition <u>Step It Down</u>	I’m Going Away to See Aunt Dinah
House Plays and Home Amusements	Missy-La Massa-La	<u>Brown Girl in the Ring</u> (Book and cd) by Lomax	Bob-a-Needle
Outdoor Games	See Step It Down		
Songs and Stories			

Ring Plays

1. Number of players - almost any number, even or odd, b/w 6 and 12
2. Formation - Players in the circle sing, clap, and “step it down”
3. The Center Player - actor
4. Movement to and from the Center - with the music
5. When to Change Actions - Continue action
6. Different Roles in the Circle - The center player and lead singer are two different roles.

Source for all of the above information: Step It Down by Bessie Jones and Bess Lomax Hawes and “Put Your Hand on Your Hip and Let Your Backbone Slip” by Bessie Jones (except where noted)

* From “American Folk Songs for Children” recorded by Alan Lomax, summer 1959, from the Southern Folk Heritage Series (SD-1350, 1965)

Westmusic

African American Ring Play
Source: Jones, Bessie and Bess Lomax Hawes., *Step It Down*. New York: Harper and Row, 1972, pg. 53-54

Formation: Line of children, facing the leader.

Action: none during the verse.

Chorus: leader leads line in a winding course, body in squatting position, arms thrown out to right and left, alternately on each step, keeping time to the down beats of the song.

African American Singing Game

Fast, with spirit

$$= 104$$

Formation: ring of players standing, one center player sitting on a chair. Leader/caller stands near chair.

Action: Person in chair whispers the name of another player to caller on "Tell me who you love, Roxie." When the next players name is called, he or she dances to center, shakes sitting player's hand, and pulls the seated child out of the center seat. The new player sits in the chair. Game repeats.

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Little Sally Walker

Traditional African American

She
street.
She said,
switch!
switch."

Formation: standing single circle, one player in middle

Action:
Circle stands and sings while center player walks around inside of circle stopping in front of someone at "stops in front of me."
"Hey girl..." center person does an action, outside person copies "and switch" - the two switch places and continue with the original action. With new person in center, the game begins again.

Source: Kristen Roemer, Indiana University, Summer, 2006.

Zudio

Traditional African American

Here we go Zu di o, Zu di o, Zu di o.
Here we go Zu di o All night long
Formation: longways set, across from partner
Verse 2 - Step Back, Sally Sally Step Back Sally all night long
Verse 3 - Goin' down the alley, alley, alley Goin' down the alley all night long

Actions:
Verse 1: Take partners hands, move arms back and forth
Verse 2: Jump backwards, clap (repeat 7 more times)
Verse 3: Top couple goes down alley One person chooses motion, other person copies

Source: Ivy Rawlins, MKMEA, Fall, 2005, Kansas City.

Missy-La, Massa-La

Game Song, St. Lucia

Source: Lomax, Alan and J.D. Elder, and Bess Lomax Hawes. Brown Girl in the Ring. New York: Pantheon Books, 1979, pg. 94-95.

Spirited
= 120
Voice

Mis sy La__ Mas sa La__ Mis sy lost__ her gold ring, go 'way.
Mis sy La__ Mas sa La__ Mis sy lost__ her gold ring. I got to find em, find em,
find em, find em, find 'em let me see__ la, la, la, la. find em, find em, find em, find em,
find 'em let me see__

Formation: Standing circle, with hands behind backs.

Action: While song is sung, students pass the ring. The children in the center tries to guess who has the ring at the end of the song. (Original game, the child in the center reaches around behind the back of a child he/she thinks has the ring and tries to grab it - catching the circle player in the act of passing.)

Hambone

As sung by Bessie Jones

J=208

Ham-bone, Ham-bone, pat him on the shoul-der

If you get a pretty girl I'll show you how to hold her

Ham-bone, Ham-bone, where have you been?

All 'round the world and back a - gain.

New words and new music adaptation by Bessie Jones;
collected and edited with additional new material by Alan
Lomax

Go To Sleep, Little Baby

As Sung By Bessie Jones

$\text{♩} = 96$ Rocking slowly

Go to sleep-y lit-tle ba-by - Be-fore the boog-er man catch - you.

All them hor-ses - - in that lot- - Go to sleep-y lit-tle ba-by.

Go to sleep Go to sleep, Go to sleep-y lit-tle ba-by.

Ma-ma went a-way - and she told me to stay - and take good care of that ba-by.