

The Fourth Wall: *Fruit Flies Like a Banana* Educational Guide, Grades K-8



About the Performance

Working at break-neck speed, the multi-talented performers of The Fourth Wall combine music, theater, and dance in this sprint-triathlon variety show. The audience chooses the show order by picking cards from a deck and even determines parameters for some pieces created on the spot. Every performance is unique! As the onstage timer ticks down, The Fourth Wall will blow your mind with tricks, bust your gut with laughter, and maybe even bring a tear to your eye with beautiful music. We strive to turn conventional classical music performances on their ear and leave our audiences with a good feeling in their belly.



About the Artist

Few musical ensembles earn top marks for their "deft choreography," but this is no ordinary ensemble. Part chamber music group, part devised theatre company, part modern dance troupe, part circus act, The Fourth Wall blends music, theatre, dance, and acrobatics into a new hybrid art form. In their award-winning variety show, *Fruit Flies Like a Banana*, this trio of conservatory-trained musicians creates new interdisciplinary works and reinterprets classic repertoire - all performed in an order chosen by the audience - to make music that leaps off the stage.

Innovative and flexible, The Fourth Wall quickly adapted to COVID life, creating *Fruit Flies Like a Banana: Virtual Style* for schools and festivals. In May 2020, The Orlando Sentinel named the show "Best of the Fest" at the Orlando International Fringe Theatre Festival. Until their international touring schedule can resume, The Fourth Wall's interactive online performances will continue to put everyone in a front-row seat, and all are invited to help create a show that leaps off the screen.

Program Learning Goals

1. Students will develop a sense of curiosity and excitement to hear new pieces and styles of music through helping to determine the order of the show.
2. Students will gain or deepen an appreciation for chamber music through a variety of senses including sight, sound, and movement.
3. Students will see creativity and divergent thinking in action as the performers bounce between pieces of music and different ways to move while playing instruments.

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Essential Questions

1. How can you make something unique and different?
2. Where will your imagination take you in the future?
3. How do you enjoy music?

Vocabulary

- Tempo: the speed of music.
- Dynamics: musical volume.
- Rhythm: Pattern of Sound

Key Facts and Cultural Context for Students

What is Hybrid Arts?

Many cultures all over the world combine music, dance, acting, and acrobatics, but Fourth Wall's particular style of performance is something they are constantly reinventing. They call it hybrid arts, but you can see versions of the idea in variety shows from early 20th century America called Vaudeville where lots of different performers would appear throughout a show, each doing something unique from music to dance, clowning to comedy. Their main instruments are flute (Hilary), bass trombone (Neil), and vibraphone (Greg), but you'll see several others in their shows.



Think About It!

As you watch the performance, notice the way Hilary, Neil, and Greg connect the music they are playing to the movements they are making as dancers. How do their movements change with the rhythm (pattern of sound), tempo (speed), or dynamics (volume) of each piece of music? How do they interact with each other?

The Fourth Wall:
Fruit Flies Like a Banana
Educational Guide, Grades K-8



Pre-Performance Discussion Questions

- What's your favorite way to listen to music?
- Where do you experience music?
- Tell me about the last time you heard someone playing music or singing live, in-person. What did you watch?
- Was it interesting to watch it? When was the last time you heard recorded music
- What do you watch or pay attention to during a performance? What makes a live performance interesting for you?

Pre-Show Activity: Make a Collaborative Mixed Tape

This activity is all about variety: listen, compare, contrast. In a group of 3-5 people, make a playlist of songs you know really well. Now figure out the most interesting order of songs. You want each song to be as different as possible from the songs before and after. There are lots of ways songs can contrast:

- Tempo: the speed of music. Contrast speeds from slow to fast, fast to slow
- Dynamics: musical volume. Put a big, loud, busy song right after something soft and thoughtful.
- Are there lyrics, or is it instrumental only?
- How does the music make you feel? Try a happy song after a sad one
- Theme: Do the lyrics or title tell a story?

The Fourth Wall plans their shows based around contrasting pieces so they can give each audience lots of different experiences. As you create your mixtape, think about the experiences you are offering your audiences.

Post Performance Discussion Questions:

1. What pieces of music did you recognize in the show?
2. What surprised you?
3. What was your favorite part of the show and why did you enjoy it?
4. What about that experience was different from other experiences you've had?

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Post-Show Activity: Music Machines

Music machines combine short, repeating musical and choreographic phrases to encourage performers to think about how their gestures, shapes, and sounds interact in an ensemble. We think about this layering of ideas all the time in The Fourth Wall with our hybrid arts work and students will be able to get a taste of our creative process whether they try the activity before or after a performance of Fruit Flies Like a Banana.

LEARNING GOALS: Students will be able to communicate through movement and sound as part of an ensemble. Students will work together to form a cohesive machine where both musical and movement ideas relate and react to one another. Students will learn about leadership, listening, and following skills as part of an ensemble.

MATERIALS/PREP:

- Large open space, clear of desks/tables/chairs
- Instruments: Music Machines can be created with vocal and body percussion sounds but you can also use almost any instrument. Handheld musical instruments allow for more choreographic flexibility, but we've seen bassists and tuba players create some really interesting shapes!

Machines have many parts that work together to make something happen like pedals, gears, and wheels on a bike or the battery, circuit board, wires, fans, and screen of a computer. Music machines work by connecting many people performing short, musical and choreographic phrases at the same time to make an ensemble. You can watch this Video: "[SPAC Break Let's Make a Music Machine](#)" then follow the step by step below.



STEP 1:

To start building a machine, one person should come to the center of the open space and begin a short, repeating musical pattern (something like the classic clapping pattern: clap - clap - clap clap clap or the first few notes of a song mi-re-do rest mi-re-do rest). While continuing that musical pattern, the same first performer should then add a motion to accompany the sound, keeping in mind that the motion will need to be done for a while.

The Fourth Wall:

Fruit Flies Like a Banana

Educational Guide, Grades K-8



STEP 2: The next person to add on to the machine should move around the first performer, looking for spaces where their body might fit in the shape and motion and places where they can add to the existing sound or rests where they can add new sonic material. Rests in music and negative space around body shapes are great things to look for when building connected machines.

STEP 3: After the second performer has added their repeating musical and choreographic phrase, more performers can add in. 4-6 performers is a great final size for the first machine! If the newly formed machine seems to be doing well, the facilitator can empower one of the members to gradually change the tempo of the machine. It's useful to look and listen for a performer whose musical and/or physical contribution is very rhythmical and easy for the whole ensemble to hear and/or see.

STEP 4: Build a second machine as a big group. Start from just one performer again and give them time to establish a solid pattern both sonically and physically. Once that is going, more students can be added in simultaneously. Encourage students to walk around the growing machine, looking for places to fit their motions and gestures that might inspire reactions, listening for different types of sounds.

STEP 5: Explore levels; if the machine started with someone standing, others might join in with low level shapes crouching, sitting, or laying on the floor. Play with different kinds of sounds: a rich musical experience can be made of clapping, patting, and snapping different rhythms or perhaps the machine is a chorus of just voices or maybe a combination of singing, humming, whistling, stomping, body percussion, and instruments!

STEP 6: Break students into smaller groups of 5-9 students. Give them 5-10 minutes to make a machine they will share with the whole class. If groups build their machine quickly, they should explore changing tempo and dynamics with different groups members taking the lead within the ensemble.

STEP 7: Have groups perform their machines for the class after a relatively short rehearsal period. Ask each group to define the stage and audience spaces so performers consider how they orient their machines. What angle gives the audience the best view of the action? Does their machine look interesting only from the front, or could it be equally or more effective in three or all sides?

STEP 8: After each performance, invite students to reflect on what they liked about their machine: Did they work well together? Were there any cool surprises in the creation process? Encourage students to reflect on how they might change the machine for future performances: What could have gone better? Are there particular movements or sounds that could better unify the machine? The audience should also be encouraged to reflect on what they saw or found interesting. Through all the reflection, students should be encouraged to think of the machine as a whole unit rather than singling out individual performances.

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Curricular Connections

Music K-8

Creating

1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. Improvise short original musical ideas. (M.Cr.01)
2. Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. Connect multiple original musical ideas together into a single piece. (M.Cr.02)
3. Refine and complete artistic work. Explore different musical ideas by experimenting with the voice or instruments. (.M.Cr.03)

Responding

7. Perceive and analyze artistic work. (M.R.07)
8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. (M.R.8)
9. Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. Demonstrate active listening as an audience member (.M.R.09)

Connecting

10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. (M.Co.10)

Theatre K-8:

Responding

7. Perceive and analyze artistic work. (T.R.07)
8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. (T.R.08)
9. Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. Demonstrate active observation as an audience member (e.g., noticing details, making connections) (T.R.09)

Connecting

10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. (T.Co.10)
11. Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural and historical contexts to deepen understanding. Identify different sources of theatrical works (e.g., folk and fairy talks, everyday life). (T.Co.11)